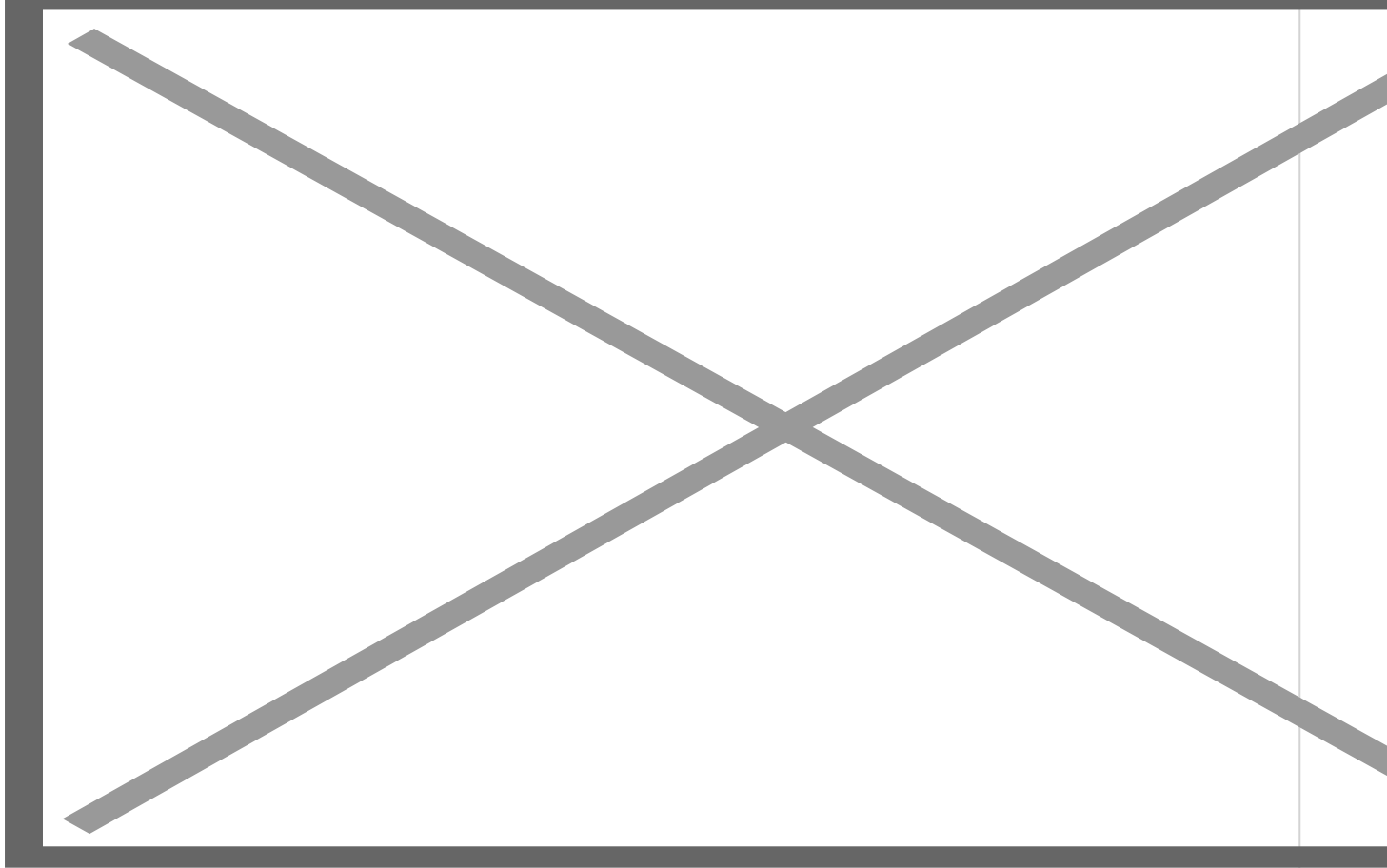


U.S. transfers convoys laden with stolen Syrian oil from Hasakah to Iraq

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American soldiers patrol on the M4 highway in the town of Tal Tamr in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah on the border with Turkey on January 24, 2020. (Photo by AFP)

Damascus, July 17 (RHC)-- U.S. military vehicles, including tanker trucks laden with stolen Syrian oil, have left the Khrab al-Jir base in the northeastern province of Hasakah for Iraq over the past 24 hours.

Syria's official news agency SANA, citing local sources in the village of Suwaydiyah in al-Ya'rubiya region, reported that two convoys of 70 vehicles headed towards Iraq after passing through the al-Waleed border crossing. The sources added that "a convoy of 44 vehicles, including tankers of stolen Syrian oil, refrigerators, and a number of armored vehicles" left for north of Iraq.

The US military forces also reportedly took out a convoy of 26 vehicles from the same area on Thursday. The US military has stationed forces and equipment in northeastern Syria, with the Pentagon claiming that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of the Daesh Takfiri terrorists. Damascus says the deployment is meant to plunder Syrian resources.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump admitted on more than one occasion that American forces were in Syria for its oil. Having failed to oust the Syrian government through proxies and direct involvement in the conflict, the US government has stepped up its economic war on the Arab country.

Last June, the US enacted the so-called Caesar Act that imposed the toughest sanctions ever on Syria with the alleged aim of choking off revenue sources for the government. The sanctions, however, have crippled the war-torn country's economy by prohibiting foreign companies from trading with Damascus.

Syria says the real purpose of the measures is to target Syrians and their livelihood. Officials also say the stepped-up smuggling of strategic Syrian resources is the latest inhumane tactic using people's basic needs as a tool to pressure the government.

Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal al-Mekdad said in May that the United States is engaged in widespread plundering of Syria's natural resources, and also reinforces terrorists to take on the Arab country. "The US ravages our resources and backs terrorist groups [inside Syria] by bringing weapons into the country," Mekdad told Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network.

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