

Two bad ideas

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When it comes to ideas some are good and some are bad. A great example of a really bad, in fact downright awful, idea is related to the Gulf oil spill. If you think the spill by BP in the Gulf is horrendous, I don't know what word you would use to describe what Royal Dutch Shell wants to do off the north shore of Alaska.

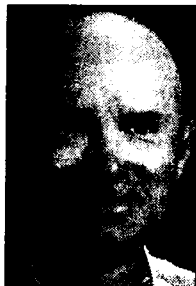
According to USA Today writer Nick Jans, a resident of Alaska for 20 years, Shell wants to drill a deep water well in "perhaps the most potentially catastrophic offshore drilling environment on earth."

Like BP, Shell has not been required to produce an adequate contingency plan in the event of a blowout. The geniuses at the Mineral Management Service figured "... such events were deemed so unlikely that they didn't warrant analysis." That philosophy is really working well in the Gulf, isn't it?

How bad could things get in Alaska in the event of a spill? Imagine adding these logistics to a Gulf-style spill: "Shell would be drilling as many as 140 miles offshore in a remote, often hostile environment. Even summer weather can mean 20-foot seas and gale-force winds. Fog may settle in for weeks, and ice conditions can change overnight. There are no deep-water ports nearby; and the closest full-size run-

way is more than 100 miles away. In the event of a major spill, mountains of emergency gear and personnel would travel huge distances over narrow logistical corridors (arctic weather permitting), and be met by a shortage of everything from lodging to boats capable of pulling oil containment booms. There is no proven technology for containing, let alone cleaning up, a blowout or catastrophic spill in shifting ice. And, the nearest Coast Guard station is more than a thousand miles away." Gee, given these conditions the idea to "drill, baby, drill" is just dandy, don't you think? The only thing saving Alaska right now is a "big government" moratorium on new offshore drilling.

Onward to the topic of money and wonderful ideas on how to spend it. One such idea has been for the United States to lay out \$26 billion so far to train the Afghanistan army (with \$1 billion added to that total each month). President Obama and President Bush before him thought this was a really good idea. Good? You be the judge.



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Reporting in Time Magazine, here's how U.S. and NATO trainers see the effort going so far. "It is a nearly impossible mission. Nine out of 10 Afghan enlisted recruits can't read ... The officers' corps is fractured by (tribal) rivalries ... Commanders routinely steal their enlisted men's salaries. Soldiers shake down civilians at road checkpoints and sell off their own American-supplied boots, blankets

and guns at the bazaar — sometimes to the Taliban. Recruits tend to go AWOL after their first leave, while one-quarter of those who stay in service are blitzed on hashish or heroin."

Excuse me if I disagree with our two most recent presidents, but it seems like this country could find a use for \$26 billion that might perhaps yield a better return on the investment.

The world has gone bonkers and I can prove it! According to the Cleveland Leader (among others), British rock legend Ozzy Osbourne has decided to donate his body to science after his death. He believes that he is a medical miracle. The star who suffered from the worst

cases of alcohol and drug addiction said that "he is convinced that doctors will be benefited if they dissect and study his body."

Ozzy thinks it is miraculous that he has survived to the age of 61 in spite of drinking heavily for 40 years now. He revealed that he would polish up 4 bottles of cognac at a time, chain-smoke cigars, and admitted to taking 42 prescribed drugs at a time. He was also hospitalized for a nearly fatal bike accident in 2003.

Several news sources note that Osbourne has reportedly spent more than a million pounds on doctors to keep him alive. He will have to be under strong medication for the rest of his life to combat the involuntary shudders. The singer is also showing signs of hearing loss and usually asks his family members to repeat whatever they have said.

Finding out how Ozzy has survived actually might yield some benefits. There just has to be a medical explanation that could help humankind. (Warning! Obscure heavymetal references ahead!) I may be paranoid, but this, I hope, isn't just a ride on Ozzy's crazy train.

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