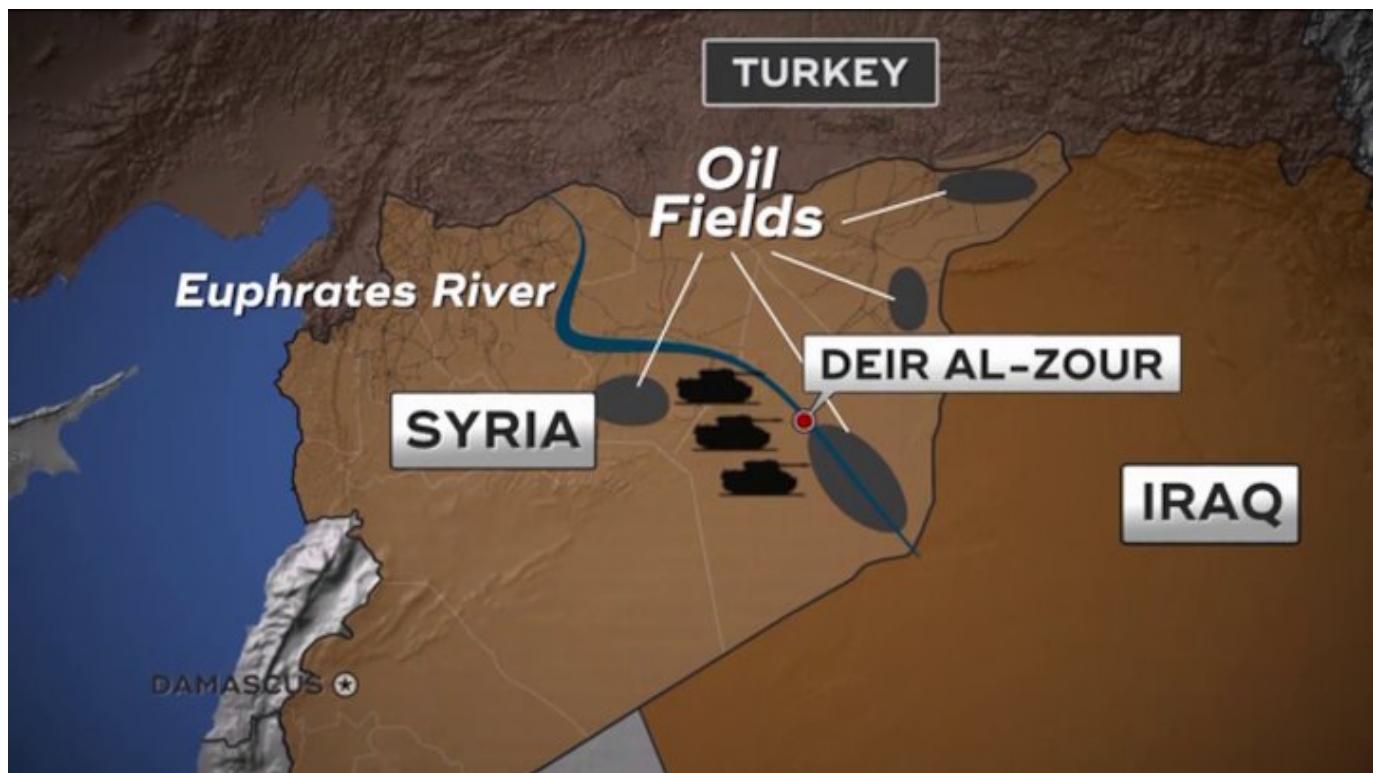


Monopoly profits fuel U.S. maneuvers in Southwest Asia

written by Bill Dores

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Syrian oil fields illegally occupied by U.S. troops.

- Part 1: [Syria, Yemen, Palestine: Trump talks peace, escalates war](#)

Trump called an Oct. 27 press conference to brag about the alleged assassination of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his family by U.S. Special Operations troops. Baghdadi was said to be hiding in Hayat Tahrir Al Shams (HTS)-controlled Idlib, Syria. He has been reported killed at least five times in recent years.

Trump announced the assassination one year and nine days before the 2020 election. President Barack Obama announced the extrajudicial execution of Osama Bin Laden by U.S. Navy SEALS on May 2, 2011, some 18 months before the 2012 election.

In an [Oct. 30 interview](#), Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had this to say about Baghdadi: “It is well known that he was in American prisons in Iraq, and that they let him out in order to play this role. So, he is someone who could be replaced at any moment.

“Was he really killed? Was he killed but through a different method, in a very ordinary way? Was he kidnapped? Was he hidden? Or was he removed and given a facelift? God only knows. American politics are no different from Hollywood. They rely on the imagination. Not even science fiction, just mere imagination. So, you can take American politics and see them in Hollywood or else you can bring Hollywood and see them through American politics.

