

# U.S. Troops Loot 95 Tankers of Syrian Oil

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The U.S. occupation forces in Syria have smuggled a new batch of stolen oil from the war-torn Arab country through Iraq's illegal crossings as looting of Syrian natural resources continues.

Syria's official news agency (SANA) said the U.S. troops plundered more Syrian oil on Thursday, taking out 95 tankers loaded with the stolen oil through the illegal al-Walid and al-Mahmudiyah crossings with Iraq.

SANA reporter quoted local sources in al-Yarubiyah countryside as saying that the U.S. occupation forces brought out new quantities of stolen oil from Syrian fields of al-Jazeera and the Eastern region via 65 tankers across the illegal al-Mahmudiyah crossing, and 30 tankers through the illegal al-Walid crossing along borders with Iraq.

U.S. military trucks and tankers frequently carry tons of grain and crude oil from the northeastern Syrian province of Hasakah to the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region



An American armored vehicle passing by a pumpjack in Syria

in northern Iraq as part of Washington's systematic smuggling of basic commodities out of Syria. The U.S. military has for long stationed its forces and equipment in northeastern Syria, with the Pentagon claiming that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of the Daesh terrorists.

Damascus, however, maintains

the deployment is meant to plunder the Arab country's natural resources.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump admitted on several occasions that American forces were in the Arab country for its oil wealth.

Meanwhile, in a separate development, Syria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Bassam Sabbagh has called on the

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to strongly condemn the Zionist regime's acts of aggression against the Arab country and put an immediate end to the regime's recurrent attacks.

Sabbagh made the remarks during a UN Security Council session on the political and humanitarian affairs in Syria, stressing that solving the current crisis in Syria requires the immediate lifting of unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States, putting an end to the illegal presence of foreign troops as well as halting acts of terrorism.

"Solving the crisis in Syria requires a move by UN Security Council to stop Israeli recurrent attacks, remove the illegitimate blockade and support the early recovery projects," he said.

The Syrian envoy further noted that "insistence on continuing the aid mechanism through borders that is encircled with a lot of breaches and faults," reflects extreme selectivity and discrimination against the Syrians who deserve those aids.

## Report: U.S. Firm Receiving Millions to Sanitize Saudi Arabia's Image

RIYADH (Dispatches) – American public relations firm Edelman has reportedly signed deals worth \$9.2 million with the Saudi regime in the past four years to sanitize the image of the kingdom, especially in the United States.

"Since Khashoggi's murder, the powerful PR firm has received or is contracted to receive \$9.6m (£7.9m) in fees from Saudi government agencies and companies controlled by the regime," The Guardian reported, citing the U.S. Department of Justice documents made available by the watchdog group OpenSecrets.

Most of Edelman's work for the regime has focused on rehabilitating its reputation in the United States, an effort that the kingdom had begun before journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed by Saudi agents, added the report.

This comes just some two weeks after a U.S. court dis-

missed a lawsuit against Saudi Arabia's crown prince and de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), over his role in the 2018 murder of Khashoggi, after Washington decided to provide him with immunity in the case.

Khashoggi, who was murdered and dismembered by a Saudi hit squad at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on October 2, 2018, used to be a vocal critic of the kingdom and its crown prince.

The CIA concluded in 2018 that MBS had ordered the killing of Khashoggi. The prince has denied ordering Khashoggi's killing but acknowledged later that it took place "under my watch." Saudi officials later blamed "rogue agents" for the journalist's murder.

Edelman's services to the Saudis come as its CEO Richard Edelman has on several occasions claimed to support human rights and oppose repressive regimes.

Edelman is not the only American firm doing business with the Saudi regime, reads the report, noting, "but Edelman's work for the regime is particularly notable given Edelman's reputation for producing the 'trust barometer', an annual survey of public trust in government, business, the media and other institutions."

During this year's gathering of the World Economic Forum, Edelman published a "special report" of the trust barometer focused on geopolitics. The company said that 59% of survey respondents agreed that "punish[ing] countries that violate human rights and international law" is a "business responsibility".

The CEO stressed then that 95% of respondents said businesses should "get out" of countries with repressive governments. Edelman has not responded to a question on whether it is ready to stop its lucrative

deals with the Saudi government as long as human rights abuses are in place.

Rights groups have long voiced concern over the grim situation in Saudi Arabia as any form of criticism received harsh response.

Saudi Arabia "really restricts almost all political rights and civil liberties and engages in arbitrary imprisonment, torture, [and] execution of perceived opponents", said Michael Abramowitz, president of Freedom House, a research and advocacy group. "It's a pretty grim picture."

The violations have increased since Mohammed bin Salman took power in the country. Under the crown prince's rule, "power has become much more concentrated than ever before in the history of Saudi Arabia", said Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of Democracy for the Arab World Now (Dawn).

## Russia ...

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On Thursday, Russia's defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, inspected front-line positions in occupied Ukraine, according to the RIA Novosti state media agency. A video showed him travelling in a convoy of Z-marked armored vehicles, touring a barracks and talking to soldiers.

In Kyiv, the general staff claimed that Moscow had lost 100,400 troops since late February, as well as more than 3,000 tanks, nearly 6,000 fighting vehicles and 283 planes. The figures are difficult to verify independently.

Zelensky went back to Ukraine on Thursday on a U.S. government Boeing aircraft. Elaborate security precautions were taken to protect him on his trip to and from the U.S. German spy planes and a U.S. air force F-15 fighter jet escorted him over western airspace and he reached eastern Poland by train.

In a video message, Zelensky said he was returning home with "good results". He added: "We are bringing to Ukraine, to Donbas, to Bakhmut and to the south, the decisions that our defense forces have been waiting for."

