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Al-Qaeda's Oil: Captured Syrian Reserves Bankrolling Civil War

By Jason Ditz

January 29, 2014

While the “moderate” rebels are always pleading poverty to the US, the more successful rebel factions, particularly al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Jabhat al-Nusra, never seem to have that problem. But where do their deep pockets come from?



Oil, as it turns out. New reports reveal that the al-Qaeda factions have considerable control over Syria's oil and gas reserves, and have been smuggling the oil into Turkey and Iraq to be sold "wherever they can find a buyer."

Nusra has some, but AQI has the most, with the Raqqa Province one of Syria's richest oil producers and also virtually entirely under their control. Companies in the region confirmed as much, saying the Assad government "practically doesn't control anything anymore."

Not that al-Qaeda controls all of the nation's oil, as the autonomous Kurdish region has considerable reserves of their own. Still and all, al-Qaeda factions control the majority, and even while Assad continues to try to make deals with Russian oil companies, his position is no doubt weaker because he's making deals for fields his government only owns on paper, and may never really control again.