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Israeli Oil Company Gets Lucrative Contract In It's Own War (Iraq)

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Israeli Oil Company Gets Lucrative Contract in It's Own War (Iraq)



An Israeli oil firm has been awarded a lucrative contract to supply the US Army in Iraq.

According to IsraelNationalNews.com, the tender was awarded to Sonol gasoline company and is valued at \$70 to 80 million. The company is expected to supply the US forces with 25 million liters of fuel monthly. Press reports say Sonol is working in conjunction with an international firm, Morgantown International.

The tender was issued by a subsidiary of Halliburton, the US-Based KDR Company which has been given the lion's share of US military contracts in Iraq. Until now, the US forces get most of their fuel from Kuwait, but following

Halliburton's admission that it overcharged the US military, the US Army decided to approach other suppliers.

Sonol is one of Israel's three largest oil product-marketing firms with a network of about 205 branded service stations.

The fuel, which Israel imports, will pass through the fuel terminal operated by the SASHAN (Oil and Energy Infrastructure Company) and will be transported by train across Israel and Jordan to Iraq.

Industry experts are baffled why Israel has been chosen for the deal when Turkey supplied northern Iraq with around 300,000 metric tons of gas over the course of six months last year, a deal estimated at \$70 to \$80 million.

According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), Israel produces almost no oil and imports nearly all its oil needs. It has recently stepped up its imports from Russia and the Caspian region and now reportedly gets most of its oil from the former Soviet States.

Arab oil analysts, quoted by the Beirut-based Daily Star, said it does not make economic sense to award the contract to a country that does not export country. Sonol will merely be acting as a go-between, forwarding gas to Iraq at a profit and driving the value of the contract higher for KDR.

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"The oil could come from Egypt, could be from Russia, could be Azerbaijan," said Walid Khadduri, editor of the Cyprus-based Middle East Economic Survey. "Israel imports all its oil, it doesn't have any."

While it would have made better financial sense for the contract to be awarded to companies operating in gasoline-refining countries adjoining northern Iraq such as Syria, Iran or Turkey, observers feel political sensitivities may have kept Halliburton from considering them.

"State Oil Marketing Organization imports products from Syria and Iran," said Khadduri. "Halliburton does not do so because the administration does not want to assist Syria or Iran."

Last year, The Observer noted plans to build a pipeline from occupied Iraq were already being discussed between Washington, Tel Aviv and potential future government figures in Baghdad.

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