The Ukrainian president's visit lasted less than 12 hours. Zelensky did not get everything he wanted. Congress failed to agree a large spending bill, which included nearly \$50 billion in extra funding for Ukraine, because of a dispute over immigration policy.

So far, the Biden administration has not provided longer-range artillery, tanks and fighter jets that would allow Ukraine to strike targets deep inside Russia. The White House worries that these advanced weapons could escalate the situation and bring the U.S. closer to a direct conflict with Moscow. Kyiv disagrees.

There are also unresolved questions as to what may constitute a Ukrainian victory. On Wednesday, Zelensky said he had discussed a 10-point "peace formula" with the U.S. president, which calls on Russia to leave all Ukrainian territory and demands reparations from Moscow, as well as Nuremberg-style trials for Putin and his generals.

Washington has made it clear that it is up to Kyiv to decide what victory means. So far, it has not explicitly endorsed Zelensky's pledge to recapture the Crimean peninsula, annexed by Russia in 2014.

## Once...

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While long-time residents have experienced temperatures in this range before, extreme weather like this can be dangerous, Maliawco said.

"When it's this cold, anybody can run into trouble," he said. "With these kinds of wind chills, if you're not wearing those warm layers... unprotected skin can get frostbite in less than five minutes."

Conditions were cold enough for people to post videos of themselves carrying out the "boiling water challenge," where boiling water is thrown into the air and instantly freezes.

"We created our own cloud @ -17° F (-27° C) at the #Missoula International Airport," tweeted NWS Missoula in Montana.

In Minneapolis and Saint Paul, more than eight inches (20 centimeters) of snow accumulated over a 24-hour period, the NWS said in a Thursday morning update.

Forecasters in Montana said they were expecting their coldest night of the Arctic snap Thursday.

Farther east in Buffalo, New York, forecasters called it a "once-in-a-generation storm" with wind gusts of more than 65 miles (105 kilometers) per hour, wind chills as low as 10 to 20 degrees F below zero, and power outages.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul joined the governors of several other states in declaring a state of emergency, warning of a long list of possible calamities.

"Heavy rain and snow, strong winds, coastal and lakeshore flooding, flash freezing, extremely low wind chills and power outages all possible," an announcement said.

## UK...

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also involved workers affiliated to two other trade unions, lasted 12 hours, the two Unison strikes next month will last 24 hours each, Unison said in a statement.

The walkouts will involve all ambulance employees as opposed to just emergency response crews, although many will be exempted from strike action under emergency cover plans, said the union, which represents the majority of ambulance workers in Britain.

"It's only through talks that this dispute will end," Unison General Secretary Christina McAnea said. "No health workers want to go out on strike again in the new year."

The strikes come as an already pressured health system faces further strain this winter, with nurses also going on strike in a separate pay dispute.

## Intel...

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present a false image and promote aggression, terrorism, and looting public property as top priorities," he added.

The intelligence minister reiterated that the enemies fomented unrest and aided separatist groups, waging a psychological war against the Islamic Republic of Iran's sacred system in order to bring about regime change.

"However, the might of the country's security and armed forces, as well as the astute leadership by the Leader of Islamic revolution, once again caused the enemies to face a severe defeat," he said.

## Turkish Doctor on 'Terror' Trial Over Chemical Arms Comment

ISTANBUL (AFP) – The head of the Turkish Doctors' Union went on trial Friday on "terror" charges linked to her calls for a probe into the army's alleged use of chemical weapons against militants in Iraq.

Sebnem Korur Fincanci was arrested and jailed on October 26 after becoming one of the most prominent public figures to draw attention to reports that first surfaced in media outlets close to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The PKK has been waging a bloody insurgency against the Turkish state since the 1980s that has seen it listed as a terrorist organization by Ankara and its Western allies.

The Turkish government has firmly rejected the allegations and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused Fincanci of "speaking the language of terrorism".

Fincanci has been charged with disseminating "terror propaganda" -- a crime that has seen past defendants sentenced to 13 years in jail.

Her initial detention sparked street protests in Istanbul that ended with dozens of arrests.

The 63-year-old forensic medicine expert entered the packed Istanbul courtroom holding a defiant fist in the air while her supporters applauded and dozens of anti-riot police looked on.

Fincanci once again called for "an effective investigation" including on-the-ground inspections and autopsies of militants.

"As a human rights defender, I have a responsibility to defend freedom of expression and the public's right to information," she told the court.

The PKK said 17 of its fighters had died in chemical weapons attacks in the mountains and caves of northern Iraq.

Fincanci is known in Turkey as both a forensics expert and a human rights campaigner who openly speaks out against Erdogan's government.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch issued a joint call with five other organizations for Fincanci's release pending trial.

## Explosion in Iraq Kills Two Soldiers, Injures Three

BEIRUT (AP) – Two soldiers were killed and three were injured in an explosion in northern Iraq, Iraqi state news said Thursday.

The soldiers were traveling in an army vehicle a day earlier in the Makhmour district when an explosive device detonated, the state Iraqi News Agency reported.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. It was the latest in a

string of similar incidents in recent days.

Eight people were killed and three injured Monday in an attack by gunmen on the village of Albu Bali northwest of Fallujah, previously held by the Daesh terrorist group.

On Sunday, an explosive device went off in northern Iraq, killing at least nine members of the Iraqi federal police force who were on patrol in the village of Ali al-Sultan in the Riyadh district of the province of

Kirkuk.

On Wednesday, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani had convened a meeting of security officials to discuss the "terrorist attacks" and the army's plans to respond, according to an official statement.

Iraqi officials declared victory over the Daesh terrorist group five years ago, but the group's remnants continue to carry out sporadic attacks.