



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

May 25, 2010

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Chairman:

This responds to your letter, dated May 17, 2010, to the Attorney General concerning British Petroleum's actions in connection with the Deepwater Horizon explosion, fire and oil spill. At the outset, we wish to assure you that the Justice Department is committed to vigorous enforcement of all applicable laws in order to protect the people who work and reside near the Gulf of Mexico, as well as nearby wildlife, the environment and American taxpayers.

The Department of Justice will take all necessary and appropriate steps to ensure that those responsible for this tragic series of events are held fully accountable. Three weeks ago Attorney General Eric Holder dispatched a team of attorneys from the Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) and the Civil Division within the Department to monitor the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and assess the legal position of the United States in the aftermath of this environmental disaster. The team, headed by Ignacia Moreno, Assistant Attorney General for ENRD, and Tony West, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division, met with the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana and the rest of the response team in New Orleans, as well as with state officials. Subsequently, Ms. Moreno and Mr. West convened a meeting of all of the United States Attorneys in the Gulf region to assure a coordinated effort.

The Department team is examining the full range of affirmative legal options that may be available to the United States. The team is providing daily legal advice and coordination for federal attorneys from across the Government, a vital function. Department attorneys also are defending the interests of the United States in suits brought by others.

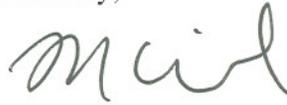
The Department has sent formal demands to British Petroleum, Transocean and other companies to ensure the preservation of potentially relevant information. These letters invoke legal requirements for preserving evidence in anticipation of litigation. Department officials have spoken with BP and Transocean counsel to ensure they are complying with these demands.

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You have asked the Department to open a criminal inquiry into events surrounding the oil spill. Consistent with long-standing policy, we neither confirm nor deny the existence of such an investigation. However we appreciate the facts that you have called to our attention and assure you they will receive due consideration.

In sum, the Department of Justice is responding to the Deepwater Horizon explosion, fire and oil spill with the utmost seriousness. We are taking all appropriate steps in the wake of an environmental tragedy in which eleven lives were lost and countless others have been grievously damaged.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "m u i l", written in a cursive style.

Ronald Weich
Assistant Attorney General

cc: Senator James Inhofe
Ranking Minority Member