GREG MUTTITT

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Freedom of Information Officer, Headquarters,
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SCIENTIFIC/EDUCATIONAL/NEWS MEDIA
100 FREE PAGES

APR 14 2009 05

April 13, 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

Freedom of Information Act request: Iraq oil minister meeting, 07/26/06

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), I hereby request that copies be provided to me of:

- Documents relating to meetings of Husayn Shahristani, Iraq Minister of Oil, with US officials and oil company representatives, on July 26, 2006, taking place in Department of Energy headquarters, Washington, D.C. Please include the minutes, preparatory notes, agendas, presentations and other substantive supporting documents (such as documents submitted to the meetings, or circulated to be discussed at the meetings).

(Please note that there are a number of alternate spellings of Dr. Shahristani's first name: "Hussein", "Husain", "Hussain" etc).

To help you to identify this information, I attach below a news article describing the meetings, by David Ivanovich of the *Houston Chronicle*.

Treatment of withheld information
If you decide to withhold any of these records (or portions thereof), please explain the basis for your exemption claims, in order to permit me to reach an informed decision as to whether or not to file an administrative appeal.

If an exemption applies, however, please consider exercising your discretionary release powers to disclose the records. Additionally, please release all reasonably segregable portions of the records that do not meet an exemption.

Time required for processing
If you are unable to provide a full and substantive response to this request within the 10-day time limit specified by section 1004.5(d) of the Department of Energy's FOIA

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FOIA-2009-000270

regulations, please provide me as soon as possible with your best estimate of how much extra time you require, in order to allow me to consider whether to request expedited handling.

Preferred format
My preference is to receive the information in electronic format – either (preferably) by email, or on computer disc. If sent by email, please break up the information such that no single email exceeds 15 megabytes in size. If any information is sent by conventional mail, please use airmail.

Fee waiver request
I request a waiver of fees, under section (a)(4)(A)(iii) of the FOIA. I require the above information to disseminate it to the public, and not for any commercial purpose. I shall disseminate it through my book 'Fuel on the Fire', on the subject of oil policy in Iraq, for which I have a publication agreement with publishers the Random House Group Limited. The book is expected to have a large circulation worldwide (exceeding 100,000), including within the United States. Its publication will be combined with media articles and blogging. As evidence of my ability to generate such coverage, my work has previously been reported in the *Washington Post, Time, National Public Radio, Financial Times, Dow Jones Newswires*, local US radio stations, and numerous non-US and online outlets.

I am an expert in Iraqi oil policy, which I have studied since 2003. (Until earlier this year, I did so on behalf of the London-based non-profit research and advocacy group Platform). I have traveled twice to Iraq, I have strong contacts with Iraqi and non-Iraqi oil experts and stakeholders, and have spoken many times at conferences of policymakers, civil society, business, journalists and academics. With this specialist knowledge, I am well placed to interpret the requested information to a public audience.

Disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the role of the US government in reconstructing Iraq. It is evident that there is considerable public concern for the future of Iraq, as seen in sustained, extensive media coverage, in widespread civil society engagement, in opinion polling and in direct expressions of concern by citizens. However, the majority of the publicly available information (in particular, media coverage) on the US role in Iraq focuses on military activities; much less is known about the behind-the-scenes policy development, which will be no less important to the future of the country, including the prospects of peace and security. Oil, which accounts for around 95% of Iraqi government revenue, is a vital part of this picture.

The specific role of the Department of Energy in arranging contact between Iraqi officials and international oil companies, and in facilitating discussion on the proposed Iraqi oil law, is little known amongst the public. Furthermore, on the question of oil in Iraq there are numerous suspicions and conspiracy theories. As such, publicly disseminating information about the US contribution to Iraqi oil policy is likely to lead to a more informed discussion, and significantly enhance public understanding.