“I believe the whole thing regarding this operation is a trick. Baghdadi will be recreated under a different name, a different individual, or ISIS in its entirety might be reproduced as needed under a different name but with the same thought and the same purpose. The director of the whole is the same, the Americans.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov described Baghdadi as a “brainchild of the United States. ... Therefore, to a certain extent, the Americans eliminated the one they gave birth to, if it actually happened,” he said.

The ISIS deception

The “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” is the product of a U.S.-Saudi project to disrupt anti-U.S. resistance with sectarian violence. Originally called “Al-Qaida in Iraq,” it was first funded by the Saudi General Intelligence Directorate. After the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, AQI launched a bombing campaign against Shia Muslim mosques and holy places across the country.

Saudi Arabia, a virtual U.S. colony, has long funded covert operations on Washington’s behalf. In the 1980s, at Ronald Reagan’s request, the Saudi Kingdom paid for the CIA’s contra wars in Afghanistan and Nicaragua.

ISIS used Saudi cash to recruit thousands of former Iraqi soldiers and mercenaries from 54 countries. Most came through Turkey. With these forces, ISIS seized land in northern Iraq and eastern Syria, where it found a new source of revenue in captured oil fields.

Oil money allowed ISIS to set up its own “caliphate” and break with al-Qaida. Much of the oil was smuggled out through Turkey to the Mediterranean and sold secretly to Israel.

The brunt of the battle against ISIS, al-Qaida and their offshoots has been borne by the Syrian Army and defense forces, Lebanese Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units and the Russian Armed Forces. The U.S., however, used “fighting ISIS” as a pretext to bomb, invade and occupy much of northern and eastern Syria, seizing the country’s oil and gas fields. Washington’s proxy war against Syria became an open military invasion.

In April 2017, the Trump regime ordered the first direct U.S. airstrikes on Syrian government installations. In January 2018, the White House announced an open-ended U.S. military occupation of northern Syria. On Feb. 7, 2018, U.S. planes and

artillery attacked Syrian forces near oil fields in Deir Ezzor province, murdering 55 soldiers.

Thieves fall out

Washington's long war in Southwest Asia ("the Middle East") is a war of plunder. As one would expect in such a war, there are conflicts and divisions among the plunderers, from the mercenary forces on the ground to their state sponsors to the corporate war profiteers on Wall Street and their servants in Washington.

Trump's phony withdrawal from Syria provoked apparent outrage in Congress, from Democrats and Republicans alike. Some of it, like the withdrawal itself, was a charade. Some reflected a genuine rift over U.S. relations with Turkey.

There was no fury on Capitol Hill when Trump announced that the U.S. Army had returned to seize Syria's oilfields. But the House did pass a nonbinding resolution threatening sanctions against Turkey. It also voted for the first time to condemn the Armenian genocide, carried out by the Turkish Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923.

The White House and State Department oppose sanctions on Turkey. So does Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell.

Why the U.S.-Turkey crisis?

The political fig leaf for the U.S. occupation of northern Syria was the "Syrian Democratic Forces" (SDF), an alliance of Kurdish nationalist and former Free Syrian Army (FSA) militias armed and protected by the U.S. military. The Pentagon spent at least \$500 million arming and training SDF troops.

The U.S.-SDF alliance, however, complicated U.S. relations with NATO Turkey. The Turkish state, with U.S. support, has long been at war with the Kurdistan Workers

Party (PKK), which is fighting for Kurdish autonomy in southeast Turkey. The strongest force in the SDF is the People's Protection Units (YPG), led by the Democratic Union Party, the PKK's Syrian affiliate.

Turkey has the second-largest land army in NATO and is the U.S. war industry's fourth-largest overseas customer. It hosts a nuclear-armed U.S. Air Force wing at Incirlik Air Base. It is the main route by which Western-backed forces bring arms and fighters into Syria and smuggle oil out.

If Trump and U.S. oil companies seriously want to "develop" and steal Syria's oil, they would need to bring it out via Turkey. More important to Trump's oil industry bosses, the U.S. needs Turkey's cooperation to keep Iran's oil and gas off the world market.

But Washington's sanctions and wars on Turkey's neighbors — Iran, Iraq, Russia, Syria — have taken a toll on the country's economy. "Turkey Faces Hike in Oil Prices as U.S. Thwarts Iran Oil Sales," Al-Jazeera reported on April 24. "Initially Defiant, Turkey Complies with U.S. Sanctions on Iranian Oil," Oilprice.com reported on May 21.

The sanctions have forced Turkey to buy oil from U.S.-controlled Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. But the situation has also driven Ankara to seek closer economic ties to Russia.

Turkey imports 50 percent of its gas from Russia. It is a potential pathway for Russian gas to reach southern Europe, bypassing U.S.-controlled Ukraine. Several joint Russian-Turkish pipelines are being built across the country. Bilateral trade between Russia and Turkey is expected to reach \$110 billion this year, over five times that between Turkey and the U.S.

In June, Turkey outraged the U.S. military by buying Russian S400 anti-aircraft

missiles instead of Patriot missiles made by Raytheon. Russia had agreed to allow greater technology transfer. At the Pentagon's demand, the White House kicked Turkey out of the F35 Joint Strike Fighter program. That cost Lockheed Martin \$500 million.

