

The US in Iraq

On March 20, 2003, the US military launched a massive war on Iraq, killing and wounding thousands of Iraqis. President Bush claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and had aided Al Qaeda, the group cited in killing nearly 3,000 people in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Three years later, investigators have found no WMD in Iraq and no link to Al Qaeda. An estimated 30,000-50,000 Iraqis have been killed and over 100,000 wounded, over 2,300 US soldiers have been killed, and the war continues. Growing numbers of Americans are asking for the truth.

Why is the US in Iraq?

The Bush Administration wants to control Middle Eastern oil (65% of the world's known oil reserves) and the world's energy. Iraq's oil resources are the second largest known in the world after Saudi Arabia. Gaining control of Iraq is key to this plan. However, it has caused great resentment throughout the Middle East and in many other countries. Here is a brief history.

1920:

Britain gained control of Iraq and selected and financed Emir Faisal to be King under British rule. The people revolted but the British crushed their rebellion. Britain took control of Iraqi oil operations.

1921-1958:

During the 1920's, the US government demanded a share of Iraqi oil for US oil companies and achieved this by 1928. Foreign oil firms took large amounts of oil wealth out of Iraq and profited, while most Iraqis suffered economic hardship. In the 1950's, the US came to dominate Iraq (and other nations in the area) by supplying arms and money to the Faisal ruling family, buying their compliance. Popular protests spurred the Free Officers Movement to overthrow the Faisal family regime in 1958. The new government of General Qasim promised land reform, civil rights, and support for Iraqi-owned industry. US oil firms worried about their oil holdings.

1959:

The Iraq Baath Party, a dictatorial group, launched a campaign against the new government. The CIA recruited a young Baathist, Saddam Hussein, to kill Qasim, but he failed.

1963:

Another CIA-directed assassination team including Hussein killed Qasim, and the Baath Party and their allies in the Army took power. A CIA-Baath Party repression killed or wounded over 10,000 people. The Baathists were forced out of the government, but returned in a coup in 1968. Despite the political turmoil and domestic economic stagnation, US oil interests remained secure.

1972-73:

Iraq moved to improve its economy by nationalizing its oil industry so it could retain a larger share of the country's oil wealth. US and other foreign oil companies strongly opposed nationalization. But they controlled the "downstream" oil supply chain so they continued to profit.

1979:

Saddam Hussein became the president of Iraq and solidified a dictatorial, right wing nationalist government whose huge secret police carried out brutal repression against the Iraqi people.

1980:

Hussein attacked Iran, reportedly over a border dispute, and a terrible war raged for eight years, killing hundreds of thousands of people and destroying both countries' economies. US oil companies were concerned. President Carter stated the US will use force to protect the free flow of Middle Eastern oil.

1984-88:

US President Reagan supported Hussein in this war, seeing Iran as the larger threat to US oil interests, and provided chemical and biological weapons to Iraq to be used on Iran. (*Counterpunch*, 10/10/02) Iraq won the war in 1988, hundreds of thousands were killed, and both nations' oil fields were greatly harmed.

1990-91:

Iraq accused Kuwait of "slant-drilling" into Iraqi oil and invaded US-friendly Kuwait. The US worried that Iraq would seize Kuwaiti oil and possibly Saudi Arabian oil (35% of world's known oil reserves), threatening US oil operations and control of the world's energy. Hussein was now seen as the major threat to US oil interests, and the US launched Desert Storm to secure this oil. 100,000 Iraqis died.

1991-2002:

When the war ended, the US got the UN to apply economic sanctions against Iraq to continue weakening Hussein and the US launched unreported military attacks against Iraq. The US claimed Iraq possessed "weapons of mass destruction" and was a threat to its neighbors and the US. These sanctions destroyed Iraq's water, food, electric, medical and WMD systems, and one million people died, reported the UN.

1997-98:

In 1997, Iraq negotiated deals with French, Russian and Chinese oil companies to develop Iraqi oil. US oil companies were opposed. Their allies in the Project for The New American Century sent a letter to President Clinton demanding "the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power" in order to "protect our vital interests in the Gulf." Publicly, they warned of WMD, but had no proof they existed. (Five signers, including Donald Rumsfeld and John Bolton, now hold high posts in the Bush government.)

2000-01:

President Bush and Vice President Cheney took office in 2001. Both ran oil industry companies. (Cheney was the CEO of Halliburton where he has \$8 million in stock options and still receives \$1 million a year.) In March 2001, two years *before* the invasion of Iraq, Cheney's Task Force on Energy studied geological maps of Iraq to target the takeover of Iraqi oil fields. Bush warned of Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction" but still had no evidence. (By 2005, Halliburton had received \$10 billion in Iraq contracts from our taxes.)

2002:

On July 23, 2002, eight months *before* the US war against Iraq, a British official reported to his superiors on his recent meeting in the US with Bush officials that "Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action," and that "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy." This "Downing Street Memo" was reported in the *Sunday Times* of London on 5/1/05, but not in the US media.

2003-06:

On February 14, 2003, over one month *before* the US attacked Iraq, Dr. Hans Blix, head of the UN inspection team, reported to the US Security Council that his team had *not* found any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Many countries protested the planned war, and over 15 million people marched against the war between February 15 and March 20 in hundreds of cities in the US and world-wide. On March 20, 2003, Bush attacked Iraq in a savage assault that killed and wounded thousands of innocent Iraqis. US troops secured Iraqi oil fields and the Oil Ministry. On April 9, 2003 the Hussein regime collapsed and US troops seized Baghdad. On April 21, the US took control of Iraq, and on May 1, 2003 Bush declared the war over. Since 2003, a guerrilla war has raged against the US occupation. The US and Iraqi people want peace and justice. Bush has spent \$225 billion (our taxes), and deceived us for oil profits and power.

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