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Bare Ford-Rockefeller plan to invade Nigeria, Venezuela

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A study prepared for Congress in August of 1975 reveals that the United States seriously considered military action to seize oil fields on three continents.

The study, titled "Oil Fields as Military Objectives," was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and submitted to the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations on Aug. 21, 1975. It was completed shortly after the conclusion of the 1973-74 OPEC oil embargo which drastically increased the cost of petroleum imports to the United States and its allies.

The CRS document, which is not listed in the Library of Congress records and has apparently never been released to the public, examines the likely scenario that an "airtight" oil embargo would have on U.S. security and the vital interests of its European allies and Japan. It also reviews the advantages and the liabilities of military action against several oil-producing countries including Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Nigeria, and Libya, as well as various combinations of targets.

Planning alternative invasions

The report advises that a military invasion could succeed only if the mission resulted in the seizure of a substantial number of intact oil installations; if the United States could secure and operate these installations for a period of "weeks, months, or years"; if sufficient technology could be made available to quickly restore wrecked assets and to operate them without the assistance of local people; and if the United States could guarantee passage of supplies and oil products to and from the conquered nations.

The study suggests that large oil-producing states in the Middle East were leery of U.S. intentions, and cited an article by Arnaud de Borchgrave in the March 31, 1975 issue of *Newsweek* claiming that oil fields in the Persian Gulf states had been planted with mines that could be set off on a moment's notice. Moreover, a Conference of the Sovereigns and Heads of State of the OPEC Member Countries, reported in the *New York Times* on April 1, 1975, issued a declaration of their willingness to counteract threats by outside forces "with a unified response whenever the need arises, notably in the case of aggression."

The CRS analysis noted that, "Several OPEC countries adjoin in the Middle East, where coordinated military actions by members and or sympathizers (especially the Soviet Union) are conceivable." Thus it concluded that U.S. occupation of oil fields in Arab nations might also require U.S. control of neighboring regions.

It added, however, that non-Arab OPEC states such as Nigeria and Venezuela "sense no significant threat, and thus have little incentive to plan sabotage operations." It described Venezuela and Nigeria as "isolated." Outsiders, it continued, "would find it difficult or impossible to oppose U.S. actions."

Additionally, the document noted that both countries are "comparatively close to the United States."

"It is five times farther from our eastern seaboard to Persian Gulf ports via the Mediterranean than to Maracaibo, just across the Caribbean," said the CRS feasibility study. And

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it pointed out that there are no "terrain bottlenecks," such as the Suez Canal or the Strait of Hormuz, that would interfere with access to and from either Venezuela's Maracaibo oil field or the offshore installations in Nigeria.

Even more importantly, says the document, neither country could mount "more than token resistance to a U.S. invasion," and the threat of intervention by Soviet air and ground forces "would be nonexistent." The report concluded that no other potential targets offer these advantages.

Nonetheless, the document acknowledges serious drawbacks to the simultaneous seizure of Venezuelan and Nigerian oil. The cost of maintaining two separate military operations 4,500 miles apart "would cause force requirements and costs to soar," it warned, and the offshore facilities present in both nations "would be much more difficult to seize and secure than installations ashore."

It advises also that special and relatively risky military tactics would be necessary in both countries. Nigeria's oil installations, the report states, are located in "mangrove swamps and rain forest similar to those that frustrated U.S. forces in Southeast Asia." And "all Latin America likely would censure U.S. actions if we seized oil fields in Venezuela, which is our official ally in the Organization of American States (OAS)."

The document proposed, as an alternative, linking Maracaibo's resources with those of Libya, but cautioned that a U.S. military adventure in the North African nation "almost certainly would cause serious rifts between this country and its European allies if seizing oil installations served U.S. interests, but not NATO's." Even more importantly, it said, Soviet Armed Forces are well-positioned "to meddle in the Mediterranean," and critical lines of communication would be highly vulnerable.

'We will not be strangled'

Discussion of possible intervention in oil-producing countries surfaced in the news media with some regularity in the months following the OPEC embargo. In an interview with the *U.S. News and World Report,* published Nov. 25, 1974, President Gerald Ford denied having formulated plans to invade Libya and Kuwait. But in January of the following year, he told a *Time* correspondent that he would not rule out the use of military force if the western world were to be faced with "strangulation" by another OPEC boycott.

In February, Ford reiterated that position on NBC television, assuring the people of the United States that "we are not going to permit America to be strangled to death" by the oil-exporting cartel. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger extended this assurance to other western nations, telling Bill Moyers in a Feb. 10, 1975 interview that "the United States will not permit itself or its allies to be strangled."

At a Jan. 14, 1975 Pentagon press conference, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger remarked that "it is indeed feasible to conduct military operations if the necessity should arise." He added, however, that such action would be undertaken only in "the gravest emergency."

