

## **The Story of Exploration for oil in the Hadhramaut**

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It all started during the British rule of Aden and the Protectorate.

'In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the British Government extended the protection of the Queen's Empress to the territories of the Qu'atyi, Mahri, and Wahidi rulers in Hadramaut through the medium of treaties negotiated by the Resident at Aden, then under the Government of Barmby.'<sup>1</sup>

It was long ago that the Qu'atyi sultanate and the British protectors have been negotiating with different oil companies for exploration. They did not reach an agreement on the terms of the oil companies. What makes matter more complicated was the inclusion element of tribes who resided in the region of exploration and the Qatayri Government. Some of them rejected the offer advanced by some oil companies and demanded a similar oil agreement like the ones signed with the Gulf States.

'In 1953, Petroleum Concession Limited (PLC) established a geological base near the bedouin well at Thamud.'<sup>2</sup>

'Iraq Petroleum Company's (IPC) search for oil ultimately proved fruitless. In 1959, the Company abandoned the Hadhramaut after failing to agree terms with the Sultans and, in the following year, withdrew from the Protectorate altogether. BP, which had separately investigated Kamaran Island in the Red Sea, also withdrew.'<sup>3</sup>

At the time the British official version was that there were insufficient commercial quantities of oil in the region when the geological surveys later on proved wrong. At the time of oil exploration Hadhrami poets and singers celebrated the occasion by welcoming the good news of oil exploration. Some critics attribute the shutdown of the oil rigs to a political understanding between the British and the Saudi rulers.

Today, 'Yemen had proven oil reserves of around three billion barrels as of January 1, 2012, and petroleum accounted for roughly 25% of GDP and 70% of government revenue. However, the country's infrastructure, particularly its pipelines, has suffered from sabotage, leading to serious interruptions to the flow of oil. Piracy has curtailed offshore activity. If the difficult internal situation continues, the immediate future of oil exploration in the country looks uncertain.'<sup>4</sup>

### **Foot notes**

1. Recent Literature on Hadramaut, George Renez, Middle East Journal, Vol.5 No.3 Summer 1951 pp 371-377

2. Oil Exploration in Yemen, Michael, Quentin Morton, History of Oil Middle East, Petroleum Geoscience, Magazine, this article appeared in Vol.10 No.2, 2013.

3. Ibid as 2.

4. Ibid as 3.