

ANOTHER SPOOKED-UP BUSHCO CRONY DABBLING IN KURDISTAN

It was bad enough that PFIAB member and Bush uber-donor Ray Hunt was doing business in Kurdistan. That put one of the President's top private advisors on intelligence, someone who has access to a great deal of classified intelligence, and someone whose privately held company evades all kinds of public scrutiny, setting up shop in Iraq and potentially contributing to its destabilization.

But now we learn that Richard Perle has joined Hunt in the oil rush in Kurdistan (h/t egregious).

Mr. Perle, one of a group of security experts who began pushing the case for toppling Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein about a decade ago, has been discussing a possible deal with officials of northern Iraq's Kurdistan regional government, including its Washington envoy, according to these people and the documents.

It would involve a tract called K18, near the Kurdish city of Erbil, according to documents describing the plan.

It's bad enough that the former Defense Policy Board Chair and one of the big champions of the war is looking to get rich off of Kurdistan's oil. More troubling, though, is that he's doing so via a company that seems to be the pure incarnation of the kinds of dubious Turkish ties that Sibel Edmonds has talked about.

A consortium founded by Turkish company AK Group International is seeking rights

to drill there, the documents say. Potential backers include two Turkish companies as well as Kazakhstan, according to individuals involved.

AK's chief executive is Aydan Kodaloglu, who, like Mr. Perle, has been involved with the American Turkish Council, an advocacy group in Washington. She didn't respond to requests for comment. Phyllis Kaminsky, who identified herself as the U.S. contact for Ms. Kodaloglu, said she herself was aware of the drilling plan but referred questions about it to Mr. Perle.

"Richard would know the most," Ms. Kaminsky said. "He is involved, I know that."

Without going too deeply into Edmonds' allegations, let me just say by far the best treatment I've seen of it is Chris Floyd's piece seeing the murky relationships that Edmonds reported to be an outgrowth of (I'd say a reincarnation of) the amorphous networks of influence, money laundering, legally sanctioned covert ops, illegal ops, and arms deals normally referred to as BCCI. I've seen evidence (regarding Brewster and Jennings) that seems to refute some things Edmonds has said; I've seen reasons to believe she was describing an entire world as viewed through one slat of the blinds on a picture window; and I've seen Chuck Grassley, a champion of whistle blowers, move on from Edmonds' case. Which suggests many things. But all of it still means that Perle's ties to the Turks are a quasi-spooky nexus of power and influence.

And now, courtesy of the well-connected Richard Perle, the Turkish company AK Group is now dabbling in Kurdistan, the home base of Kurdish forces that—Turkey insists—are a threat to Turkish security.

It does make you wonder whether the State

Department, while still ostensibly discouraging deals with Kurdistan, is helping AK Group find deals like they were with Hunt Oil? It almost makes you think the Bush Administration is encouraging these kinds of deals, doesn't it?