

Israel Grants First Golan Heights Oil Drilling License To Dick Cheney-Linked Company

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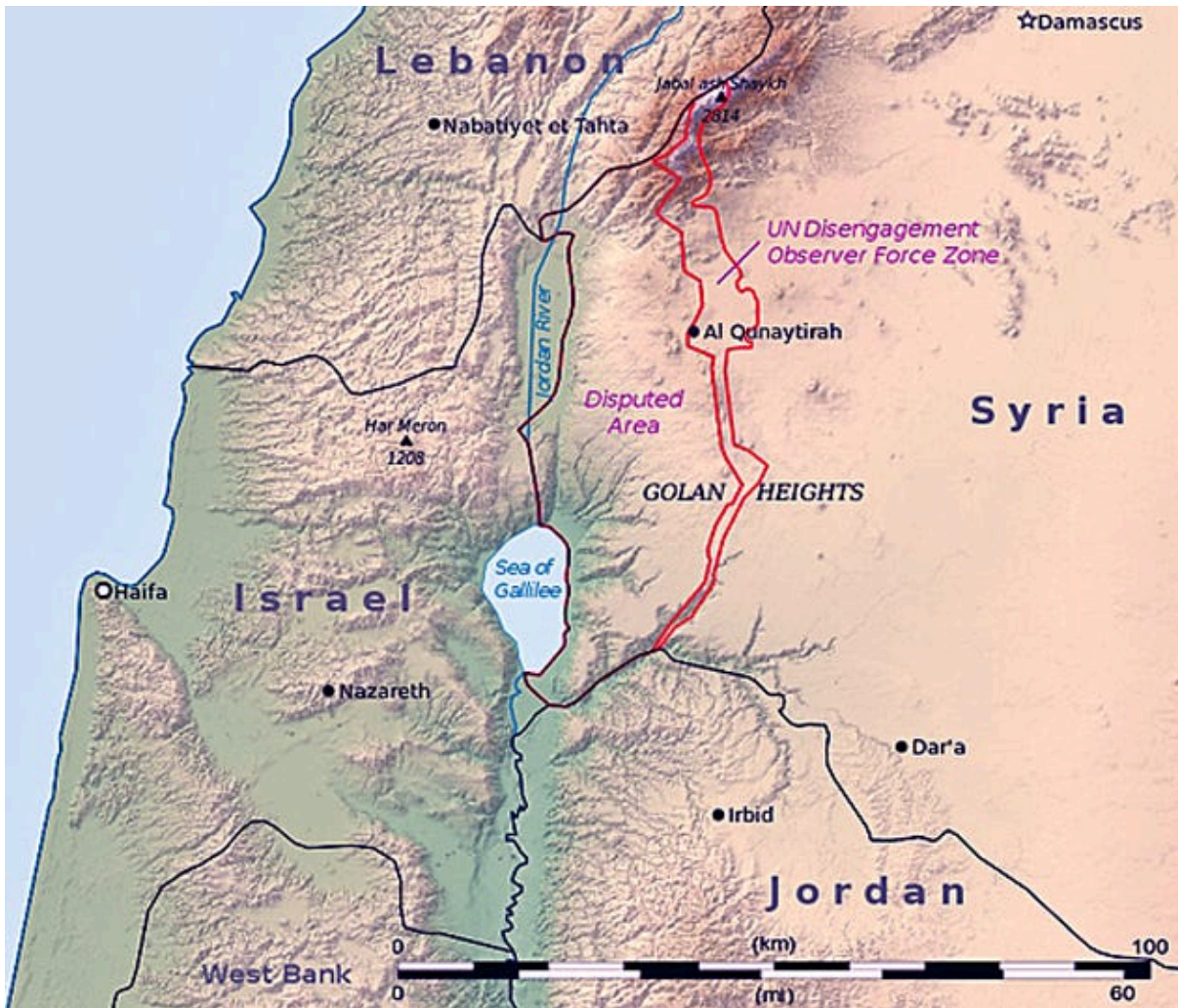
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Israel has granted a U.S. company the first license to explore for oil and gas in the occupied Golan Heights, [John Reed of the Financial Times reports](#).

A local subsidiary of the New York-listed company Genie Energy — which is advised by former vice president Dick Cheney and whose shareholders include Jacob Rothschild and Rupert Murdoch — [will now have exclusive rights](#) to a 153-square mile radius in the southern part of the Golan Heights.

That geographic location will likely prove controversial. Israel seized the Golan Heights in the Six-Day War in 1967 and annexed the territory in 1981. Its administration of the area — which is not recognized by international law — has been mostly peaceful until the Syrian civil war broke out 23 months ago.

“This action is mostly political - it’s an attempt to deepen Israeli commitment to the occupied Golan Heights,” Israeli political analyst Yaron Ezrahi told FT. “The timing is directly related to the fact that the Syrian government is dealing with violence and chaos and is not free to deal with this problem.”



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[imedia Commons](#) There are about 20,000 Israeli settlers in the Golan Heights.

Earlier this month [we reported](#) that Israel is considering creating a [buffer zone](#) reaching up to 10 miles from Golan into Syria to secure the 47-mile border against the threat of [Islamic radicals in the area](#).

The move would overtake the UN Disengagement Observer Force Zone that was established in 1973 to end the [Yom Kippur War](#) and to provide a buffer zone between the two countries.

Reed notes that recent [natural gas finds off Israel's coast](#) in the Mediterranean have made the country's offshore gas reserve one of the largest of its kind in the world, meaning Israel may become a significant energy exporter in its region.

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