

PETROLEUM IN TURKMENISTAN 2002

1. WORLD BANK SAID HELD TALKS ABOUT FINANCING A FUEL PIPELINE THROUGH AFGHANISTAN TO INDIA OR PAKISTAN.

KABUL, May 15 (AFP) - World Bank chief James Wolfensohn said Wednesday he held talks about financing a fuel pipeline to channel massive gas reserves from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to India or Pakistan. Wolfensohn, who was in the Afghan capital to open the financial institution's offices here and to confirm 100 million dollars of World Bank grants for the interim administration, said a number of companies had already expressed an interest in the project.

Turkmenistan is reportedly estimated to have 159 trillion cubic feet (4.8 trillion cubic metres) of gas reserves, the 11th largest in the world.

But its landlocked status and the 23 years of war in Afghanistan have scuppered previous plans to open up the reserves to the outside world. "I have spoken to a number of people concerning a possible pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and either out through a port in Pakistan or through to India," Wolfensohn told reporters.

"We have expressed interest in that but I think the principals need to discuss that further. We have said that we are ready to discuss it when they are ready to discuss it. "We are not taking the entrepreneurial role but were it to come up we would certainly take a look at it.

"There are a number of entrepreneurs already in the exercise so we will wait and see." Wolfensohn said the governments of Turkmenistan, Pakistan and India had already expressed an interest while Ashraf Ghani, special advisor to interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai, also confirmed Kabul's interest.

Wolfensohn added: "If they get it together I will be delighted to talk to them and then we will see who it is who is the main entrepreneur in the exercise and what they have come up with."

The Taliban signed an agreement with US company Unocal in 1998 to allow a two billion dollar 890-mile (1,424-kilometre) natural gas pipeline to be. The plan was for the pipeline to run from Turkmenistan's Dauletabad gas field through to Herat in Afghanistan before linking up with Pakistan's gas grid.

But Unocal later pulled out of the project, citing the civil war and continuing uncertainty over costs.

Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 30 – July 2002

2. TRANS-AFGHANISTAN PIPELINE

Gas pipeline: Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf addresses a summit attended by Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai and Turkmenistan President Sapamurat Niyazov in Islamabad.

Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan signed on Thursday an agreement to build and maintain a 1460 Kilometres gas pipeline to supply natural gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan.

Upon successfully negotiating leases to explore in Turkmenistan, Bidas was awarded exploration contracts for the Keimar block near the Caspian Sea, and the Yashlar block near the Afghanistan border. By March 1995, Bulgheroni had accords with Turkmenistan and Pakistan granting Bidas construction rights for a pipeline into Afghanistan, pending negotiations with the civil war-torn country.

The following year, after extensive meetings with warlords throughout Afghanistan, Bidas had a 30-year agreement with the Rabbani regime to build and operate an 875-mile gas pipeline across Afghanistan.

But Unocal was not interested in a partnership. The United States government, its affiliated transnational oil and construction companies, and the ruling elite of the West had coveted the same oil and gas transit route for years.

A trans-Afghanistan pipeline was not simply a business matter, but a key component of a broader geo-strategic agenda: total military and economic control of Eurasia (the Middle East and the Central Asian republics).

As of 1992, 11 western oil companies controlled more than 50 percent of all oil investments in the Caspian Basin, including Unocal, Amoco, Atlantic Richfield, Chevron, Exxon-Mobil, Pennzoil, Texaco, Phillips and British Petroleum.

Business and policy planning groups active in Central Asia, such as the Foreign Oil Companies Group operated with the full support of the US State Department, the National Security Council, the CIA and the Department of Energy and Commerce.

Among the most active operatives for US efforts: Brezezinski (a consultant to Amoco, and architect of the Afghan-Soviet war of the 1970s), Henry Kissinger (advisor to Unocal), and Alexander Haig (a lobbyist for Turkmenistan), and Dick Cheney (Halliburton, US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce).

Unocal's Central Asia envoys consisted of former US defense and intelligence officials. Robert Oakley, the former US ambassador to Pakistan, was a "counter-terrorism" specialist for the Reagan administration who armed and trained the mujahadeen during the war against the Soviets in the 1980s. He was an Iran-Contra conspirator charged by Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh as a key figure involved in arms shipments to Iran.

Richard Armitage, the current Deputy Defense Secretary, was another Iran-Contra player in Unocal's employ. A former Navy SEAL, covert operative in Laos, director with the Carlyle Group, Armitage is allegedly deeply linked to terrorist and criminal networks in the Middle East, and the new independent states of the former Soviet Union (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan).

Armitage was no stranger to pipelines. As a member of the Burma/Myanmar Forum, a group that received major funding from Unocal, Armitage was implicated in a lawsuit filed by Burmese villagers who suffered human rights abuses during the construction of a Unocal pipeline. (Halliburton, under Dick Cheney, performed contract work on the same Burmese project.)

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