

JoMUN XVI

Forum: Disarmament Commission

Issue: Prevent further exploitation of oil reserves in countries under Daesh occupation

Student Officer: Chenika Bukes

Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

In 2014 ISIL made over \$3 million a day through its illegal oil trade and was named the wealthiest terrorist organization in history by the United States. Today, oil remains to be the terrorist groups second largest source of income, after kidnapping, as they continue to invade new oil assets and lose many as well.

ISIL began capturing these oil assets most invasively from 2011, when conflict erupted between rebel fighters and the Assad regime in Syria. Amid this turmoil there was seemingly easy access to oil assets for terrorist groups and quickly over 60% of the country's oil assets were taken over by terrorist groups. The hands in which these oil assets are controlled by often shifted for about the first year between by the Nusra Front and ISIL, but today the majority are controlled by ISIL.

The groups rely on the cooperation of locals, the people who had been running these operations before they were taken over by the Islamic State. It's also important to note that not all of these fields are staffed by "ISIL personnel," but by other insurgencies or entities that are willing to cooperate with the group. (Brookings, "*How ISIS Uses Oil to Fund Terror*")

The capacity of the fields under ISIL control is about 80,000 barrels a day, but the militants only produce around 30,000 barrels a day and the number has been decreasing since the start of the U.S. air strikes and the joint operations launched between the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the Iraqi army. As well, crude oil is not as valuable as refined oil and the group struggles to independently, successfully refine their oil. The crude oil is either refined in small facilities or exchanged across the border, mostly through the southern corridor of Turkey, for refined oil products.

No specific international organizations or country governments have been found guilty of buying this black-market oil. Much of this oil cannot be tracked as to whom it is sold to though there is an extensive network of shadow clients and partners. The known, primary client of ISIL is the 8 million people living in ISIL's territory in desperate need of basic fuel and energy supplies for their life and activities.

ISIL struggles to maintain these oil assets today and the group's annual income has drastically decreased from an estimated \$1.9 billion in 2014 to \$870 million in 2017, but to officially annul this threat of ISIL their oil assets must be repossessed by their legal, rightful owners because of the continuous income brought in by these oil assets supporting terrorism across the world.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Black Market

Illicit trade in goods or commodities in violation of official regulations.

Crude Oil

Unrefined petroleum.

ISIL

A militant Islamic fundamentalist group active particularly in Syria and Iraq. (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*). This title for the Islamic State was emphasised by the Obama administration for use when referring to the terrorist group, but the Trump administration rather uses the term ISIS. By many “Levant”- the last ‘L’ in ISIL- is believed to be a more accurate translation from the Arabic name, instead of the last ‘S’ in ISIS only representing Syria.

ISIL Controlled Territory

As of October 2017, 10 210 km² of territory in Iraq and Syria and 7 323 km² of territory in Afghanistan, Egypt and Nigeria.

Land Mine

An explosive mine laid on or just under the surface of the ground.

Petroleum Refining

Petroleum refining processes are the chemical engineering processes and other facilities used in petroleum refineries to transform crude oil into useful products.

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

The oil industry rose to great importance in the 19th century when crude oil began to be refined, first into paraffin. Since then, the oil industry and petroleum products have drastically changed and broadened in importance from first producing paraffin to petrol, diesel, lubricating oil, fuels and tar. Today, oil is viewed by many countries as the most powerful and contested natural resource. In the 20th century, as the race for oil began, the countries of Russia, France, Britain, Germany and the United States ran to claim land in the middle East and prosper from all of the oil. Since then oil has been a political point of quarrel and a staple of independence and power for who whom controls the resource in the Middle East.

The Islamic State officially started in 1999 with the goal being to eradicate obstacles to restoring God's rule on Earth and to defend the Muslim community against infidels and apostates. The jihadist group became a high-profile threat internationally in 2014 when it seized large strips of territory in Syria and Iraq. With this land seize, many oil fields were also taken under control by ISIL. In April 2013, it was announced that the Islamic State of Syria and Levant was born- the merge between Iraqi and Syrian forces. Along with the earlier seize of land and combined forces ISIL has now been in control of large amounts of Syria and Iraq's oil assets. The partnership allowed for relatively smooth oil smuggling from the South East of Iraq to Syria's Turkish border. (*“Timeline: the Rise, Spread and Fall of the Islamic State”, Wilson Centre*).

