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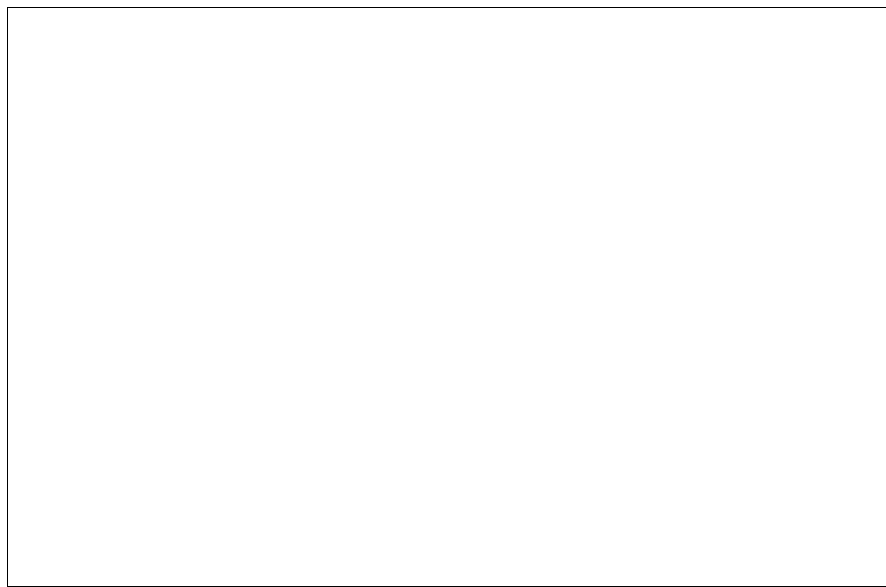
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May 14, 2010

Barack Obama plans to punish BP with tax hike as Gulf spill worsens



[Jacqui Goddard, Miami](#)

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Oil companies face an immediate tax rise of 1 cent per barrel to help to pay for the clean-up in the Gulf of Mexico under proposed legislation rushed out by the White House yesterday.

The measure, unveiled as BP began a new attempt to contain the ruptured well that has leaked millions of gallons of crude oil into America's southern coastal waters, would put an extra \$500 million (£340 million) over ten years into the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, which covers damage caused by such disasters.

Under a \$118 million spending plan outlined in the package, people affected by the spill — such as fishermen who have lost their livelihoods because of the contamination — will be granted financial assistance, and federal agencies will get additional funds to monitor the slick and assess its impact.

President Obama, said by a spokesman to be “deeply frustrated” that the leak has still not been plugged three weeks after it erupted, intends that BP will pick up most of the cost of his new plan.

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Hearings into the incident aboard the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig on April 20 continued yesterday in Louisiana and in the US Congress, where Democrat Henry Waxman blamed a “calamitous series of equipment and

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Oil firms blame each other for disaster spill

MULTIMEDIA

IN PICTURES: Gulf Coast oil disaster

operational failures" for the disaster. "If the largest oil and oil services companies in the world had been more careful, 11 lives might have been saved and our coastlines protected," he said.

The way BP and its partners responded to the disaster, which began with an explosion aboard the Deepwater Horizon on April 20, will also be a matter for investigation.

Survivors have alleged that, after being rescued, they were held at sea while the rig's owner, Transocean, assembled its lawyers. After being brought ashore, traumatised and exhausted by two nights without sleep, they claim that they were taken to a hotel and "coerced" by Transocean representatives into signing liability waivers before being allowed to see their families.

According to Steven Gordon, of the Houston legal firm Gordon, Elias and Seely, the waivers are now being used against the workers as they attempt to seek compensation for emerging psychological problems that have left some too afraid to work at sea again.

"These people went through holy hell. They have probably just gone through the most traumatic period of their entire lives. They needed counselling — not 'Please sign here that you're not hurt' ," said Mr Gordon, who is representing Christopher Choy, a rig worker. "When they asked him to sign this, he hadn't been allowed to sleep and have his first nightmare."

