

Coast Guard media liaison works for PR firm hired by BP

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A member of the US Coast Guard serving as a public affairs specialist in the Deepwater Horizon response is also employed by a public relations firm hired by BP. Petty Officer Rachel Polish is a Coast Guard reservist whose duties as a media liaison include preparing materials for the press, photographing Coast Guard events and coordinating with Coast Guard units and various external agencies on press events and announcements. An interview with National Incident Commander Thad Allen conducted by Polish appears on the official web site of the Unified Command.

At the same time, Polish is also a vice president of digital strategy with Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide where her responsibilities include “creating engaging experiences designed to promote awareness, brand loyalty, advocacy and conversion.” Ogilvy is the PR firm hired by BP to carry out its “A Brighter Tomorrow” campaign.

There can be no doubt that Polish’s dual role is a major conflict of interest. But she would not be the only member of a federal agency or branch of government compromised by ties to BP or the oil industry as a whole. President Obama himself received \$77,051 from BP during his presidential campaign. His chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, when he was still a member of the house of representatives, lived rent-free for five years in the apartment of Stanley Greenberg, whose firm was heavily involved in a “re-branding” public relations campaign for BP.

Before she was appointed deputy assistant secretary for land and minerals management in 2009, Sylvia Baca was an executive with BP. Steven E. Koonin, appointed by Obama to fill the role of under secretary of energy and science at the US Department of Energy, previously served as chief scientist for BP.

As the Deepwater Horizon oil spill began to spread in

the Gulf of Mexico and cases concerning the spill began to make their way through the legal system, as many as seven judges in New Orleans federal district courts were forced to recuse themselves because of financial ties to the oil industry.

When Judge Martin Feldman struck down the Obama administration’s six-month moratorium on offshore drilling, reports of his extensive financial ties to the oil industry were exposed. The judge maintained investments in Transocean and Haliburton, two of the corporations responsible for the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

The list goes on. In every branch of government, federal officials are deep in the pockets of BP and the major oil conglomerates.



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