The United States, Iran, Turkey and other international forces have begun employing the powerful technique of training many anti-Islamic forces instead of placing men on the ground whom of which do not know the inner logistics of any operations in Syria and Iraq. This technique has been proven very successful in pushing ISIL out of their territories and diminishing how much land they are in control of. Along with these training programs the United States, France, Britain, Germany, Netherlands, Jordan and a few other countries have been conducting persistent airstrikes over Syria and Iraq, hitting ISIL territory and targeting ISIL oil fields. Despite this, many oil fields are still controlled by ISIL in their territory of Syria and Iraq and must be quickly controlled because of the power and large sums of money it denotes to the jihadist group of ISIL.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Democratic Federation of Northern Syria

The decidedly secular and women empowering character of Rojava made it an automatic antagonist for ISIL and its geographical proximity to the ISIL heartland as well as the vigor and success of its self-defense militias have spurred much conflict between and involvement in conflict with ISIL. Bordering Turkey, much of Rojava was claimed by ISIL, but the people continue to try and monitor oil movement and trade through this Kurdish territory.

Iraqi Kurdistan

The rise of ISIL and fall of Mosul heavily changed the oil scene in Iraq. ISIL fighters captured Ajil and Himrin oilfields in Salaheddin province and Qayyarah and three others in Nineveh province. Kurdish Peshmerga belonging to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) took over the prized Kirkuk fields of Avana and Bai Hassan, which were swiftly integrated into the KRG's oil production system even after their earlier oil losses. The Kurds assure that there is no way that ISIL oil can be smuggled and transported through Iraqi Kurdistan.

Republic of Iraq

Iraq is filled with conflict between the military and people and the ISIL fighters. Specifically referring to oil conflict, today with the fall of ISIL controlled Mosul ISIL is beginning to retreat and Iraq is gaining much of its territory back from ISIL. ISIL does not simply hand over their oil assets, but torches them and aligns the whole reserve with landmines and explosives, killing hundreds at times. Iraq continues to press forth and fight to gain back their land from ISIL. (*Middle East Monitor, "Syrian Army Takes More Oil Fields from Daesh in Raqqa and Eastern Desert."*)

Republic of Turkey

Smuggled oil finds its way into Turkey's export facilities and onto ships in Ceyhan bound for international markets. There is no clear, affirmative link between the Government of Turkey or Erdogan directly and ISIS oil sales. It is apparent, that Turkey has not fully acknowledged the issue of ISIS's oil trade. Turkey failed to seal its border, facilitating ISIS oil exports and sometimes Turkish people profit at stages from the supply chain. It is key to note that Turkey has been involved in the Syrian Civil War since its beginning, but thus far has not been involved in any direct conflict.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran, the neighbor of Iraq, has always been involved in the fight against ISIL. Iran prefers to establish local militias in conflict zones instead of directly fighting themselves. Iran is home to black-market dealers buying and trading the oil because of its proximity to ISIL controlled territory in Iraq. The Obama administration has placed pressure on global oil powers such as South Korea, China and India to stop buying Iranian oil under the Iran Sanctions Act.

Syrian Arab Republic

Syria is government by Bashar al-Assad and the regime is spurred conflict between rebel forces and the government. As well, the Kurds govern the North and Northeast parts of Syria and are fully apart of the conflict against ISIL. ISIL controls a strip from the Turkish border of Syria to Abu Kamal, a town bordering Iraq and their presence continues down into East Iraq as well. 60% of Syria's oil assets are controlled by ISIL and have been since 2012, after the uprising against the Assad regime. With supports from the United States Syria is slowly earning back their oil fields and ISIL begins to retreat with a recent loss of their largest Omar oil field and control over the Syrian city, Raqqa.

State of Qatar

Many gulf states like that of Qatar have been blamed by Syria and Iraq for ISIL's existence in the past. Along with Saudi Arabia, indirectly with a combination of poor policy's and lack of methodology has led to Qatar-funded weapons and money making their way into the hands of IS.

United States of America

The United States of America intervened in the Syrian civil war on the 22nd of September 2014 and has since launched dozens of airstrikes targeting ISIL oil assets. The US has launched coalitions to support anti-ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria. The military's plan for ISIL in Iraq is to try and defeat ISIL with and through local forces. The US continues to expand their efforts on training local forces to defeat ISIL which will result in retrieving Iraqi and Syrian oil fields.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

