

# BP and the Government Are Underplaying the Difficulty of Stopping the Oil Leak

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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BP and the Government Are Underplaying the Difficulty of Stopping the Oil Leak While BP and the government say that permanently capping the oil well is no problem, they act like they have no idea what they're doing. Indeed, Admiral Thad Allen is now saying "We're concerned about the vital signs of this well": He's also saying that completion of relief well will be delayed until mid-September, at the earliest, and that the government is looking for problematic "material" in the well: What's really going on? Well, initially, if the well had structural integrity, there wouldn't be concern about the "vital signs" of the well, there wouldn't have been delay after delay in completing the relief wells, there wouldn't be never-ending rounds of new tests, there wouldn't have been an attempt to seal it (or perhaps more accurately, patch it) from the top using cement, there wouldn't be an attempt to remove "material" from the well. Indeed, what does "removing material" even mean?

Does that mean removing crumpled casing or drill pipe, or does it mean clearing out caved-in portions of the well and trying to rebuild those portions from scratch? Moreover, one of the world's top experts in oil drilling disasters - Dr. Robert Bea - told me yesterday that the geology underneath the seafloor at the leak site is fractured, and includes very loose salt formations. This geology may make it very hard to kill the well, even using relief wells, and he says that we may never be able to kill it. He also said that there are uncorroborated reports of additional leaks other than the main well, but that BP isn't sharing enough information to be able to assess whether or not that there are additional leaks. (Dr. Bea told me that BP is using a "cloak of silence", and is refusing to even show the government videos of what the seafloor looked like before the April explosion). So instead of simply trying to cap an existing well, it may be more accurate to think of this as trying to build a new well - or at least trying to duck tape the old one - so that it has enough integrity to be permanently stopped.

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