

War on the Islamic State (ISIS): TV Anchor to US Treasury Official: Oil Fields and Refineries, “Why Can’t You Just Bomb Them?”

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PBS NewsHour correspondent Margaret Warner ([11/18/14](#)) had on the US Treasury official, David Cohen, who’s in charge of trying to counter ISIS by cutting off its finances. But it seems like it’s hard to talk to an elite media host for very long before they start fantasizing about blowing things up.

WARNER: These are essentially fixed assets, the oil fields they have taken over, the refineries they have taken over, in Iraq and Syria. Why can’t you just bomb them out completely?

COHEN: I’m not a military targeter, so I don’t...

WARNER: You have enough on your plate.

COHEN: I have enough on my plate without selecting specific targets to hit. But it is absolutely the case that we’re working very closely with the Department of Defense and—in thinking about going after some of their oil resources.

Now, it’s very easy for a TV host to use a phrase like “bomb them out completely”; there’s no requirement, in your studio, to think about what that would look like for oil fields that contain billions of barrels of oil to be completely bombed out. Nor do you have to think about what happens to the people on the receiving end of those bombs—as the New York Times’ Kareem Fahim ([11/13/14](#)) did in an exceptional piece that looked at how US airstrikes were (predictably) making the population of the Syrian city of Raqqa more sympathetic to ISIS. “Ten civilians were killed in a coalition airstrike on Sunday that hit one of the oil facilities run by the Islamic State, where many people had found work,” Fahim wrote. No word on whether the facility had been bombed out “completely” or only partially in the course of killing the ten workers.

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