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Acting Inspector General for Interior Department Questioned on Role in Producing Report that Recommended Gulf Drilling Moratorium

Documents reveal involvement in report that IG's office then investigated

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) yesterday sent a [letter](#) to the Department of the Interior's Acting Inspector General (IG) Mary Kendall to question her about discrepancies between her testimony before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources and documents recently provided to the Committee that suggest she was involved in the process of producing the report that recommended a six-month drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico when she told the Subcommittee she was not.

On June 17, 2010 Kendall appeared before the Subcommittee. She told then Ranking Subcommittee Chairman Doug Lamborn that the IG's office was not currently investigating edits made to the Drilling Moratorium Report and that she had no involvement in the process of producing the report.

Kendall: *"Congressman Lamborn, we have not. I understand right now that the 60-day moratorium is the issue of a lawsuit brought against the Department by industry. It has been the Office of Inspector General's practice for as long as I have been with the office that when a matter is in another forum, such as a Federal District Court, unless there is a compelling need for us to get involved and, in this case, we have not heard from either of the parties—either the Department or the industry—we would not investigate that. I think it would be inappropriate.*

*I mean, I have heard all the things that you have itemized here. **I was not involved in the process of developing that report, and I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment on it.**" [Emphasis added]*

Lamborn: *"And by the way, I didn't want to make any suggestion that you were involved. In fact, it is good that you are not so that you can be a disinterested, objective observer because there needs to be an investigation."*



[Click here to watch video clip](#)

However, documents recently provided to the Committee from the IG's office suggest that Kendall apparently did play a role in the process of developing the report:

- Kendall received a calendar invitation for a May 25, 2010 meeting and conference call, along with Steve Black (counselor to Secretary Salazar), Neal Kemkar (Mr. Black's special assistant), Mary Katharine Ishee (former deputy director of the Minerals Management Service), Kallie Hanley (White House liaison), Wilma Lewis (former Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management), Rhea Suh (Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget) and others. The subject of this calendar invitation is listed as: "Follow up call with NAE Peer Review Panel (30-Day Safety Report attached)." A document titled "Interim Measures Report 100525 nk Final.pdf" was attached to the invitation. The final Drilling Moratorium Report was released on May 27, 2010.
- In an email chain dated May 28, 2010, Kendall wrote to Mr. Black requesting a copy of the letter Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar sent to the President transmitting the Drilling Moratorium Report. The email says:

"We are launching teams next week to respond to the [Secretary's request](#) that we determine whether specific deficiencies in [Minerals Management Service] policies or practices exist that need to be addressed to ensure that operations on the [Outer Continental Shelf] are conducted in a safe manner protective of human life, health, and the environment. **We do not, however, want to duplicate effort that you have already made (your effort has been tremendously impressive, by the way!).**" [Emphasis added]

Mr. Black responded by writing, in part:

"And thanks for your kind words, Mary, and **for your participation in so many of the meetings and interviews leading up to this report.** I have attached the final 30-day report and the transmittal letter that went to the White House yesterday. Please don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions." [Emphasis added]

[Click here to view a PDF of the documents.](#)

“I am troubled that these documents suggest the Acting IG played a role in developing the Drilling Moratorium Report, including participating in meetings with senior Department officials prior to the report’s issuance,” said Chairman Hastings. “This apparent involvement also raises new questions about the Acting IG’s independence and impartiality in conducting the investigation of the Drilling Moratorium Report, whether it was appropriate for her to oversee this investigation in the first place, and whether she should have disclosed her involvement and recused herself from all matters concerning the investigation.”

The Committee has been conducting over a year-long investigation into whether an Obama Administration report that recommended a six-month drilling moratorium was intentionally edited to incorrectly state the views of peer reviewers. [Subpoenas](#) have been issued to both the Interior Department and the IG’s office, with which they have both failed to fully comply.

Although the Obama Administration and others have claimed that this matter has already been investigated by the IG’s office, [emails](#) from the IG’s lead investigators detail how they were not able to obtain all DOI documents that may have been relevant to their investigation or interview White House staff involved in the editing of the report.

“The more information that becomes public, the more it becomes clear that a proper investigation into the Drilling Moratorium Report has never taken place,” continued Hastings. “Officials at the Interior Department and the White House have never had to answer key questions about how the decision to impose a moratorium was made and why the report was edited to impose a drilling moratorium that cost thousands of American jobs and blocked American energy production. This is why the Committee is conducting its investigation and why it’s unacceptable for the Interior Department to continue to withhold valuable information from Congressional oversight and public review.”

In the [letter](#), Chairman Hastings requested complete and unredacted copies of the following documents by June 4, 2012:

1. All documents that were created, sent, or received by Mary Kendall between April 20, 2010 to the present date concerning communications or meetings with David Hayes, Steve Black, Neal Kemkar, Mary Katherine Ishee, Kallie Hanley, Laura Davis, Reah Suh, and Wilma Lewis about the Drilling Moratorium Report;
2. All documents that were created, sent, or received by Mary Kendall concerning her selection to serve on the Outer Continental Shelf Safety Oversight Board;
3. All documents that were created, sent, or received by Mary Kendall concerning drafts of the Outer Continental Shelf Safety Oversight Board’s September 1, 2010 report to Secretary Salazar; and
4. All documents that were created, sent, or received by Mary Kendall concerning her June 17, 2010 appearance before the Committee.

For more information, on the Committee’s oversight investigation, visit <http://naturalresources.house.gov/oversight/moratorium>

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