

Are Vampire Capitalists About to Descend on Crisis Wrought Myanmar?

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Nowadays, most important news gets ignored, buried or goes under the radar by corporate-owned media, especially when this news reveals the dark side of the “free market” or the dark plans for more parasitic, predator capitalism unleashed against a weakened populace or country.

Myanmar is the modern name for a country the English speaking empires still call Burma.

On May 2nd, US President George W. Bush ordered a new round of sanctions on Burmese state companies to pressure the military leadership there over human rights abuses and to push for political change.

Few wires picked up this Act of Aggression from Washington. Instead, the whole world watched with wonder as Tropical Cyclone Nargis slammed into Myanmar on May 2nd and May 3rd.

For over a week, meteorologists knew that Myanmar would be hit so it is either ironic or planned that Bush would sanction Myanmar the same day it was to be devastated.

Bush announced in his statement on May 2nd, "Today I've issued a new executive order that instructs the Treasury Department to freeze the assets of Burmese state-owned companies that are major sources of funds that prop up the junta."

The sanctions were targeted at companies and industries that produce timber, pearls and gems. Notice that gas and oil were not on the list of sanctions.

Myanmar is one of the world's oldest oil producers. It exporting its first barrel in 1853. Rangoon Oil Company, the first foreign oil company to drill in the country, was created in 1871. Between 1886 and 1963, the Myanmar's oil industry was dominated by Burmah Oil Company (BOC), which discovered the Ychaugyaung field in 1887 and the Chauk field in 1902. Both fields are still in production.

The oil and gas industry was nationalized after a socialist-leaning military regime seized power in 1962. As in many other countries, the State assumed ownership of the resources, either operating them itself or delegating this task to private operators, who were paid for their outlay and work in oil or gas under production sharing contracts called PSCs.

The article, ‘Big Oil Fuelling Burma’s Junta?’

(<http://www.nowpublic.com/politics/big-oil-fuelling-burmas-junta>) says, “...global oil companies are falling all over themselves in the cue to gain access to what may be substantial oil reserves in that fractured country.” If Myanmar was fractured before, it is shattered from Tropical Cyclone Nargis.

French oil giant TOTAL is the fourth largest oil company in the UK, and the fourth largest oil company in the world. On February 21, 2005, the Burma Campaign UK published a hard-hitting new report exposing how oil giant TOTAL plays a crucial

role in funding and protecting Burma's brutal military dictatorship.
(http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/050108C.shtml)

The report said, "There has been little relief for villagers living in the Yadana pipeline region in southern Burma since the Chevron Corporation became a partner to this natural gas venture in 2005."

"Chevron and its consortium partners continue to rely on the Burmese army for pipeline security and those forces continue to conscript thousands of villagers for forced labour, and to commit torture, rape, murder and other serious abuses in the course of their operations," revealed the 76-page report, 'The Human Cost of Energy'.

"Chevron should act on "its moral and legal obligations to human rights rather than profit from human rights abuses," the report added of this project that earned the Burma's junta about 1.1 billion US dollars in 2006, over half of its total earnings from the sale of gas to neighbouring Thailand, which was 2.16 billion dollars that year."

The Yadana pipeline has been dogged by controversy and human rights abuses since its inception in 1991. The venture, to extract offshore natural gas in the Andaman Sea and have it flow along an overland pipe to Thailand, was backed by a consortium that included the US company Unocal, French company Total and a subsidiary of Thailand's state-owned gas and oil company. The local partner was the Myanmar Gas and Oil Enterprise, an affiliate of Burma's energy ministry.

In developing Burmese energy resources, the ruling Myanmar junta has forcibly relocated villages and uses villagers as slave labor. This keeps profits high for foreign oil companies and the ruling junta who get their cut.

Soldiers are contracted by foreign investors to protect energy project sites and pipelines. Violence by these is commonplace, perpetuating the cycle of human rights abuses. Soldiers have been implicated in killings, beatings, rapes and arrests of the villagers living on or by energy fields and pipelines.

On Tuesday, May 6th, President Bush requested the country's junta to allow the United States to provide disaster assistance, saying Washington was prepared to move naval assets to help search for the dead and missing.

Barbara Starr, Pentagon reporter for CNN, reported the same day (May 6) on CNN Business Report that Myanmar could receive all kinds of "help" from the US Navy including help with delivering and sanitizing water.