1999	The Islamic State is officially founded.
2006	The Islamic State of Iraq declares its mission to control central and Western Iraq and turn it into a Sunni caliphate.
2011	The Syrian Civil War begins.
2012	It is declared that ISIS is in control of over 60% of Syria's oil assets.
2013	The Nasra Front in Syria and Islamic State of Iraq merge to become the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.
2013	ISIS militants in Iraq take control of their largest oil field yet in Fallujah and parts of Ramadi.
2014	ISIS gains control over the border between Syria's Deir Ezzor and Iraq.
2015	With the help of the US and coalition airstrikes, Kurdish fighters remove ISIL from the Syrian border town of Kobani which was crucial for oil trade.
2015	Kurdish fighters successfully rid ISIL from the Syrian town of Tal Abyad on the Turkish border, pertinent to the group's oil smuggling.
2016	ISIS captures the Shaer gas field near Palmyra.
2016	The Iraqi army takes back Fallujah and its surrounding oil fields from ISIS.
2017	The major Syrian city of Raqqa, the 'ISIS capital', one of the most important cities for the oil smuggling route is liberated from ISIS.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee, 1999

This committee is in control of enacting sanctions against member states which do not follow the specific policies passed through the committee since 1999 and as well the Syrian and Iraqi government. These include air, financial and arms embargos, assets freeze and travel bans. This committee therefore as well has a monitors ISIL and soldier activity in Syria and Iraq with their Monitoring Team and Office of the Ombudsperson.

(S/RES/2170) Security Council, 2014

This resolution was adopted to call upon all United Nations Member States to act to suppress the flow of foreign fighters, financing and other support to Islamist extremist groups in Iraq and Syria. It expressed readiness to consider putting on the sanctions list those who facilitated the recruitment and travel of foreign fighters.

(S/RES/2368) Security Council, 2017

This resolution was adapted to push for member states to adapt to evolving terrorist threats, encourage Governments to update their methods for cut off funds to terrorist groups, prevent their travel, ban them from acquiring arms and ensure that sanctions were fully implemented. (*"Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List Security Council Subsidiary Organs", United Nations*)

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

International Air-Strikes on Daesh Occupied Territory

Air-strikes have been conducted by the United States, France, Germany, Britain and many other countries and have greatly decreased ISIL's numbers, territory and therefore its oil assets. This attempt to resolve the issue is relatively successful, prevents many deaths on the anti-ISIL front and is ongoing today.

Training and Arming Local Forces Against ISIL

The United States, Iran, Turkey and a few other countries have for the past 2 years begun training local anti-ISIL forces and arming them for a higher chance of success in combat against ISIL. This previous attempt decreases the number of casualties on the international side and is proven more successful due to the local forces greater knowledge of the inner logistics of the conflict and very personal involvement in the conflict. (*"Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism." Wikipedia*)

Operation Tidal Wave II

This operation is a US-led coalition military operation which began on the 21st of October in 2015. The operation is against oil transport, refining and distribution facilities and infrastructure under the control of ISIL. The US military targets oil transport trucks, operated by middlemen, which previously were not usually targeted.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Shutdown Oil Trade Across the Syria and Turkey Border

At the moment, the extensive black-market network ISIL operates has a very specific trade route and uses mafia and middlemen to transport their oil, therefore ISIL's oil is extremely hard to track. Oil from anywhere under ISIL control is smuggled and sold across the Syria and Turkey border. This promotes a steady flow of income for the terrorist group, is the reason for why ISIL controls many oil fields and steals possible income from Syrian and Iraqi people. ISIL also depends on oil products smuggled back from southern Turkey in exchange for their crude oil and thus this solution would be an interesting resolution to investigate. (Bronstein, "How ISIS Makes Its Millions")

Investigate Where Makeshift Refineries Are Being Used by ISIL

Crude oil is less valuable than refined oil. Currently, crude oil is traded by ISIL across the Syria border to Turkey in return for refined oil. When ISIL is able to produce their own refined oil this extra, tedious step which cuts money is taken away and so if these refineries were to be rid of then ISIL will be forced to do the long trade with Turkey where oil has to travel a far distance and face many problems and often loses. Therefore, this resolution would be a solid preliminary method in tackling this substantial and comprehensive issue. (Nakhle, "ISIL Sells Its Oil, but Who Is Buying It?")

Investigate the Middlemen Involved in ISIL's Oil Trade

ISIL does not directly export or import any oil, instead the terrorist group works through a network of middlemen and mafia. Currently, it is unknown who are these transporters and middlemen. ISIL oil supplies people in their territory and is traded across the border, by ridding these middlemen ISIL would be subject to transporting their oil directly and would suffer great loses in the indirect numbers provided by this 'supporting' mafia.

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APPENDIX OR APPENDICES

<https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>

Includes several resolutions relating to the topic of interest.

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/terrorism/>

Provides the UN Security Council Resolutions relating to terrorism.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/profileguide.html>

Provides a very good overview of the states of Syria and Iraq and any country of interest.