

As far from the gaze of the mainstream press as the leaking wellhead is below the sea are the opinions of those who are convinced that all is not what it seems in the Gulf of Mexico and that something far more sinister than a mere environmental catastrophe is taking place.

Even the timing of the explosion which led to the oil spill has proved controversial. The Deepwater Horizon rig was crippled on April 20, which is Hitler's birthday, and the day after Israel's 2010 independence celebrations. Two days later the rig sank: April 22 also happened to be 'Earth Day'.

It could be that the Deepwater Horizon disaster ends up spawning as many conspiracy theories as the 9/11 attacks. Here we present a selection of outlandish explanations as to who caused the oil spill and why.

Eco terroristsThe most widely circulated theory claims that the explosion was caused by eco-warriors intent on bringing down BP, the oil industry and anyone who supports offshore drilling.

Rush Limbaugh is one high-profile commentator who subscribes to the idea. Soon after the explosion he mused: "What better way to head off more oil drilling, nuclear plants, than by blowing up a rig?"

Obama's decision to send a SWAT team to the scene has also raised eyebrows. As one blogger wondered: "Why on earth would you deploy SWAT teams in response to an oil spill unless it was an act of terrorism, an act of war, or if they were sent to carry out some sort of covert operation?"

North KoreaCould Kim Jong-il be behind the disaster? According to one theory the rig was torpedoed by a submarine crewed by North Korean sailors on a suicide mission. Their vessel was hidden in a cargo ship that left Cuba a day before the explosion *en route* to Venezuela. It then apparently veered from its course and headed towards the rig. Once in the vicinity it released the mini-submarine, which carried the torpedoes used in the attack. Two days later the submarine crew blew the craft up directly underneath the rig.

The motive, it is claimed, was to damage the South Korean economy as the drilling contractor, Transocean, is part of South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries. There is an added benefit of hurting the US.

But one poster on the conspiracy theory website Godlike Productions thinks it may be another superpower. Truthinnumbers blames "Russian subs off the coast of Cuba, this wasn't terrorism. This was Russia letting us know they're out there and they're pissed at the rockets we just put in space that can take them out with a mouse click."

The US governmentJust as with the 9/11 attacks some people believe that the US government is behind it all. Many subscribers to this view believe that the catastrophe will give the government the excuse to "move in and take control". What they will take control of is not explained in the posts on conspiracy websites.

The blogger Jerseynut declares: "It was a politically-driven conspiracy by the Obama administration to help push it's [sic] energy policies and punish conservative-leaning states." And he claims that White House chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel was the man overseeing the operation.

Soon after the rig collapsed, Michael Brown, who oversaw the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) relief effort after Hurricane Katrina, accused President Barack Obama of welcoming the spill. "This is exactly what they want, because now he can pander to the environmentalists and say, 'I'm gonna shut it down because it's too dangerous'," said Brown. "This president has never supported Big Oil, he's never supported offshore drilling and now he has an excuse to shut it back down."

Big businessUnsurprisingly there are plenty of conspiracy theorists who believe that 'big business' was somehow involved and will stand to benefit from the disaster.

There are whispers that those in "the know" were busy selling BP shares in the run-up towards the disaster. Even BP chief exec Tony Hayward offloaded some of his holding.

Goldman Sachs is a popular target. Blacklisted News says: "We are living in a full-blown international corporate command and control system where even the most basic rescue efforts are in the hands of proven pirates. It also has become clear that the pirate flotilla is owned by Goldman Sachs... and the president of the United States is the captain."

Meanwhile the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that Halliburton, the contractor in charge of cementing the rig's well, purchased an oil spill prevention firm which is now working on the aftermath of the disaster.

GodMore than one Bible analyst believes that the explosion was actually God's revenge on America for failing to support Israel at the United Nations. In a YouTube video posted by Carl Gallups of the quaintly-named Hickory Hammock Baptist Church in Milton, Florida he explains: "April the 19th, Israel celebrates its independence in 2010. On April the 19th, Fox News reports that the US will no longer automatically support Israel in the United Nations. The next day, on April the 20th, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded. Coincidence? Or the hand and judgment of God?"

They quote the book of Genesis, in which God tells Abraham: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse..."

Biological warfareIt might sound fanciful but there are concerns that the clean-up operation is in fact just a front for the launch of germ warfare aimed at "specific targeted populations". This theory has a following among believers in chemtrails.

Anonymous Coward, posting on Godlike Production website explains that the dispersant being used on the spill is a toxic chemical. The theory goes that the tiny droplets of oil created by the

dispersant will be stirred up by hurricanes and carried onto dry land where they will be breathed in by humans.

"Once a hurricane picks up this bio-warfare agent and disperses it hundreds of miles in every direction there will be mass hysteria - exactly what is needed to break the back of this country and deliver it into the hands of those perpetrating the attack," he explains.

The end of the worldMore worrying still is the idea that the disaster could lead to a mass extinction event that wipes out most life on earth. Terrence Aym, writing on the website Helium, states that a huge methane bubble may lie below the oilfields in the Gulf of Mexico and it could now rise to the surface after being dislodged by the outpouring of oil. He says something similar happened 251 million years ago, and that caused massive explosions, poisoned the atmosphere and destroyed more than 96 percent of the world's life.

He warns: "BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling operation may have triggered an irreversible, cascading geological Apocalypse that will culminate with the first mass extinction of life on Earth in many millions of years."

Martial law in AmericaFinally, the biggest concern of the conspiracy theorists is that the government will use the disaster to restrict the freedom of the people. They also fear that it could lead to martial law and the evacuation of most of the southern states of the USA.