

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Interior’s acting inspector general found that government workers tasked with the oversight of Big Oil took gifts from the industry.

Reporting on the investigation, the Associated Press (AP) noted that between 2000 and 2008, “Staffers at an agency that oversees offshore drilling accepted tickets to sports events, lunches and other gifts from oil and gas companies and used government computers to view pornography, according to a new Interior Department report.”

According to the AP, the report “found that staffers in the Louisiana office of the Minerals Management Service violated a number of federal regulations and agency ethics rules.”

“Interior Secretary Ken Salazar called the latest report ‘deeply disturbing’ and said it highlights the need for reforms...,” wrote the AP. I couldn’t agree more.

Here is the full article:



### **Salazar: IG drilling findings 'deeply disturbing'**

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By Matthew Daly

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Staffers at an agency that oversees offshore drilling accepted tickets to sports events, lunches and other gifts from oil and gas companies and used government computers to view pornography, according to a new Interior Department report.

The report Tuesday by the department's acting inspector general found that staffers in the Louisiana office of the Minerals Management Service violated a number of federal regulations and agency ethics rules. The report follows up on a 2007 investigation that revealed what then-Inspector General Earl Devaney called a "culture of ethical failure" and conflicts of interest at the minerals agency.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar called the latest report "deeply disturbing" and said it highlights the need for reforms he has proposed, including a plan to abolish the minerals agency and replace it with three new entities.

The report "is further evidence of the cozy relationship between some elements of MMS and the oil and gas industry," Salazar said Tuesday. "I appreciate and fully support the Inspector General's strong work to root out the bad apples in MMS."

Salazar said several employees cited in the report have resigned, were fired, or referred for prosecution. More may be fired, disciplined or referred for criminal prosecution as warranted, Salazar said.

Salazar stressed that the report by Mary Kendall, Interior's acting inspector general, applied to actions taken between 2000 and 2008. He said he has asked Kendall to expand her investigation to look into agency actions since he took office in January 2009.

The report covers actions well before last month's disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but it adds to the climate of frustration and criticism facing the Obama administration in the oil spill disaster.

Millions of gallons of oil are spilling into the Gulf, endangering wildlife and the livelihood of generations of fishermen.

BP said Tuesday it is briefing federal authorities on the first results of its internal investigation into the accident that started with an oil rig explosion April 20 and has turned into an environmental disaster with millions of gallons of oil pouring into the Gulf of Mexico.

The oil company said it is focusing on the blowout preventer—a massive piece of machinery that sits atop the well head and is supposed to act as a safety device of last resort—as well as the cementing and casing of the well head.

Meanwhile, White House energy adviser Carol Browner said that BP is complying with the government's request to use less of a toxic dispersant in fighting the spill, but alternative dispersants aren't so readily available.

Salazar last week proposed eliminating the Minerals Management Service and replacing it with two bureaus and a revenue collection office. The name Minerals Management Service would no longer exist.

Members of Congress and President Barack Obama have criticized what they call the cozy relationship between regulators and oil companies and have vowed to reform MMS, which both regulates the industry and collects billions in royalties from it.