

Turkish FM: U.S. launched war for Iraq oil

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 14, 2008 - Turkey's finance minister says the United States is "after the oil" in Iraq, joining other high-profile officials making the assertion recently.

"The guy from miles away is invading Iraq claiming to put an end to the unfair system," Kemal Unakitan said, referring to U.S. President George W. Bush, the Anka News Agency reports. "But everyone knows they are after the oil. All the rest is just made up stories."

Unakitan's statements last week in Istanbul at an event sponsored by the Turkish business group MUSIAD came while Turkish President Abdullah Gul was meeting with Bush.

A senior Bush administration official said after the meetings that the two sides agreed to work together further on Iraq issues, such as the controversial oil-rich city of Kirkuk and the threat from Kurdish separatists.

Unakitan, however, was blunt in his criticism of the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

"He brings his army forces in the name of bringing freedom and nobody objects. Indeed they support saying that they also were contributing to the peace efforts," he said. "What peace efforts? You all are coming there for your sake, for oil."

Former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan caused an uproar after the September release of his book "The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World."

"I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: The Iraq war is largely about oil," Greenspan wrote.

The Bush administration denied such motives and both it and Greenspan watered down the rhetoric in subsequent media accounts.

Two months later, Hans Blix, the former chief of U.N. inspections of alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, weighed in on Australia's ABC radio.

"One fear I would have is that the U.S. has a hidden thought to remain in Iraq," said Blix, the former chief of the U.N. inspection team looking for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

"One reason why they wanted in was that they felt they must leave Saudi Arabia. After the Gulf War in 1991, they left their troops in Saudi Arabia to protect pipelines," he said. "And when they felt they could no longer stay in Saudi Arabia, Iraq was the next best place because it was more secularized than Saudi Arabia and had the second biggest oil reserves in the region."

According to the U.S. Energy Department's data arm, the Energy Information Administration, Iraq has the world's third-largest oil reserves at 115 billion

barrels. But Iraq is mostly unexplored, and experts believe there's at least twice as much oil to be found.

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