

Southern Iraq being drained of oil

by UPI

BASRA, Iraq -- The Iraqi government has accused neighboring Iran of taking over more than 15 oil wells on the Iraq-Iran border. Inadequate security permit militia groups in the south -- allegedly backed by neighboring countries -- to loot the region's riches, particularly along the borders, the Alsumaria Iraqi satellite network reported Monday. A U.S. report estimated oil smugglers pocketed yearly revenues of nearly \$4 billion, equal to some developing states' budgets, the network reported. Observers said recent clashes between security forces and al-Yamani groups in Basra and Nasiriyah were attempts to demonstrate that Iraqis weren't capable of taking over their country's security, among other things. Evidence of Iran's involvement include Iranian-made grenades, explosives and anti-armor missiles, Alsumaria reported. Also, Tehran was accused of being behind the assassination of two southern governors last August.

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