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Administration defends handling of oil spill

 By Aamer Madhani | *National Journal* | October 7, 2010

The White House pushed back hard Thursday against stinging charges that the administration slowed scientists from letting the public know the full extent of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Responding to preliminary reports released Wednesday by the presidential commission on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and offshore drilling, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said the White House worked diligently to provide "accurate and timely information" on the oil spill.

"The worst-case scenario was being discussed on national television," Gibbs said. "We know the response was robust in ensuring that every possible step was taken to protect the coastline and prevent more damage from being done."

The report criticizes the federal government for creating the impression that it was "either not fully competent to handle the spill or not fully candid with the American people about the scope of the problem."

It also paints a picture of an administration that failed to be frank with the American people, and lays out perhaps a more serious charge that the administration was trying to prevent scientists from publishing worst-case scenarios about the oil spill.


The [Office of Management and Budget](#) halted efforts in late April or early May by the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) to reveal worst-case discharge numbers from the Deepwater Horizon well that exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, according to the report.

Kenneth Baer, a spokesman for [OMB](#), said the assertion is misleading. Baer noted that NOAA was tasked with analyzing the impact the oil spill could have on the shoreline -- not flow rates. OMB officials had suggested that NOAA revise its report to take into account various cleanup efforts that were already in progress.

"If you are going to analyze what the impact could possibly be, you probably need to account that all these mitigation efforts are under way," Baer said. "These were collegial discussions. They weren't denied or told 'you can't do it.' There wasn't a heavy hand."

The commission also contends that the federal government's estimates during the first month of the crisis that about 5,000 barrels of oil were flowing into the Gulf of Mexico each day "undermined public confidence." Government officials and independent scientists later concluded that about 60,000 barrels of day poured into the gulf.

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Carol Browner, Obama's climate and energy czar, was singled out for saying in a television report on August 4 that 75 percent of the oil was "gone."

Gibbs acknowledged that Browner misspoke, but the White House clarified Browner's remarks during a White House briefing hours after the interview. At that point, White House officials said about 50 percent of the oil was "completely gone."

"Carol probably did hundreds of hours of interviews, and may have misspoke once, which is a very good track record," Gibbs said.

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The NAVY should have been on site hours after the event instead the Coast Gaurd?? ? Never did see the NAVY in the game they actually train for this type disaster history books will tell the truth one day of what happened and why the US government let BP swing in the wind. I fear it dirty but then again I dont trust any of them.

LC | Posted October 8, 2010 | 9:27 AM

Nothing but lies and half-truths come out of this administration.

Mel | Posted October 8, 2010 | 8:57 AM

It all depends on what Ms Gibbs' intention was when she "misspoke." From what I understand, she and her agency were attempting to silence the researchers who were putting out data that conflicted with theirs.

nathan wolfson | Posted October 8, 2010 | 8:52 AM

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