If this fee waiver is denied, please inform me of your reasons. In that case, for the purpose of assessing fees, please treat me as a representative of the news media, under FOIA section (a)(4)(A)(ii)(II). In consideration of such fee status, please note:

- The definition of "news media" in the Open Government Act of 2007, as "any person or entity that gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn the raw materials into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience" (sec.3);
- The definition of "news" in the Department of Energy's FOIA regulations as "information that is about current events or that would be of current interest to the public" (section Sec. 1004.2(m)); and
- The ruling in *National Security Archive v. Department of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381 (D.C. Cir. 1989) that the Freedom of Information Reform Act of 1986 requires a broad interpretation of "news media" as a person or organization who publishes and disseminates information to the public, including through the publishing of books.

In any case, please notify me if costs are to exceed $50. I agree to pay costs not exceeding that amount, subject to your consideration of my above submissions on fee status.

Contacting me

If you require any clarification on this request, on my fee status, or on any other matters, please contact me by email at r by telephone at

Wherever possible, I would prefer that written communications in relation to this request are sent by email rather than posted letter.

Yours faithfully,

Greg Muttitt

Iraqi looks for U.S. oil deals

By David Ivanovich
The Houston Chronicle (Texas)
July 27, 2006 Thursday
Distributed by Knight/Ridder Tribune News Service
SECTION: BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL NEWS

WASHINGTON -- Iraq's oil minister met with executives from the nation's major oil companies Wednesday, hoping to lay the groundwork for future oil deals for his energy-rich but violence-ridden country.

Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani conferred with representatives from nine oil companies at the U.S. Energy Department's headquarters to discuss how best to attract foreign investment soon to the war-ravaged country.

Iraq's vast oil resources "are waiting to be developed," Shahristani told reporters after the meeting.

Officials from Exxon Mobil Corp., Chevron Corp., ConocoPhillips, Shell Oil Co., Marathon Oil Co., BP America, Anadarko Petroleum Corp., Occidental Petroleum Corp. and Hess Corp., along with Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, attended the meeting, the Energy Department said.

Iraq is not yet ready to begin negotiating actual deals or to identify specific fields that might be opened to foreign investment.

"We have to do some homework," Shahristani said.

Instead, Shahristani said he solicited advice about what Iraqis might want to include in a new hydrocarbon law, which the government in Baghdad hopes to enact before the end of the year.

Several of the oil companies suggested Iraq's national oil company enter into joint venture agreements with foreign partners, a business structure producers argue might encourage foreign companies to try doing business in Iraq despite the obvious risks.

Asked about the session, Sarah Howell, a spokeswoman for BP in Washington, said her company was happy to meet with the oil minister.

"We're constantly looking at where we can do business in many different parts of the world, as long as it makes sense for us to do business there," Howell said.

Exxon Mobil spokesman Len D'Eramo, in an e-mail, said company officials attended the meeting "at the invitation of the Department of Energy to hear what Iraqi Oil Minister Shahristani had to say about the status and outlook of the energy sector in Iraq."

Iraq is keen on attracting foreign investment because the country's economic lifeline -- oil production -- continues to lag behind pre-war levels.

Iraq was producing about 1.9 million barrels of oil a day in May, compared with about 2.6 million before the war, the U.S. Energy Information Administration said.

That's because the country's energy infrastructure has been the target of attacks -- about 315 between April 2003 and June 2006, the Energy Information Administration said.

Iraq's largest oil pipeline, from the northern area of Kirkuk to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, has been hit repeatedly and has operated only sporadically over the last three years.

In May, a fire destroyed much of the port facility at Khor al-Amaya, hampering Iraq's efforts to boost exports.

But Shahristani is optimistic Iraq will be able to boost oil output to 3 million barrels a day by the end of the year and to 4 million to 4.5 million within the next three to four years.

Eventually, Iraq -- which boasts the world's third-largest oil reserves -- hopes to become the globe's largest oil producer.

Shahristani said Iraqi's current government hopes to avoid the mistakes made by former leader Saddam Hussein and invest in a number of fields around the country rather than just a select few.