

OBAMA'S COMMISSION

As we go through another round of hearings on the BP disaster today (at the Energy and Natural Resources Committee this morning, Bernie Sanders asked Ken Salazar whether the risk of a disaster like this was worth the \$.03/gallon decrease on the price of gas in 2030; Salazar didn't really answer), Obama has leaked his intent to appoint a Presidential Committee to investigate the spill.

President Obama plans to create a presidential commission to investigate the BP oil spill, administration officials said Monday.

The commission will be established by an executive order, they said. One official likened the new panel to one ordered by President Jimmy Carter to examine the partial meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in 1979.

Thus far, though, the Administration has only leaked its intent, with no details on the mandate of the Commission.

It will be interesting to see whether this Commission falls into that great tradition of whitewash commissions, or whether it will be a real commission. Ken Salazar said that the work of existing investigations (an IG one, and a Coast Guard one, and a science one, I think) would feed into the Presidential Commission. But there are several other efforts to push an investigation. Barbara Boxer has asked DOJ to investigate whether BP lied on its drilling permit application (in its claim that it had a plan to respond to a disaster). And Lois Capps and Ed Markey have sponsored a bill that would mandate a commissions, with subpoena powers and restrictions on conflicts of interest.

As Atrios says:

Because Bob Kerrey, Tom Keane, and Tom Daschle Need Something To Do?

Yes I'm a bit negative about 'presidential commissions.' I'll be more positive if experts, rather than ex-politicians, get to do the job.