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**AS TRUMP MUSES ABOUT SEIZING IRAQ OIL, ENERGY EXPERTS SAY IT MAKES NO SENSE**

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WASHINGTON -- Overshadowed by Donald Trumps false assertions in his first days in office about inauguration crowd size, a highly controversial statement from the new president with greater importance received far less attention.

Before a group of CIA employees on Saturday, Trump said the United States should have taken Iraqs oil during its eight-year war there.

Now, I said it for economic reasons, Trump said. But if you think about it ... if we kept the oil, you probably wouldnt have ISIS because thats where they made their money in the first place, so we should have kept the oil. But, OK, maybe well have another chance.

Trump made similar statements during his winning presidential campaign, including at a forum moderated by NBCs Matt Lauer on September 7. Now that Trump occupies the Oval Office, his hint that the United States may have another opportunity to seize Iraqs oil supply is raising fresh objections.

This is foolish, Kenneth Pollack, a senior fellow at Brookings Institution, said. This is a typical Trump remark. Its moronic. It makes no sense. We couldnt just suddenly grab Iraqs oil and walk away with it.

In order to extract the oil, American forces would need to occupy the country, a costly, dangerous, and politically risky process, Pollack said. He added Iraqi resistance to these efforts would be quite strong given oil is a crucial source of income for the country.

In response to Trumps comments, Massachusetts Representative Seth Moulton, a former Marine, tweeted on Saturday, No. Thats pillaging, and its a war crime. Moulton could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said Tuesday that Iraqs oil is the countrys constitutional property, adding that he was still unclear exactly what Trump meant by his comments, according to Reuters.

On Monday, when asked to clarify the presidents comments, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Trump wants to make sure American interests are protected as part of the countrys foreign policy strategy.

If were going in to a country for a cause, I think that he wants to make sure that Americas getting something out of it for the commitment and the sacrifice that were making, he said.

At the forum in September, however, Trump made a similar suggestion about taking Iraqs oil, saying the U.S. would only need to leave a certain group behind to do it.

It used to be, To the victor belong the spoils, he said at the time. Now, there was no victor there, believe me. There was no victor. But I always said: Take the oil.

Experts say the process of extracting and transporting oil is time-consuming and expensive.

You cant take oil any faster than you can pump it out of the earth and to do that, you not only have to secure the well. You have to secure the entire export system, said Anthony Cordesman, the Burke Chair in Strategy Emeritus at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Its not something that is going to happen particularly peacefully.

He added that there would be strategic concerns, given the illegal nature of the proposal.

You also have to consider what the reaction would be of virtually every country allied with the United States, Cordesman said. It is simply a totally unworkable proposition.

Experts also raised questions about the usefulness in seizing Iraqs oil as a strategy for weakening ISIS. Most of Iraqs oil is in the south of the country and controlled by Shia Muslims, who hate ISIS, a terrorist organization comprised of Sunni Muslims, said Robert McNally, the president of the Rapidan Group, an energy consulting firm in Bethesda, MD.

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