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Iraqi Study Group

Anarcho

December 12, 2006

That the invasion of Iraq was not called “**Operation Iraqi Liberty**” will do down in history as a missed opportunity for two administrations which seem intend on ensuring the redundancy of satire. For those with any sort of grasp on reality, the large reserves of oil under that country was always a key issue for the Bush Junta (that, and the dilapidated nature of Saddam’s war machine and lack of WMD). The desire for a US client state in the heart of the Middle Eastern oil fields has long been a goal of US/UK imperialism.

The recent Iraqi Study Group report makes this extremely clear. As it says, “*Iraq is vital to regional and even global stability, and is critical to U.S. interests. It runs along the sectarian fault lines of Shia and Sunni Islam, and of Kurdish and Arab populations. It has the world’s second-largest known oil reserves. It is now a base of operations for international terrorism, including al Qaeda.*” That the Bush Junta made the last sentence become true by its invasion is also a truism.

On the details of what to do next, the report’s specific recommendation section is also illuminating. Recommendation 62 states that the “*U.S. military should work with the Iraqi military and with private security forces to protect oil infrastructure*

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Retrieved on 28th October 2021 from www.anarkismo.net

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and contractors. Protective measures could include a program to improve pipeline security by paying local tribes solely on the basis of throughput (rather than fixed amounts)." In addition, *"in conjunction with the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. government should press Iraq to continue reducing subsidies in the energy sector, instead of providing grant assistance. Until Iraqis pay market prices for oil products, drastic fuel shortages will remain."*

Wonderful — after turning Iraq into a slaughter house, the least the occupiers could do is let the population have some cheap oil, but no. Subsidies harm profits and they have to go. Which is the key to recommendation 63: *"The United States should encourage investment in Iraq's oil sector by the international community and by international energy companies ... [and] should assist Iraqi leaders to reorganize the national oil industry as a commercial enterprise, in order to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability."* In other words, open up Iraq's oil to western corporations. Let them make the profits, not the population who has paid the ultimate price. Hence the need, also stated in recommendation 63, for the US to *"provide technical assistance to the Iraqi government to prepare a draft oil law."*

Which is, of course, a long-term stated aim of the invasion. The US State Department's Oil and Energy Working Group, meeting between December 2002 and April 2003, also said that Iraq "should be opened to international oil companies as quickly as possible after the war." The right-wing Heritage Foundation think-tank also released a report in March 2003 calling for the full privatisation of Iraq's oil sector. Unsurprisingly, a representative of the foundation was a member of the Iraq Study Group while another assisted in its work.

Given this advocacy for securing foreign companies' long-term access to Iraqi oil fields, it is unsurprising that the report did not advocate immediate withdrawal. No, the report aims to continue the occupation while, at the same time, presenting

the image of trying to end it. It is extremely doubtful that any genuinely popular Iraqi regime will support the commercialisation and opening up of Iraqi oil to foreign firms and so the need for occupation for several more years while, at the same time, as appearing to seek a withdrawal.

Which raises the question, how long will we tolerate spilling blood for oil?