

US taking over from IS & Al-Nusra Front by seizing Syrian oil at behest of 'money lobbies' – Assad

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Powerful lobbies are behind the US rush for Syria's natural resources, and the Americans are carrying on where Islamist groups left off by "stealing and selling" them, President Bashar Assad has said.

In October, Donald Trump made headlines by ordering all US troops out of Syria, leaving the devastated country to anyone who wants *"to come in and fight."* But weeks later, he backtracked on the decision, bluntly stating that troops would remain to *"protect"* Syrian oil fields east of the Euphrates.

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In a comprehensive interview with China's Phoenix, Assad commented on Trump's swift transition from the mild non-interventionism that he championed before the troop withdrawal, to the outright oil-driven expansionism that resembled the 2003 Iraq War.

'Lobbies in charge of US policies'

It's not the government in the classical sense that drives US endeavors in Syria but *"the money lobbies, whether in the form of oil, weapons, banks, or others,"* Assad [explained](#).

American lobbies are *"in charge of the policies"* of the country, which *"is not governed by principles, but rather by the interests of those companies,"* he said.

If they have an interest in occupying the oil wells, stealing and selling them one way or another, then this state and this regime will act in favor of these companies, regardless of international law and regardless of American law.

Those in the White House and on Capitol Hill aren't shy about breaching the US' own laws for the sake of these corporations "because if they don't make them happy, the president might be impeached," Assad said, referring to the previous historical experience of his country.

Therefore, it doesn't matter for Syria who is in charge in the White House since the US president's hands are cuffed by corporate, not state, interests.

There're 'thousands,' not hundreds, of US troops on Syrian soil

The Pentagon has retained around 800 troops to "guard" Syrian oil facilities, along with Kurdish-led forces, but the figure has artificially been decreased and did not include "individuals fighting with the American army," Assad believes.

The American regime relies significantly in its wars on private firms like Blackwater in Iraq and others. So, even if they had a few hundred American soldiers in Syria, they still also have thousands – maybe tens of thousands – of civilians working for such companies and fighting in Syria.

Regardless of how many US troops are present in Syria, they seem to be setting up for a long-haul deployment. Previously, it was reported that they were building two new military bases in Deir ez-Zor, the province where the majority of Syrian oil assets are concentrated.

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Such compounds are situated near the border with Turkey, and Syria's northern neighbor plays a role in the affair, Assad suggested.

Crude smuggled from Syria is sold to Turkey

The oil trade has always been a mainstay of the Syrian economy, although their crude reserves pale in comparison to those of the Gulf monarchies. In 2018, Syria had an estimated 2.5 billion barrels of oil reserves, compared with Saudi Arabia's 297 billion, Iran's 155 billion, and Iraq's 147 billion barrels, [according](#) to OPEC.

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Still, they were of great utility to anyone controlling them. Syrian oil wells were used by Jabhat Al-Nusra and Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS), Assad noted. As IS was largely defeated in most parts of Syria, the US is obviously filling the blank space left by the retreating terrorists that capitalized on selling Syrian crude.

Before the Americans, in the early days Jabhat Al-Nusra used these wells; after Daesh came and drove out Al-Nusra – or rather when it merged with Al-Nusra and they all became Daesh – it also stole and sold oil. Where? It used to sell it through Turkey. Now America is the one stealing oil and selling it to Turkey.

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