

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON THE GULF OIL SPILL****May 27, 2010
12:50 P.M. EDT**

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, everybody. Before I take your questions, I want to update the American people on the status of the BP oil spill — a catastrophe that is causing tremendous hardship in the Gulf Coast, damaging a precious ecosystem, and one that led to the death of 11 workers who lost their lives in the initial explosion.

Yesterday, the federal government gave BP approval to move forward with a procedure known as a “top kill” to try to stop the leak. This involves plugging the well with densely packed mud to prevent any more oil from escaping. And given the complexity of this procedure and the depth of the leak, this procedure offers no guarantee of success. But we’re exploring any reasonable strategies to try and save the Gulf from a spill that may otherwise last until the relief wells are finished — and that’s a process that could take months.

The American people should know that from the moment this disaster began, the federal government has been in charge of the response effort. As far as I’m concerned, BP is responsible for this horrific disaster, and we will hold them fully accountable on behalf of the United States as well as the people and communities victimized by this tragedy. We will demand that they pay every dime they owe for the damage they’ve done and the painful losses that they’ve caused. And we will continue to take full advantage of the unique technology and expertise they have to help stop this leak.

But make no mistake: BP is operating at our direction. Every key decision and action they take must be approved by us in advance. I’ve designated Admiral Thad Allen — who has nearly four decades of experience responding to such disasters — as the National Incident Commander, and if he orders BP to do something to respond to this disaster, they are legally bound to do it. So, for example, when they said they would drill one relief well to stem this leak we demanded a backup and ordered them to drill two. And they are in the process of drilling two.

As we devise strategies to try and stop this leak, we’re also relying on the brightest minds and most advanced technology in the world. We’re relying on a team of scientists and engineers from our own national laboratories and from many other nations — a team led by our Energy Secretary and Nobel Prize-winning physicist, Stephen Chu. And we’re relying on experts who’ve actually dealt with oil spills from across the globe, though none this challenging.

The federal government is also directing the effort to contain and clean up the damage from the spill — which is now the largest effort of its kind in U.S. history. In this case, the federal, state, and local governments have the resources and expertise to play an even more direct role in the response effort. And I will be discussing this further when I make my second trip to Louisiana tomorrow. But so far we have about 20,000 people in the region who are working around the clock to contain and clean up this oil. We have activated about 1,400 members of the National Guard in four states. We have the Coast Guard on site. We have more than 1,300 vessels assisting in the containment and cleanup efforts. We’ve deployed over 3 million feet of total boom to stop the oil from coming on shore — and today more than 100,000 feet of boom is being surged to Louisiana parishes that are facing the greatest risk from the oil.

So we’ll continue to do whatever is necessary to protect and restore the Gulf Coast. For example, Admiral Allen just announced that we’re moving forward with a section of Governor Jindal’s barrier island proposal that could help stop oil from coming ashore. It will be built in an area that is most at risk and where the work can be most quickly completed.