



Drumbeat: December 1, 2012

Posted by [Leanan](#) on December 1, 2012 - 10:15am

[Saudi-Led Oil Lobby Group Financed 2012 Dark Money Attack Ads](#)

The “American” in American Petroleum Institute, the country’s largest oil lobby group, is a misnomer. As I [reported](#) for The Nation in August, the group has changed over the years, and is now led by men like Tofiq Al-Gabsani, a Saudi Arabian national who heads a Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Aramco) subsidiary, the state-run oil company that also helps finance the American Petroleum Institute. Al-Gabsani is also a registered foreign agent for the Saudi government.

New disclosures retrieved today, showing some of API’s spending over the course of last year, reveal that API used its membership dues (from the world’s largest oil companies like Chevron and Aramco) to finance several dark money groups airing attack ads in the most recent election cycle.

[Luxury cars sold for a song after bubble bursts in 'China's Dubai'](#)

BEIJING -- With miles of freshly paved roads, little traffic and some seriously avant-garde architecture, the Chinese city of Ordos provides a driving environment most car enthusiasts can only dream of.

Yet rich Chinese who have invested in the resource-rich city are now frantically rushing to sell off their new luxury toys to stem the excessive bleeding that has come with a steep decline in coal prices.

As the boom turns to bust, some luxury car owners are said to be asking for as little as 10 percent of the typical asking price.

[Oil Caps First Monthly Gain Since August on Economy](#)

Oil capped its first monthly increase since August on signals that economic expansion in the U.S. is accelerating.

Futures rose 1 percent after the MNI Chicago Report’s business barometer showed activity in the U.S. grew in November for the first time in three months. Investors also weighed developments in U.S. budget talks as Democrats and Republicans discussed how to avoid more than \$600 billion a year in spending cuts and tax increases known as the fiscal cliff.

[Senate Votes to Add Iran Sanctions as White House Objects](#)

The U.S. Senate approved new economic sanctions on Iran, overriding objections from the White House that the legislation could undercut existing efforts to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions.

The Senate voted 94-0 yesterday to impose additional U.S. financial penalties on foreign businesses and banks involved in Iran's energy, ports, shipping and shipbuilding sectors, and impose sanctions on metals trade with Iran.

[Nations May Keep Sanctions Exemption for Cutting Iran Oil](#)

Oil-importing nations are continuing to cut back their purchases from Iran, making it likely those countries will earn a new round of exceptions from U.S. sanctions next week.

Two U.S. officials said yesterday that publicly available oil trading figures indicate that the seven nations whose waivers are up for renewal on Dec. 8 have continued to significantly reduce their Iranian oil imports over the last 180 days.

[Thousands support Egypt president in rival rally](#)

CAIRO (AP) — Tens of thousands of people waving Egyptian flags and hoisting large pictures of the president are demonstrating across Egypt Saturday in support of him and Islamic law.

[Good Morning! It's The 70th Anniversary Of The Start Of Nationwide Rationing At The Pump](#)

On December 1, 1942—70 years ago today--nationwide gasoline rationing went into effect in the United States. By the end of that year, half of the vehicles in the U.S. were issued "A" stickers, which allowed owners to purchase 4 gallons of gas a week. "B" stickers were issued to vehicle owners such as industrial workers whose driving was considered essential to the war effort. They were good for 8 gallons a week. "C" stickers were given to others considered essential to the war effort including doctors, ministers and mail carriers. VIPs including members of Congress received "X" stickers, which allowed for unlimited amounts.

[Mexico Oil Monopoly and Drug War Head New President's Agenda](#)

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto takes office today vowing to bolster Latin America's second- biggest economy by ending a seven-decade oil monopoly and improving security in a nation wracked by drug violence.

[Energy Policy Must Be Stable to Be Sustainable, Council Says](#)

Global energy policies must be stable to contribute to sustainability as demand for energy rises, the World Energy Council said.

The group interviewed 40 executives from the energy industry for its World Energy Trilemma report about what they would like from policy makers. The group defines sustainable energy systems as those that have security of supply, social equity and can mitigate the impact on the environment. The executives said they wanted predictable policies, incentives for long-term investments and a greater encouragement of research and development.