Schlesinger discussed military action against OPEC on at least two other occasions. He told Hugh Sidey on a Jan. 7, 1975 broadcast of Washington Straight Talk, "It is plain, I think, that one should not tempt fate by pushing the concept of national sovereignty too far." He likewise conceded that the U.S. would be "less likely to be tolerant of a renewed embargo than we were of the initial one in 1973" in an interview with *U.S. News and World Report* published on May 26, and acknowledged that there are "economic, political and conceivable military measures" that might be implemented if such a situation were to arise.

Non-governmental "experts" on foreign relations also took part in a debate about the use of military action against oil-producing nations. In an article titled "Oil: The Issue of American Intervention" which appeared in the January 1975 issue of *Commentary* magazine, Robert W. Tucker of Johns Hopkins University predicted that "a disaster resembling the 1930s is indeed a distinct possibility." Tucker offered harsh criticism of anyone who argued that such an invasion would be bound to fail, claiming that such limited options leave the world "quite at the mercy of the Arabs and the Russians."

Tucker argued for seizure of a 400-mile strip extending down the Persian Gulf from Kuwait through Saudi Arabia to Qatar. This strip, he wrote, contains more than 50% of all known OPEC oil resources, and 40% of the world's proven reserves. Moreover, he explained, "it has no substantial centers of population," and "its effective control does not bear even remote comparison with the experience of Vietnam."

Most importantly, added Tucker, such an intervention would virtually end OPEC as a viable economic institution. "With the core of the cartel broken, it is not only difficult to see such countries as Iran or Venezuela accepting this risk [of a future trade embargo], it is even difficult to see Libya doing so."

For Tucker, however, the issue was bigger than OPEC or even petroleum itself. The oil crisis, he noted, "affords a spectacular demonstration . . . of the growing power of the new and developing states." Indeed, he added, the Arab oil embargo points out "the increasing pressure we will be subject to by those whose numbers grow daily at an ever greater rate and who are determined to share an ever larger piece of a cake that no longer can be considered as indefinitely expansible."

Another item, written for *Harper's* by an author using the pseudonym Miles Ignotus, explained: "The goal is not just to seize some oil (say in accessible Nigeria or Venezuela), but to break OPEC." That article, published in March of 1975, recommended that "force must be used selectively to occupy large and concentrated oil reserves, which can be produced rapidly in order to end the artificial scarcity of oil and thus cut the price."

The writer conceded the substantial political benefit the Soviet Union would gain from such an unpopular military intervention by the United States, but dismissed it by saying: "Let the Russians have the influence, and let us have the oil."

The report to the House of Representatives, too, addresses the potential "strangulation" of the West and the need to "break" OPEC.

"Economic warfare, most notably oil embargoes, currently could threaten most modern societies just as surely as nuclear weapons," it states. "Degrees of vulnerability depend on relationships between each country's requirements on one hand and its resources plus stockpiled resources on the other."

It projected that sustained sanctions by oil exporting nations "would disrupt this country domestically and degrade U.S. security," but stated that "not even a full-scale OPEC oil embargo would threaten U.S. survival."

Effective sanctions by OPEC, however, would quickly compromise the economies of major European allies and Japan, it says. An extensive embargo would thus "involve vital interests at a very early stage, 'strangling' Nippon and NATO in every sense of that word," according to the CRS memorandum. "Political, military, economic, and social interests in America would suffer accordingly," it adds.

The question of whether the U.S. would have an obligation to defend these countries against what CRS called "economic warfare" by OPEC is only briefly addressed in the document. Treaty obligations toward NATO call for joint action only in the case of "armed attack," the CRS study notes. But, on the other hand, there would be little support from the allies for a military excursion conducted only to assure U.S. oil supplies. In fact, "operations to supply the United States alone could be inimical to NATO's interests," it states.

Busting cartels through debt

Cartel-busting was the dominant theme of a memorandum on the future of U.S. economic activities in OPEC countries which was prepared for the Development Coordination Committee by the State Department, the Agency for International Development, the Overseas Private Investment Corp., Eximbank, and the CIA. The report was written for the Development Coordination Committee in November of 1975 and declassified in early 1992.

The "dramatic change" in the fortunes of some low-income OPEC nations, along with their new-found "ability to affect economic conditions worldwide through oil policy decisions," raises questions about the best form of economic engagement to pursue, it states.

"The primary U.S. objective in dealing with the cartel," it continues, "is to minimize its adverse effects on our economy, either through price or quantity actions on their part. This objective may be pursued by actions which would weaken the cartel and bring market forces to bear more heavily on oil prices or to negotiate and influence cartel members on their actions."

The DCC memorandum provides no details about how the various "policy tools" of the U.S. foreign aid arsenal might be used to "weaken the cartel" or to "influence cartel members," but it does contain a lengthy discussion of the economic needs of the three least-developed OPEC nations—Nigeria, Indonesia, and Ecuador—and of the available options for extending loans and other development assistance. The use of technical assistance programs and international financial institutions, it explains, would be a valuable mechanism for establishing political ties and main-

New light on Desert Storm

Newly released documents from the Ford-Rockefeller administration give the background to *EIR*'s analysis that the 1990 Anglo-American occupation of the Persian Gulf and 1991 war against Iraq, had nothing to do with the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. As the accompanying article analyzing these documents shows, a U.S. plan to seize the region's oil fields, and also destroy the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) by other means, had been seriously considered 15 years ago. These plans were later implemented by the Bush administration under the pretext of protecting the region from "Iraqi aggression." In many cases, the cast of characters in the Ford and Bush administrations was the same.

