

US Government Sues All Companies Involved in BP Oil Spill...except one: Halliburton

U.S. sues BP, Transocean, Anadarko

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WASHINGTON — Attorney General Eric Holder announced Wednesday that the United States is filing a lawsuit against BP and its partners in the Deepwater Horizon oil well in the Gulf of Mexico, claiming their negligence led to the massive spill that sent millions of barrels of crude into the Gulf during the spring and summer.

Holder said a months-long investigation by the Justice Department had found that BP, which was the primary operator of the well, its partners in the well, which included Anadarko and the MOEX subsidiary of Mitsui & Co., and Transocean, which BP had hired to drill the well, had failed to secure the well properly, failed to maintain drilling equipment and failed to monitor the well, and that those failures had caused the spill.

Holder also said the massive spill was a violation of the Clean Water Act, and that the defendants will be held liable for fines for each barrel of oil that spilled into the gulf.

Holder did not detail how the defendants had failed to secure the well, maintain the equipment or monitor the well. But a presidential commission investigating the disaster as well as BP's own internal investigation found that the crew aboard the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig misread the results of pressure tests and failed to notice that hydrocarbons were surging into the well until just minutes before a huge cloud of methane enveloped the drilling rig and exploded. Eleven workers were killed in the initial explosion, which set the rig ablaze. It sank 36 hours later, taking a mile of drilling pipe with it.

Investigators also have found that the rig's last line of defense against a massive spill, the blowout preventer, had been altered and that BP engineers were unable to close its valves and seal the well.

One company not named in the lawsuit is Halliburton, the Houston-based oil services firm that poured the concrete that was intended to seal the well. There was no immediate explanation for its exclusion.

Holder noted that the case filed Wednesday was a civil suit and that it does not preclude future criminal charges.

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