

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Port Fourchon, Louisiana
May 28, 2010

The President. Everybody, I want you all to meet Charlotte Randolph, who's the parish president in this parish. And what I just heard from Thad Allen was that this parish has been as effective as any in coordinating and working to make sure that they respond quickly.

You've got about 7 miles of beach here where two types of boom have already been laid. This is new boom as well. What you're seeing here, if I'm not mistaken—right, Thad?—is—

Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG. The old boom was picked up yesterday.

The President. The old boom was picked up yesterday, but this will just soak up the oil as it comes up. And if you guys want to get a little bit closer and get dirty, you can see—you might want to stop right around here—you can see these little balls; these are the tar balls that they're talking about.

So, Madam President, these you can actually send out teams to pick up as they wash up onshore.

Lafourche Parish President Charlotte A. Randolph. And it's picked up by the booms.

The President. So either the boom soaks stuff up or manually you can pick up these tar balls as they're coming ashore. But obviously, the concern is, is that until we actually stop the flow, we've got problems. And it may be that there's some additional strategies, Madam President, that you're interested in pursuing.

So the—Thad, you want to just talk a little bit about how the parish, Coast Guard, has been—and the cleanup teams have been working together?

Adm. Allen. Yes, Mr. President. I was here yesterday meeting with the parish president—

The President. Yes, that stick is—

Adm. Allen. You got an oiled stick there.

The unified command center they have here is one of the best examples I've seen in the region where you have Coast Guard, the responsible party, and the local responders both from the parish and the State and the other Federal stakeholders that are there. They sit in a room every day; they work together. They've got everything up on a screen in front of them; they know where the boom is at; they track it. They're using modern technology to do that, and they've got a real sound booming strategy. If oil were to get into the bay over here, which is very, very sensitive, they'd have to have local shrimp boats that are standing by to deploy the boom—a lot of good integration among State and local and Federal here—and the contractors.

The President. Good.

Parish President Randolph. Plus we're concerned about the port being closed by oil.

The President. Right.

Parish President Randolph. The Coast Guard has been very vigilant over that, any oil that has attempted to get into the port, the Coast Guard is on top of. We can't close our port.

The President. Right.

Adm. Allen. The other thing is we have—if a ship comes through and it gets oiled before it hits port, we try to establish a cleaning station so we can manage that so we can keep the commerce going—unless it's a—[*inaudible*]
—situation.

The President. Now, I was here—they were also saying that a day like today is actually ideal for in-situ burning and skimming. It's hot, and it's calm, which means that a lot of boats are out there right now, and they're in a position where they can help prevent it from getting close to shore.

Some of you guys may have noticed when we were walking up, by the way, there were a couple of dolphins right—just about 50 feet out, maybe 100 yards out. So obviously, there's precious wildlife in this area, even though you see a whole bunch of oil rigs in the background. The parish president said she used to come out here and do a lot of fishing, so we want to make sure that she comes back and can fish again.

All right, thank you, everybody.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Source of Tar Balls on Fourchon Beach

Q. Can you be sure these oil tar balls are from the oil spill? Because when I used to swim on the Gulf in Texas, I'd get tar balls in my bathing suit all the time.

Adm. Allen. Some of them are naturally occurring. I think we can say to a high degree of certainty this is from the——

Parish President Randolph. We attribute all of them that we see right now to BP.

Q. Yeah. But you do get some occasionally, right, in good times?

Parish President Randolph. Yes, seepage.

Adm. Commander Allen. There's natural seepage from time to time as well.

The President. At some time—at some point, Jackie [Jackie Calmes, New York Times], we'll want to hear more about those tar balls and your bathing suit. [*Laughter*]

Offshore Oil Royalties

Q. Mr. President, would you support Mary Landrieu's efforts to step up payments of the offshore oil royalties?

The President. You know, we're going to be doing a statement——

Q. Okay.

The President. ——at the next stop.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. on Fourchon Beach. Adm. Allen spoke in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Port Fourchon, LA; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Port Fourchon, LA.

Locations: Port Fourchon, LA.

Names: Allen, Thad W.; Randolph, Charlotte A.

Subjects: Gulf of Mexico : Deepwater Horizon oil spill :: Environmental effects and cleanup efforts; Louisiana : President's visits.

DCPD Number: DCPD201000428.