Although Iraq has now been crushed, the Anglo-Americans are not leaving. Under the cover of granting U.S. and British "basing rights," Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and other states in the region, have agreed that their military occupation will be permanent.

OPEC, meanwhile, has been all but destroyed. At a September 1991 OPEC meeting, Saudi Oil Minister Hisham Nazer proclaimed that Saudi Arabia would produce as much oil as it wanted, regardless of OPEC quotas, which are intended to fix a price. "Nobody has to approve what Saudi Arabia produces," he claimed, provoking the Algerian representative to ask, "What then is the need for OPEC?" In October, Nazer told *Petrostrategies* that the Saudis might open up their oil fields to foreign ownership, reversing the policy of oil nationalization upon which OPEC, and even Arab sovereignty, has been based.

Iraq's continuing refusal to allow the U.N. to determine its future oil production policy, on the other hand, may yet be the reason cited for a new Anglo-American military assault.

Bush and the Ford administration

One striking feature of the Ford era plans now made public is that the same figures active in plotting against OPEC then, were later key figures in planning and executing the Bush administration's Operation Desert Storm.

As the documents show, the Ford administration's little known Development Coordination Committee was then involved in plans to bust OPEC. There were 10 members of the shadowy inter-agency committee. One was James Baker III, then undersecretary of commerce. Another was Brent Scowcroft, Ford's deputy national security adviser. Scowcroft would soon be Ford's national security adviser, a post he holds for Bush today. A third conspirator was future Reagan-Bush CIA director William Casey, then president of the Overseas Private Investment Corp. The committee was informally run by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who remains a guiding influence on Bush to this day. Bush was himself CIA director for part of this period, and the CIA helped prepare the inter-agency committee's studies. Current Defense Secretary Richard Cheney was then the powerful Ford White House Chief of Staff.

This same group also authored a series of National Security Council memoranda in the Nixon and Ford years that called for reducing the population of several Third World states, in part to secure access to their raw materials. National Security Study Memorandum 200 (NSSM 200) and its sequels, prepared by Kissinger and Scowcroft, targeted Iran, Algeria, Nigeria, Indonesia, and other states for population reduction. These same states were then also potential targets of U.S. invasions to secure oil supplies.

Unsolved murders

The documents also shed light on some important assassinations in the Ford years whose effects are still important today.

On March 25, 1975, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was assassinated, shortly after a violent meeting with then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger over Saudi policy toward Israel and toward the price of oil. The assailant, a deranged nephew who had a strange circle of friends in Colorado and California, had gained access to the king. The Saudi interior minister at the time, Prince Fahd, is today the Saudi monarch.

On Feb. 13, 1976, Murtala Mohammed, the President of oil-rich Nigeria, was killed by another deranged assailant. Murtala Mohammed was an open opponent of Henry Kissinger. His successor, Olusegun Obasanjo, is now in retirement at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, where he is a close associate of former World Bank president and U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. The assassination took place a few weeks after George Bush replaced William Colby as CIA director.

Within hours of the Aug. 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Saudi ambassador to the U.S. Prince Bandar met with George Bush. Following the meeting, Bandar sent a memo to King Fahd calling upon him to accept hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops on Saudi soil even though an Arab diplomatic solution to the crisis was then still attainable and even likely. Accept the troops, Bandar said, "because I have been informed by the U.S. administration that its decision in this regard is final, whether or not Riyadh agrees to ask in U.S. troops. Therefore, I suggest that an invitation be extended so that it would not look like an occupation by force." Bandar is now Bush's favorite to replace Fahd as King.—*Joseph Brewda*

taining a U.S. presence in nations that might otherwise use oil exports as a political weapon against the United States.

It was more than 15 years after the Congressional Research Service completed its feasibility study that the United States finally staged a full-scale military offensive in the Persian Gulf. But questions remain as to whether the Ford-era plan was ever really abandoned at all. Reports about an alleged meeting between high-level Kuwaiti officials and former CIA chief William Webster less than a year before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait suggest that the U.S. may simply have waited for a thaw in the Cold War to make its move.

Kuwait's former Security Chief, Brig. Gen. Fahad Ahmed Al-Fahd, is quoted in one such report, taken from Kuwaiti files and released by the Iraqi government, as saying: "We agreed with the American side that it was important to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq in order to put pressure on that country's government to delineate our common border. The CIA gave us its view of appropriate means of pressure, saying that broad cooperation should be initiated between us on condition that such activities are coordinated at a high level."

The OPEC oil embargo, of course, was never repeated. But clearly the rationale for military dominance by the West still exists. As Professor Tucker of Johns Hopkins wrote in 1975, "the essential meaning of the oil crisis is that the developed and capitalist states are at the end of a long period of rapid economic growth made possible in large measure by the cheap raw materials of the undeveloped world."