Republican Sen. Lindsay Graham is now one of the loudest advocates of U.S. sanctions on Turkey. But in August, he represented the White House in negotiations with Turkish officials. In that role, he expressed sympathy for Turkish action against "your YPG Kurdish problem."

Graham also offered Ankara a "free-trade deal" if it broke its missile contract with Russia. We know this because one "Turkish official" Graham spoke with was Russian prankster Alexei Stolyarov, posing as Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar.

Looting Palestine's gas

There's a much bigger prize at stake than Syria's 2.5 billion barrels of oil: control of Europe's energy market. To recapture it, U.S. firms seek to grab newfound gas reserves beneath the Eastern Mediterranean. At least 125 trillion cubic feet of gas are believed to lie there.

Some 20 percent of that is known to be below the waters of Israeli-occupied Palestine. Much of the rest lies in a "joint-exploration zone" between Cyprus and Palestine and off the coasts of Lebanon, Syria and Egypt.

In March, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo presided over an "energy summit" in Jerusalem between Cyprus, Greece and Israel. The meeting approved plans for a \$7-billion pipeline to bring stolen Palestinian gas to Europe via Cyprus, Greece and Italy.

Noble Energy, a Texas-based company with links to the Trump regime, is the lead investor in the project. ExxonMobil, which just found a huge gas field off Cyprus, is

also interested. Noble already sells stolen Palestinian gas to Jordan.

Cyprus, however, is partitioned between the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish-backed Republic of Northern Cyprus. Turkey opposes any energy projects there that don't include Northern Cyprus. It also does not recognize the 200-mile offshore territorial limit that Cyprus claims under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Turkey, which never signed the convention, is exploring for gas in waters that Cyprus claims. In August, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak announced Russia was prepared to collaborate with Turkey on oil and gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In April, the U.S. lifted an embargo on arms sales to Cyprus. In October, Pompeo traveled to Athens to sign a U.S.-Greece defense pact. On Oct. 8, he warned Turkey to stop drilling off Cyprus. On Oct. 9, from Rome, he announced the sale of 90 F35s to Italy.

A bill before Congress, the "Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act," supports a Greek-Cyprus-Israel military alliance to counter "Russia's malign influence in the Eastern Mediterranean."

Many in Washington seem to have written off the U.S.-Turkey relationship. The Trump regime, however, appears to be using "good cop, bad cop" tactics to try and pull Turkey away from Russia.

"We need Turkey back in the fold," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Nov. 13. Raytheon, Esper's former employer, provides electronics for the F35 fighter.

Monopoly profits depend on restricting supply

The Saudi ARAMCO auction and Eastern Mediterranean gas discoveries may conjure

dreams of huge profits for bankers and investors. But there's a rub: The contradictions of the capitalist profit system itself.

The world energy market is reeling from oversupply. In the past two months Iran announced big new oil and gas discoveries. Iran leads the world in gas-powered vehicles. "A surge of oil is coming, whether the world needs it or not," wrote the New York Times on Nov. 3, citing new production in Brazil, Guyana, Canada and Norway.

Meanwhile, new technologies, pioneered by oil-importing countries, threaten the future of fossil fuels. Looming over all this is the specter of a capitalist economic downturn.

Trump and his handlers know there is little chance that U.S. oil companies will invest in eastern Syria. U.S. troops are there to stop Syria from using its own oil and to block the long-planned Friendship Pipeline from bringing Iranian gas to the Mediterranean.

The U.S. wars against Iraq and Libya, combined with sanctions on Iran and Venezuela, devastated and impoverished those oil-rich countries. But they rescued the energy industry from a crisis of oversupply that followed the fall of the USSR. They created a bubble that drove prices through the roof and brought oil companies years of record profits.



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That bubble spurred trillions of dollars of new investment. Much of that was in the fracking industry, which is poisoning land, water and air across North America. That industry has a powerful voice in the Trump regime.

The bubble collapsed five years ago, putting huge investments in peril. The profitability of new energy projects depends upon limiting global supply.

The Obama-Kerry White House tried to take advantage of the bubble's collapse to hurt the economies of Ecuador, Iran, Russia and Venezuela. It ordered Saudi Arabia to raise production and drive prices down further. The Trump campaign was in large part a revolt of the energy industry against that strategy.

No one in the White House, Congress or the Pentagon can admit going to war to restrict the energy supply and drive up prices and profits. But that is what monopoly

capitalism is about. That is the hidden motive driving Washington's brutal wars and sanctions against independent oil-producing countries around the world.

Corporate America's need for endless war goes far beyond the military-industrial complex, critical as that has become. In a world where the productivity of labor is surging by leaps and bounds, only war and destruction can maintain the U.S. ruling class's obsolescent position in the global economy. Ultimately, capitalism needs war because war destroys — and the value of both capital and commodities depends upon their scarcity.

