

Drilling for Oil in the Israeli-occupied Region of Syria's Golan Heights, A Violation of International Law

By [Claire Bernish](#)

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After concluding the flow testing phase, Afek Oil and Gas will now begin analyzing samples drawn from the Ness-2 drilling site, euphemistically dubbed “Deborah’s Well,” in the Israeli-occupied region of Syria known as the Golan Heights. New Jersey-based Genie Energy, Ltd., Afek’s parent company, claims a dubious cadre of investors cum war profiteers, including Rupert Murdoch, Dick Cheney, Lord Jacob Rothschild, former CIA director James Woolsey — as well as a number of current and former U.S. politicians.

Prior testing at a separate Afek site did not meet expectations, so the company sought other “sweet spots” in the area. Analysis of samples from additional wells will be [performed](#) by Afek scientists in conjunction with “external international experts.”

To understand U.S. involvement in the quagmire in Syria, Afek’s oil exploration is of critical import.

Israel’s occupation of the Golan Heights region violates international law — thus, Israeli permits granting Afek the ostensible right to perform exploratory tests of a possible “large reservoir” of natural gas and light oil is also illegal. But in a world where Big Oil remains powerful enough to drive foreign policy of the U.S. empire, this direct violation of the Geneva Convention might not even be worthy of a footnote — except to the people of Syria.



In fact, as *The Free Thought Project*’s Justin Gardner previously [reported](#), the unsavory character heading Genie Oil is none other than Efraim “Effie” Eitam, an Israeli military commander and former Knesset member who once called for the expulsion of the “cancer” of Arabs from Israel.

“Expel most of the Judea and Samaria Arabs from here,” Eitam arrogantly [asserted](#) during a soldier’s memorial service in 2006. “We cannot be with all these Arabs and we cannot give up the land, because we have already seen what they do there. Some of them may be able to stay under certain conditions, but most of them will have to go.”

In addition to the eyebrow-raising cabal of Eitam, Murdoch, Cheney, and Rothschild, Genie Oil and Gas [appointed](#) new members to its Strategic Advisory Board last September, [including](#):

“Dr. Lawrence Summers, 71st Secretary of the Treasury under President Clinton and Director of the National Economic Council under Pres. Obama; former Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu, who is credited with helping pass the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Bill while she chaired the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; former governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson, who became an energy insider after serving as the Clinton administration’s Energy Secretary; and former Director of Central Intelligence, R. James Woolsey, who co-founded the U.S. Energy Security Council.”

At stake is a 153 square-mile region in the Golan Heights, demarcated by Israeli authorities as exclusive territory for Afek to perform exploratory testing, which began in 2015, through early April 2017.

However, even beyond the not-at-all-minor issue of legality, Afek’s drilling in the region has stirred another, perhaps more imperative, concern. A large aquifer supplying the entire region’s drinking water is positioned uncomfortably close to the stores of fossil fuel — raising contamination concerns sufficiently serious that an Israeli high court issued a temporary restraining order in 2014, though it was quickly dismissed.

But none of this bothers Murdoch, Cheney, Rothschild, and the others, as the Golan Heights to Big Oil represents little more than an exploitative business opportunity. Syria, in fact, has been systematically torn apart primarily because foreign powers and radical groups seek to protect their varied oil interests.

While the Afek ilk set their sights on Golan Heights oil and natural gas, [Turkey](#), the U.S., [Russia](#), [Daesh](#), and a spate of [others](#) have been fighting over Syria’s geostrategic [location](#) for major oil pipelines under the cover of religious and civil strife.

“[W]e may want to look beyond the convenient explanations of religion and ideology and focus on the more complex rationales of history and oil, which mostly point the finger of blame for terrorism back at the champions of militarism, imperialism and petroleum here on our own shores,” Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., intoned in an April [editorial](#) for Ecowatch.

As Kennedy astutely noted, U.S. interventionism in the Middle East, and particularly Syria, has little to do with fighting terrorism and far more to do with the region’s rich petroleum reserves — as in the case of Genie’s magnates. And such insistent international meddling at the behest of corporate oil interests so destabilized the entire region, it [led to](#) the formation of Daesh (ISIS) and similar radical groups.

Of course, oil exploration certainly benefits the ongoing push by Israel to expand its occupation and settlements, since U.S.-backed Big Oil operates under the premise the manufactured nation’s encroachment on Syrian territory is perfectly legal. Often, as is the case with Afek and Genie, the Golan Heights is dismissively referred to as “Northern Israel.”

Environmental and humanitarian groups vocally criticize Afek’s exploratory drilling, but despite growing international outcry, have not succeeded in halting ongoing tests.

Considering the notoriously powerful, monied warmongers backing Afek’s petroleum plans, outrage and violation of international law wouldn’t factor one iota in matters concerning the Golan Heights.

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