

## What Are the Real Reasons Behind the Bush Administration's Rush Towards War?

**U.S. threats to go to war against Iraq are largely driven by oil and empire —**

expanding U.S. military and economic power. As these goals primarily benefit oil companies and the already rich and powerful, the Bush administration relies on fear to mobilize public support for war among ordinary Americans by linking Iraq falsely with the very real threat of terrorism and through rhetoric like “axis of evil.” Bush also plays on Americans' genuine concern about human rights to gain support.

Many top officials of the Bush administration come directly out of the oil industry. President Bush himself, as well as Vice-President Dick Cheney, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans and others all have strong ties to oil companies — Chevron once named a tanker after Rice as a gesture of thanks.

But the U.S. isn't threatening an invasion simply to ensure its continued access to Iraqi oil. Rather, it is a much broader U.S. play for control of the oil industry and the ability to set the price of oil on the world market.

Iraq's oil reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia's. And with U.S.-backed Saudi Arabia increasingly unstable, the question of which oil companies — French, Russian, or American — would control Iraq's rich but unexplored oil fields once sanctions are lifted has moved to the top of Washington's agenda. Many in the Bush administration believe that in the long term, a post-war, U.S.-dependent Iraq would supplant Saudi control of oil prices and marginalize the influence of the Saudi-led OPEC oil cartel. Iraq could replace Saudi Arabia, at least partially, at the center of U.S. oil and military strategy in the region, and the U.S. would remain able to act as guarantor of oil for Japan, Germany, and other allies in Europe and around the world.

Expanding U.S. power, central to the Bush administration's war strategy, includes redrawing the political map of the Middle East. That scenario includes U.S. control of Iraq and the rest of the Gulf states as well as Jordan and Egypt. Some in the administration want even more — “regime change” in Syria, Iran, and Palestine, and Israel as a permanently unchallengeable U.S.-backed regional power. The ring of U.S. military bases built or expanded recently in Qatar, Djibouti, Oman and elsewhere as preparation for a U.S. war against Iraq will advance that goal.

But the super-hawks of the Bush administration have a broader, global empire-building plan that goes way beyond the Middle East. Much of it was envisioned long before September 11th, but now it is waged under the flag of the “war against terrorism.” The war in Afghanistan, the creation of a string of U.S. military bases in the (also oil- and gas-rich) countries of the Caspian region and south-west Asia, the new strategic doctrine of “pre-emptive” wars, and the ascension of unilateralism as a principle are all part of their crusade. Attacking Iraq is only the next step.

*(From Understanding the U.S.-Iraq Crisis: A Primer by Phyllis Bennis. Complete text available through the Institute for Policy Studies [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org))*



**STOP THE WAR ON IRAQ NO MORE BLOOD FOR OIL**