Mr Choy, 23, teamed up with a firefighter on the rig to try to rescue a crane operator who was trapped by the fire. "They couldn't get to him because he was in flames. These guys watched their friends burning," Mr Gordon told The Times.

Alwin Landry, the captain of a cargo ship that was moored alongside the rig, told a hearing in New Orleans that mud began pouring down on him "like a black rain", followed by a thunderous hiss. "I saw the green flash on the main deck. Time kind of slowed down. I heard the explosion," he said, adding that minutes later came a radio call: "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! The rig's on fire. Abandon ship."

Workers leapt eight storeys into the sea to escape the flames, but even the water was on fire. The last to climb from the rig on to Mr Landry's boat was the rig's captain, Curt Kuchta, who tried to hit the "kill" switch to shut the oil well. "He acknowledged he pressed it and didn't know if it worked or not," Mr Landry said.

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YOUR COMMENTS 164 Comments (Displaying 1-10) Order By: Newest first | Oldest first | Most recommended Limey 44 wrote: Francis Francis wrote: @ 12:14 PM Get your facts straight yourself before you call anybody a moron... The tax amounts to 1 cent per barrel of oil as reported in the first sentence... How do you think that 1 cent spread over all those products is going to raise the price of fuel 1%? Do try to do better next time Francis. May 16, 2010 1:38 PM BST RECOMMEND? (1) George Glasser wrote:

Well, if I were an advisor to Mother Nature, I would strongly suggest that She call in the exterminators and rid this planet of the most destructive, self-serving vermin that ever inhabited it - Human Beings.

May 15, 2010 7:39 AM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (1)

Tim McCarthy wrote:

@ Francis Francis and Hugh Colgan.....excellent.....

May 15, 2010 3:44 AM BST

👍 RECOMMEND?

Tarik Toulan wrote:

The problem is obviously beyond the capabilities of BP or any other oil company. I think the situation now necessitates a direct federal intervention to effectively contain the disaster, because it's ultimately the USA environment that is being ruined. And let the punishment or liability be discussed later on.

May 14, 2010 2:59 PM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (4)

Luke Bennett wrote:

What hypocrites!

The country that consumes the most oil in the world is punishing an oil company for drilling for the oil that they gulp down their greedy throats and because it is spilling onto their precious land. You fail to look at the big picture. Your insatiable demand for oil which caused Transocean to build this rig and BP to drill it. You yanks pay barely anything for a gallon of oil whereas the rest of the world gets shafted for it. How about raising the price of oil and get off your fat arses and walk the 10 metres to the shops rather than driving everywhere.

May 14, 2010 2:42 PM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (12)

Hugh Colgan wrote:

It's hard to believe that this idiot received the Nobel Peace Prize. Mr MegaMouth is a complete disaster!

May 14, 2010 12:56 PM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (6)

Francis Francis wrote:

Great plan Barack - all it'll mean is that the rest of us will have to pay 1 percent more for our fuel. Moron.

May 14, 2010 12:14 PM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (10)

Peter Sammons wrote:

It is to be hoped that key technical and risk management lessons are learned by the industry as a result of this terrible accident.

Whilst no fan of Mr Obama, a special tax on the industry seems appropriate given the extent of 'collateral damage' to local communities and the local economies. Consumers should pay as ultimately they are the users or petro-chem products.

But the urgent things is to learn lessons

May 14, 2010 10:51 AM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (3)

Chris Thompson wrote:

This is NOT going to be used for the "clean up" this will go directly into the general fund and vanish into some politicians pork project attached to the passing of the stalincare bill. Government isn't even involved in the clean up, except as a regulatory nightmare. BP is paying for the clean up, just like Exxon did. Let's not forget that government isn't going to let this go un legislated upon. You can bet that nationalization of petroleum is being pondered as we comment.

May 14, 2010 10:06 AM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (9)

Tarik Toulan wrote:

What a paradox! Oil which they were breathlessly trying to get yesterday, are unsuccessfully trying to stop today. It's nature saying "I am the stronger".

May 14, 2010 7:23 AM BST

👍 RECOMMEND? (9)

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