



## Kurds Sink Iraq Via Oil Law

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Forget about Operation Surge, designed to preserve Baghdad and Iraq. Thanks to the Kurds, backstopped by Iran, Iraq is Kaput. To be specific, Iraq has been finished off by the Kurds, via Kurdish demands on the new Iraqi oil law.

To quote the Minister for National Resources of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG): "I am pleased to say that almost all our ideas are now featured highly in the draft Federal Oil Law; indeed, the Federal Oil Law is modeled on the Kurdistan Regional Petroleum Law. I am particularly pleased with the articles which call for the restructuring of the industry throughout Iraq in order to create greater accountability and transparency and to offer opportunities for inward investment." (see "Kurdistan Regional Government supports draft Federal Oil Law," 2/26/07.)

To break the code on this diplomatic double talk -- what the KRG minister is actually saying is that the Kurds have won by preserving their right to negotiate and sign contracts directly with the international oil companies, while bypassing Baghdad, which is only able to review such agreements after they have been negotiated and signed. By gaining this right, the Iraqi Kurds have taken a giant step towards political separation from Iraq, to be followed by Kurdish acquisition of Kirkuk in a planned referendum in December 2007, which will mark the final consolidation of Kurdistan's independence drive.

Kurdistan's secession from Iraq will be followed by Shiastan's secession from Iraq and its annexation by Iran. Meanwhile, the Iraqi state will disintegrate. In short, the end point for US intervention in Iraq will be the destruction of Iraq and the creation of a powerful Kurdistan and a far more powerful Iran.

Not too far down this road will come the realization that the Kurds have betrayed US interests inside Iraq. Moreover, the Kurds have betrayed the US in league with Iran, the US's primary potential adversary today.

To step back and look at the big picture again: the Kurds will take Kirkuk and Kurdistan in northern Iraq; Ahmadinejad's Brown Shirts (the Quds force) will take southern Iraq and Basra; while Al-Qaeda will take most of western Iraq and Al-Anbar province. This partition scenario will be a living nightmare for the Iraqis, even the Kurds, who face almost certain military intervention by Turkey.

This draft Iraqi oil agreement was announced in the past 24 hours. Given this massive Kurdish betrayal of the US, it is not surprising to see Iraq's Kurdish president Jalal Talabani take refuge in Jordan, supposedly for "emergency medical reasons."

The most alarming aspect of this Kurdish perfidy is the timing, which could not be worse. The US's Operation Surge is stalling, facing resistance from the Sunnis and Muqtada al-Sadr's Shia militia alike. Kurdish action against Iraq, by pushing a pro-separatist oil law, will further alienate the Sunnis and the Shia from the US-sponsored Baghdad government, which no longer appears to represent a viable state. In short, Operation Surge may no longer be relevant.

The bad news is that even if the Iraqi Kurds do not get 100 percent of what they want in this round of negotiations, they will use their considerable clout in the Iraqi parliament, which must ratify the oil agreement, to kill off the agreement in the event the Kurds do not prevail. The Kurds are in no mood to make concessions on the oil law or on Kirkuk, regardless of US policy. The Kurdish natural resources minister made this threat public in his interview when he said the US had "no longer" than two months to produce a final Iraqi oil law to satisfy Kurdish demands or the Kurds would go their own way and ignore all guidance from Baghdad.

The good news is that even though the US's pro-Iran, pro-Kurdish strategy may be in error, Turkey is preparing to intervene in northern Iraq to stop Iran and the Kurds. Turkey is very much against the new Iraqi oil law that favors the Kurds, against Kurdish acquisition of Kirkuk, and against the entire concept of an independent Kurdistan, which Turkey believes will become a playground for the PKK.

In sum, the US should take immediate and forceful action against the Kurds and their Iranian allies by reopening the debate on Iraq's oil law. If the US fails to do so, it may as well withdraw its troops. Iraq and Baghdad are finished.

By Scott Sullivan  
[www.iranian.ws](http://www.iranian.ws)

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