

Report: Iraq national oil bill imperiled

by UPI

BAGHDAD - There is well-organized trade union opposition to a shaky national oil bill before Iraq's parliament, the independent Global Insight group reported Tuesday.

The analytical and forecasting group said all three of Iraq's ethnic and religious factions -- Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds -- have disputes with how oil revenue should be shared, but the Southern Oil Company Union has also become vocal in criticizing the bill.

Union leader Abood Umara traveled to New York this week and denounced the draft bill because "it emphasizes or confirms U.S. hegemony over Iraqi oil fields," and favored international oil companies over Iraqi workers, the group said.

Umara's remarks followed a visit to Baghdad by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who reinforced pressure on Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to reach three key political benchmarks, one of them being passing an oil bill before the parliamentary summer recess.

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