
The Oil Wars

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Venezuelan authorities and recognized regional analysts maintain that the true objectives of the Empire's "*war on drugs*," which is directing its full force toward the South American nation, are in fact its vast oil reserves.

But what supports this claim? It is enough to review the archives of this young century. Let us begin with the year 2003, when, under the false pretext that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, the United States began bombing that country, with disastrous results that continue to this day.

After U.S. forces took control of the Arab nation, the opening of its immense oil reserves to Western companies such as ExxonMobil, BP, and Shell began—companies that, prior to the U.S. intervention, had no access to the hydrocarbons of that territory.

The price for oil magnates to lay their hands on that nation was thousands of fatalities, ruined infrastructure, a transitional government that plundered the country, and countless promises of freedom and prosperity that never materialized.

When, in 2011, the occupying forces announced their withdrawal, the same did not happen with the oil companies. Far from leaving, they consolidated their positions with multimillion-dollar contracts. Recall how in November of that year, Royal Dutch Shell signed a \$17 billion contract related to Iraqi gas.

Also around that time, U.S.-based energy company Emerson auctioned a contract offer to operate a gigantic oil field in Iraq.

Following the U.S. intervention, hydrocarbon production in Iraq skyrocketed, without this translating into jobs, schools, or roads for its people, devastated by war. Major media monopolies blamed this on the corruption of the governments that succeeded the transitional council, overlooking the evident plunder by Western transnational corporations.

And as if the coincidence of false pretexts, sovereignty over energy resources, and abundant oil reserves were not enough—as is the case with Venezuela—prior to the intervention, that country was subjected to various sanctions that prevented the full economic development of its industry.

An investigation published by Al-Jazeera reveals a report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, published in 2011, which stated that “*up to 90 percent of Iraqi territory remained unexplored, after suffering decades of economic sanctions and U.S.-led wars*.”

Just as with Iraq, Venezuela has faced a long history of sanctions from the United States. To mention only a few applied in the last 10 years, these include the freezing of assets and entry bans to the U.S. for Venezuelan officials, as well as restrictions on access to international markets.

In this sense, we cannot overlook the blocking of PDVSA's assets, the prohibition of transactions, the limitation of exports, and sanctions on foreign companies that facilitate operations with Venezuela.

U.S. politicians are entirely unoriginal: regardless of party, they apply the same script for the appropriation of oil resources, the same one used in Libya and Syria just a few years ago.

And although some sources show that oil production in the United States is reaching record numbers, they also report that it requires heavier crude, such as Venezuela's, to obtain high-quality derivatives.

For these reasons, the denunciation by various experts and Venezuelan authorities is more than justified. They remain in the streets, preparing to face the worst scenarios, and they do so with broad popular support. Herein lies a fundamental factor to overcome this new imperial assault, which, if realized, will bring dire consequences for the region and for the aggressor itself.

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