

Ray Hunt, the Texas oil man who landed a controversial oil production deal with Iraq's Kurdistan regional government, has enjoyed close political and business ties with Vice President Dick Cheney dating back a decade – and to the Bush family since the 1970s.

“Documents obtained by the Committee indicate that contrary to the denials of Administration officials, advisors to the President and officials in the State and Commerce Departments knew about Hunt Oil's interest in the Kurdish region months before the contract was executed,” Waxman wrote.

Waxman said the Hunt-Kurdish case also raised questions about the veracity of similar administration denials about its role in arranging more recent contracts between Iraq and major U.S. and multinational oil companies, including Exxon Mobil, Shell, BP and Chevron.

Plus, there's the longstanding suspicion that oil was a principal, though unstated, motive behind the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq, which sits on the world's second-largest oil reserves.

Administration officials – and much of the mainstream U.S. media – have ridiculed the oil motive charge as a conspiracy theory.

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