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Karl Burkart

Internet entrepreneur blogs about the latest in green media and technology



Coast Guard and BP threaten journalists with arrest for documenting oil spill

Meanwhile, oil washes up on shore as Louisiana governor says he was unable to get funding for an emergency retaining wall.

Tue, May 18 2010 at 11:49 PM EST

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IT'S HERE: Parish County, Louisiana. (Photo: CBS)

I never thought I would say this, but for once I actually agree with Rush Limbaugh. The right-wing radio host is attributed with calling the Gulf Oil Spill "Obama's Katrina." It was an odd statement at the time, but now nearly four weeks later, Limbaugh's brash statement is not at all off the mark.

Today, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal dispensed with his laid-back attitude about the spill and in a local radio interview said that he had made repeated, increasingly desperate pleas to get the Army Corps of Engineers to approve an emergency retaining wall project that would have protected the fragile marshlands of Louisiana from the onslaught of thick oil now oozing out of the Gulf.

These marshlands are often referred to as "the nursery" for good reason — they are the breeding ground for hundreds of species of birds and marine animals and the womb of Louisiana's fishing industry. They are also the state's primary buffer against hurricanes. But sadly Jindal's pleas fell on deaf ears, and this morning around 8 a.m., oil washed up onshore.

The Obama administration, it appears, has higher priorities ... namely helping BP in its frantic efforts to keep the public in the dark about what is almost surely the worst environmental catastrophe in U.S. history.

Contacts in Louisiana have given me numerous, unconfirmed reports of cameras and cell phones being confiscated, scientists with monitoring equipment being turned away, and local reporters blocked from access to public lands impacted by the oil spill. But

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today CBS News got it on video, along with a bone-chilling statement by a Coast Guard official:



"These are BP's rules. These are not our rules."

But wait ... isn't that a public beach? From my viewpoint, it looks as if the Coast Guard* has been given direct orders to protect BP's PR interests above [safety concerns](#) over air and water quality, above the outcries of local governments in need of aid, and (worst of all) above the need for the American public to be informed about what is really going on in the Gulf.

The Coast Guard, as one of the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, answers to the commander in chief — President Obama. Despite Obama's half-hearted attempt at displaying anger over the government's "[cozy relationship](#)" with BP, I believe Obama is aiding and abetting a foreign oil company as it perpetrates an environmental crime on American soil, a crime which fortunately (thanks to Sen. Barbara Boxer) is now being taken to the [Justice Department](#).



It's a well-known fact that President Obama received a [hefty campaign contribution](#) from British Petroleum (the largest of any of the candidates) and in the oily aftermath of a thoroughly un-American corporate cover-up, Obama's credibility as the people's president is quickly eroding. In the next few days — as the Gulf current pulls miles of black ooze up the Eastern seaboard (the first tar balls landed today in the [Florida Keys](#)) — BP's federally subsidized media containment operation may soon become impossible to

maintain.

At that point, the president will have to ask himself if his allegiance to the polluting petroleum giant was worth it.

Follow all of Karl's posts on Twitter [@greendig](#) or Facebook [/greendig](#) or [RSS](#).

* **WRITER'S NOTE:** Please join 350.org's Facebook page [1,000,000 Strong against Offshore Drilling](#)

* **EDITOR'S NOTE:** The U.S. Coast Guard contacted MNN today with this update:

CBS Evening News reported they were denied access to oiled shoreline by a civilian vessel that had clean-up workers contracted by BP, as well as Coast Guard personnel on board. CBS News video taped the exchange during which time one of the contractors told them (on tape) that " ... this is BP's rules not ours."

Neither BP nor the U.S. Coast Guard, who are responding to the spill, have any rules in place that would prohibit media access to impacted areas and we were disappointed to hear of this incident. In fact, media has been actively embedded and allowed to cover response efforts since this response began, with more than 400 embeds aboard boats and aircraft to date. Just today 16 members of the press observed clean-up



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operations on a vessel out of Venice, La.

The only time anyone would be asked to move from an area would be if there were safety concerns, or they were interfering with response operations. This did occur off South Pass Monday which may have caused the confusion reported by CBS today.

The entities involved in the Deepwater Horizon/BP Response have already reiterated these media access guidelines to personnel involved in the response and hope it prevents any future confusion.

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Posted By chiffon beach dress - Fri, May 21 2010 at 12:29 AM EST

chiffon beach dress

the Socialist in their pocket now! Yankee Doodle assholes lined up at the polls to make change happen, for nothing! the Corporate lobbyists win hands down in the crunch, your vote at the polls, worthless! Democracy is dead, American Corporate interest

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Posted By ZachE - Thu, May 20 2010 at 7:43 PM EST

Bobby Jindal (R) LA

Isn't he the governor that campaigned on his absolute refusal to take Federal government money? C'mon, Bobby, the free market will always take care of everything, right? I'm sure that the whole army of unemployed folks in LA (as a result of his policies) will be totally happy to handle the cleanup for him, so long as LA pays them with all of that extra money they must have from embracing total free market capitalism.

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Posted By LoPhatt - Thu, May 20 2010 at 6:54 PM EST

USBP?

Since when does the USCG, a federal agency, take orders from a foreign corporation? Oh, I forgot, we ARE a corporate acquisition thanks to Comrade Soetoro and his cronies. "Miri" above has it right. He's not a "socialist", he's a corporate fascist. For those who may not know, that's what Musilini called fascism, "corporatism".

This is a disaster of unprecedented proportions and they sit there on their hands and allow BP to call the shots? Why not arrest them, freeze their assets to.... [More](#)

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Posted By Russell Castro - Thu, May 20 2010 at 5:45 PM EST

BP Spill NOT comparable to Katrina...

Recently I told my Social Problems lecture students that the BP oil spill was not a social problem, but rather a "symptom" of a larger on-going phenomenon of the "dominance of corporate culture in our society," that is--in fact--not