

# Pompeo enlists US energy conglomerates for global oil war

By Bill Van Auken  
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US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered an extraordinary speech this week to a conference attended by representatives of the major US energy conglomerates in which he appealed to “Big Oil” to play an increasingly direct role in the drive by US imperialism for global dominance and the preparation for war on every continent.

Speaking Tuesday at the annual CERAWEEK conference in Houston, Texas which brings together US oil and gas company executives, representatives of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and US government officials, Pompeo stressed that the steep growth in US energy production, driven by what industry insiders describe as the “shale revolution,” has provided Washington with a potent weapon to use against its global rivals.

The growth in energy production, with the US surpassing both Russia and Saudi Arabia as the largest crude oil producer late last year, and estimates that US exports will exceed those of Russia in the next three years and those of Saudi Arabia in the next five, is seen by the US ruling elite as a means of exerting its hegemony on a worldwide scale.

Pompeo’s speech provided a blunt description of US predatory aims across the planet that involve the interests of the American-based energy conglomerates.

His attempts to present this as some kind of moral crusade were laughable. Countries targeted by US imperialism, he claimed, were “using their energy for malign ends, and not to promote prosperity in the way we do here in the West. They don’t have the values of freedom and liberty, or the rule of law that we do, and they’re using their energy to destroy ours.”

The “prosperity” promoted by Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, ConocoPhillips and other US-based energy conglomerates is that of their CEOs and major

capitalist investors. Their values of “freedom and liberty” and “rule of law” extend just as far as their freedom to exploit the planet’s energy reserves at will and to impose the rules dictated by the US government to protect their interests.

Pompeo went on to link the interests of “Big Oil” to the multiple geostrategic conflicts between US imperialism and its global and regional rivals.

He stressed that US energy production and export was crucial to countering a series of “bad actors.”

“We don’t want our European allies hooked on Russian gas through the NordStream II project, any more than we ourselves want to be dependent on Venezuelan oil supplies,” Pompeo said, referring to the expansion of a natural gas pipeline linking Russia to Central Europe. He stressed that US liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports could “make Europe free from that Russian intervention.”

This pitch for promoting US energy dominance in Europe came as the Pentagon announced that it is preparing to develop and test new low-flying intermediate-range nuclear missiles beginning in August, after the formal expiration of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) between the US and Russia, torn up by the Trump administration last month. The Pentagon has also sent officials to Warsaw to discuss the establishment of a permanent US base in Poland, dubbed “Fort Trump” by Polish officials.

Pompeo also denounced China, claiming: “China’s illegal island-building in international waterways isn’t simply a security matter. By blocking development in the South China Sea through coercive means, China prevents ASEAN members from accessing more than \$2.5 trillion in recoverable energy reserves.” Clearly, the main concern is that these reserves could be

exploited by US-based conglomerates.

Beijing issued an angry rebuke to Pompeo's charge, denouncing his remarks as "irresponsible" and insisting that "Nations in the region are capable of resolving and managing the disputes in their own way." It added, "Nations outside the region should refrain from stirring up trouble and disrupting the harmonious situation."

The day after Pompeo's speech, two B-52H Stratofortress bombers flew from Guam over the disputed areas of the South China Sea, the second flight carried out in 10 days in the face of Chinese objections. The warplanes are capable of carrying nuclear payloads.

The US secretary of state also signaled the importance of US energy production in underpinning the economic blockades imposed by US imperialism on both Iran and Venezuela, measures that are tantamount to acts of war.

Pompeo vowed to tighten the stranglehold on Iran in the coming period. "We're committed to bringing Iranian crude oil exports to zero as quickly as market conditions will permit," he said. He declined to answer a question as to whether Washington is preparing to revoke waivers granted to a number of countries dependent upon Iranian oil.

Pompeo told the energy executives that Washington is "using all of the economic tools at our disposal" to effect regime change in Venezuela, including the embargo on Venezuelan oil exports imposed in January. He denounced the Venezuelan government for shipping oil to Cuba at a "subsidized price," contrasting this practice to the "superior business model" of the United States.

After delivering the speech, Pompeo, asked by CNBC whether Washington is considering military action in Venezuela, thuggishly repeated the mantra that "every option is on the table."

Appearing together with Pompeo, Secretary of Energy Rick Perry was asked if the overthrow of Maduro would lead to the reassertion of control over Venezuela's oil reserves, the largest on the planet, by US-based energy giants. "Absolutely, I think that is the real message, that the national companies want to see this regime outside so that we can return," he replied.

Pompeo's pep talk to US "Big Oil" about supporting the predatory aims of US imperialism was hardly

necessary. The two have been intertwined for well over a century. Pompeo's predecessor as secretary of state, it should be recalled, was Rex Tillerson, the former CEO of Exxon, whose predecessor, Standard Oil, monopolized control of Venezuela's oil industry until its nationalization in 1976.

The oil corporations have been intimately involved in the US wars of the 21st century. The invasion of Afghanistan, directed at furthering US influence over the vast energy reserves of Central Asia, resulted in the installation of Hamid Karzai, a former consultant of Unocal, as president. The US ambassador to the country, Zalmay Khalilzad, who served as Karzai's handler, also worked for the oil company in plotting the construction of strategic pipelines across its territory.

In advance of the Iraq war, Vice President Dick Cheney, the former CEO of the oil service giant Halliburton, organized a "task force" on Iraqi oil comprised of major US oil executives. Detailed maps were drawn up for the parceling out of the spoils of the US war of aggression launched in 2003.

If the secretary of state is compelled to make a fresh appeal to the "patriotic" profit interests of the energy conglomerates it is because US imperialism is now preparing for a far greater conflict, a world war with catastrophic implications for humanity.

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