

As Congress prepares to debate expansion of drilling in taxpayer-owned coastal waters, the Interior Department agency that collects oil and gas royalties has been caught up in a wide-ranging ethics scandal — including allegations of financial self-dealing, accepting gifts from energy companies, cocaine use and sexual misconduct.

In three reports delivered to Congress on Wednesday, the department's inspector general, Earl E. Devaney, found wrongdoing by a dozen current and former employees of the Minerals Management Service, which collects about \$10 billion in royalties annually and is one of the government's largest sources of revenue other than taxes.

"A culture of ethical failure" besets the agency, Mr. Devaney wrote in a cover memo.

The reports portray a dysfunctional organization that has been riddled with conflicts of interest, unprofessional behavior and a free-for-all atmosphere for much of the Bush administration's watch.

TVNL Comment: We, along with all the other truth organizations, have been saying this and reporting the evidence for almost 8 years!

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