Why the flip-flop? Why does Bush freeze Myanmar's assets the day it is hit with a Hurricane Katrina-size cyclone and four days later Bush wants to help this crisis wrought country? It's like beating someone to a pulp (freezing assets) and then leaving them on the sidewalk for violent nature to finish the job! And both happened on the same day! Now that the country is properly beaten, Bush wants to help them? This kind of mindset is psychopathic to say the least!

If Myanmar's assets are frozen, how are they to rebuild the country?

Thankfully, the Myanmar military, which regularly accuses the United States of trying to subvert their regime, is unlikely to allow US military presence in its territory. How would the junta make the Navy leave after it and US oil carpet-baggers become entrenched in the rivers and sea around Myanmar, especially since the country is so weakened by cyclone devastation? Think how weakened and powerless New Orleans was after Hurricane Katrina and apply this same dynamic to Myanmar.

But with tens of thousands of Burmese dead, more injured and up to a million are homeless, this may be the “Perfect Storm” for proponents of the Friedman Chicago School of Economic’s “Shock Doctrine” where western capitalists, the World Bank and the IMF are always poised to descend on third-world countries devastated and paralyzed by shock, despair, huge losses of life and destroyed infrastructures from natural or other disasters.

The article “Turning a Tsunami Into a Windfall - For Some” begins (http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=53cd6f6b99245288a7d2316c5c563e62) says “The Christmas tsunami of 2004 left a devastating trail of destruction but for some it opened up huge business opportunities. It created a blank slate for what Naomi Klein calls “shock doctrine.” This is how shock doctrine works. First there is a disaster, a coup, a terrorist attack, a tsunami, a hurricane: the population goes into shock, the economy is in a shambles, it’s a perfect opportunity to push through unpopular economic shock therapy. This means privatizing resources and selling state assets.”

If you’ve read Naomi Klein’s book THE SHOCK DOCTRINE: THE RISE OF DISASTER CAPITALISM, you will know that half a million Sri Lankan fisher folk were moved inland to free up the beaches for “development” the tourist market. This left a half million people without their traditional land to live on and without a way to make an income.

The Washington Consensus has been pushing for a “regime” change in Myanmar for a long time. They base it on “abuse” of human rights and endless western propaganda that the “majority” of Burmese want “democracy.”

Who is Bush to push for “human rights” reform when most of the world regards America as the worst human rights abuser on the planet? This is evidenced by the fact that the US prison population dwarfs that of other nations (<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/04/23/america/23prison.php>), the illegal detainment and torture of inmates in Guantanamo, illegal wars leaving over 2 million Iraqis dead and more injured (for “regime change”), and torture of its prisoners internationally and nationally to name a few offenses.

American “human rights” reform is always done by the barrel of a gun or economic genocide (like freezing assets) or both.

The current junta had scheduled a May 10 referendum as a key stage in a seven-step “roadmap to democracy” that should culminate in multi-party elections in 2010, as a replacement to the absolute power wielded by the army since their 1962 coup.

With Myanmar lying in ruins, Tropical Cyclone Nargis has delayed this vote. Myanmar state radio announced that Saturday's vote on the military-backed draft constitution would be delayed until May 24 in 40 of 45 townships in the Yangon area and seven in the delta. It indicated that the balloting would proceed in other areas as scheduled.

Not only is freezing a country's assets an Act of Aggression, it can also be interpreted as an Act of War.

On March 30th, another "under the radar" important news story was released and few news wires picked it up.

In, 'Day of Infamy: The March 20, 2008 US Declaration of War on Iran' (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=8429>) Global Research reported the American government used its political muscles to freeze Iran's assets through the FinCEN unit of the US Department of Treasury.

Global Research's article says that this sanction will "...deliver the ultimate death blow to Iran's ability to participate in the international banking system... What it really means is that the US, again through FinCEN, has declared two acts of war: one against Iran's banks and one against any financial institution anywhere in the world that tries to do business with an Iranian bank."

Although Myanmar's oil output is small (9,500 barrels a day), the oil industry believes that there are billions of untapped reserves below Myanmar's soil and sea.

By its structure, western capitalism constantly needs new "markets" to keep itself afloat. Predatorial and without conscience, the Lords of the "Free Market" either wait like vultures in the treetops for wounded and weak prey or they wait "in the cue to gain access to what may be substantial oil reserves in that fractured country."

However they do it, it seems that vampire capitalists are about to rush in on crisis wrought Myanmar and plunder it like they've done to countless other countries when they were in severe shock.