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# CHANNEL 4 NEWS

SPECIAL REPORTS

## Oil rush

Broadcast: October 25, 2001

Reporter: Liam Halligan

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**Freedom, justice, a world rid of terrorism, Operation Enduring Freedom has a whole range of stated objectives.**

**But is there another, less well advertised motive to the bombing of Afghanistan?**

**With world-wide demand for oil increasing and the Gulf States- in particular Saudi Arabia- vulnerable to instability the United States is desperate to tap the vast untapped fields of Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states.**



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**And as Liam Halligan explains Afghanistan is central to trying to move oil from there to the west:**

The September 11th atrocities sparked a coalition - a "crusade" said George Bush - for freedom and justice. But take a closer look. There's an important subtext to the struggle over Afghanistan. OIL.

Over the last few years, you may have read that the West - and particularly the US - is becoming less oil dependent. But it's just not true.

Back in 1970, the US used 16m barrels each day. Today that's ballooned to 22m - making America by far the world's biggest oil importer.

The European Union used 12m barrels a day 30 years ago. Now it's 15m.

And oil's not just used for petrol. Right now, you're reading off a computer monitor made of plastic, presumably in a warm room and probably wearing man-made fibres. All thanks to oil.

### **So where does it all come from?**

Saudi Arabia, of course, is the biggest exporter - over 7m barrels per day. Iran, Iraq and Kuwait are big players too.

But don't forget the Former Soviet Union to the East - which exports almost 4,500,000 barrels daily. Apart from Russia, it's these newly independent Central Asian states that are key.

**Already 20 BILLION barrels of oil reserves have been found in Kazakhstan - and there could be much more. The oil and gas so far discovered in these parts is worth THREE TRILLION dollars in today's prices.**

That's why Western oil companies are so interested this oil to world markets.

It's the culmination of the Great Game. The struggle for influence in Central Asia is the last great oil rush, as the West tries to reduce dependence on the Gulf.

Russia's already built a pipeline from Kazakhstan to the Black Sea and onto the outside world, earning billions in oil and gas exports.

US oil companies could try and build from Baku through Georgia , or on to Turkey's Mediterranean coast.

But it would be much, much cheaper to build pipes from Central Asia through Afghanistan, to the Gulf Coast in Pakistan.

That's a major reason the US unofficially backed the Taliban in the mid-90s, when American oil men were planning such a pipeline. But when the Taliban turned it's back on Uncle Sam, Western oil money got scared.

Afghanistan - once the stomping ground of Czars and commissars - is no stranger to the Great Game.

As a pipeline route, this remote region is crucial if Western powers are to reduce their dependence on Saudi Arabia - itself potentially unstable.

The Gulf War was largely about oil. You won't hear it said often but, inadvertently, this one is too.

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