

# PRIMING THE PUMP

Some years ago when Paul Wolfowitz was asked why we went to war in Iraq but not North Korea, he noted that Iraq “swims on a sea of oil.” [Update: Note worldwidehappieness’ comment that the Guardian’s reporting on this—and therefore this syntax—took Wolfowitz’ quote out of context.] And while less obviously a war for oil, our presence in Afghanistan promises to keep the US in the “Great Game” in central asia fighting for oil. More recently, former US officials Zal Khalilzad and Jay Garner are cashing in on their Iraq experience to win oil contracts there.

Yet, as a Deloitte report lays out, our giant war machine requires more and more oil every year to go to war to control these oil resources. (h/t Danger Room)

Deloitte conducted a study of energy use in wartime from World War II (WWII) through the current Middle East wars, and found that there has been a 175% increase in gallons of fuel consumed per U.S. soldier per day since the Vietnam conflict. In today’s conflicts, fuel consumption is 22 gallons used, per soldier, per day, for an average annual increase of 2.6% in the last 40 years, with an expected 1.5% annual growth rate through 2017. This has been driven by several factors: the increasing mechanization of technologies used in wartime, the expeditionary nature of conflict requiring mobility over long distances, and the rugged terrain and the irregular warfare nature of operations.

The increase has occurred despite the significant increase in fuel efficiency in internal combustion and jet engines used with armored vehicles, tanks, ships and jet aircraft, and the use of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and

submarines. However, these significant improvements in efficiency are vastly overshadowed by the higher number of vehicles and increasing rate of use. Furthermore, the increasing number of convoys required to transport an every increasing requirement for fossil fuels is itself a root cause of casualties, both wounded and killed in action.

There is, hopefully, an ironic teleology here: the military is being forced to use more and more alternative fuels. But the use of those alternative fuels will, to a large degree, make this giant oil-sucking war machine less critical.

Anyway, perhaps we can use this stat to put more federal money into alternative fuels.