[Making the right energy choices for rural communities](#)

With the intermittency of renewable energy sources, there is also a need to look into cleaner energy options which could support renewable energy production. For instance, currently used coal and heating oil could be easily replaced by decentralised and lower-carbon fuels. A full switch from coal and heating oil to LPG in the five biggest EU Member States would result in a reduction of 7.7 Mt CO₂-eq in rural households and services: emissions from over 7.5 million inhabitants.

[Fracking 'exploitation' report dismissed by energy department](#)

The energy department has dismissed a report that "60% of the UK countryside could be exploited" for fracking, the controversial gas extraction method.

[Pressure mounting on Obama over pipeline decision](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Embarking on a second term, President Barack Obama faces mounting pressure on a decision he had put off during his re-election campaign: whether to approve the \$7 billion proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline between the U.S. and Canada.

[Americans are giving diesels a second look](#)

After years of trying, automakers are again taking a stab at selling diesel-powered cars in North America.

[U.S. gas boom could kill eco cars](#)

If the automotive revolution — EVs, hybrids and four-cylinder econoboxes — they have been promising is to occur, it will be promoted on pump prices, not saving the

environment.

[Operating Silver Line could cost Metro millions more than expected](#)

Metro may have to spend millions more than anticipated to operate the new Silver Line because trains will have to travel farther east than planned, according to two people with knowledge of the problem.

Transit officials originally expected eastbound Silver Line service to end at the Stadium-Armory stop, according to the two sources. But officials have since concluded that the tight turning space near the station would make it difficult for trains to reverse course there. Instead, trains will travel five additional stops to Largo before turning around to head back toward Virginia.

[Chairman of Utility Under Fire Resigns](#)

The chairman of the Long Island Power Authority resigned on Friday, continuing an exodus from the troubled agency, which has received harsh criticism from customers and elected officials for its response to Hurricane Sandy.

[LA oil company faces criminal charges for spill](#)

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles city prosecutors have filed criminal charges against an oil company for a 245-gallon crude oil and water spill last December.

The city attorney's office said Friday that Brea Canon Oil Co. violated state regulations and unlawfully discharged crude oil and contaminated water into a flood channel.

[New View from Inside Fukushima: Chaos and Uncertainty](#)

Even in the early days of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in March of last year, as the reactors spiraled out of control, the terse statements issued by the operator felt like an exercise in denial. Radiation readings were “higher than the ordinary level” (about 100 times higher), and a “loud noise and white smoke” had hit the No. 4 reactor (a possible hydrogen explosion).

Now, footage released by the operator from the crisis's early days – the second set of recorded teleconferences between the command center of the tsunami-hit plant and the company's headquarters in Tokyo – demonstrates just how little those announcements reflected the chaos and uncertainty on the ground. The gap between the initial assurances given by company and government officials, and the ultimate scale of the nuclear disaster, has helped fuel a crippling public mistrust of government.

[Another suit filed to halt reactors at Kepco's over Oi nuclear plant](#)

FUKUI — A lawsuit was filed Friday by 154 people in Fukui and other prefectures seeking to shut down the only nuclear reactors now in operation in Japan, at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s power plant in Oi, Fukui Prefecture, contending Kepco had the two units restarted before their safety was guaranteed.

[The elephant in the room](#)

Despite the catastrophe at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the issue of nuclear power has been given lower priority in the runup to the Dec. 16 Lower House election. But the launch of a new party, Nippon Mirai no To (Japan Future Party), by Gov. Yukiko Kada of Shiga Prefecture, a veteran environmental studies scholar, will not only help deepen discussions on the subject but also offer a concrete option for voters who are concerned about the problems posed by nuclear power. The new party's main theme is "graduation from nuclear power generation," meaning the eventual abolition of all of Japan's nuclear power reactors.

[U.S. regulators grill Edison on bid to restart part of San Onofre](#)

The utility wants to fire up one of the two reactors at 70% power for five months, before taking it offline for inspection. Edison says the procedure would be safe.

[How To Make a Bundle on Energy Efficiency](#)

This is a potential energy revolution of the back-office sort. It's about developing new business models rather than developing new metal. It's wonky, opaque, and largely untested. It's just beginning, and it still could fizzle, because scaling it up would require resolving a thicket of thorny technical and financial questions. But if it works, it could make some investors a lot of money. And, theoretically at least, it could do more for the planet than a roomful of futuristic energy-saving devices that sit, sparkling and unused, on a shelf.

[Seeking to Start a Silicon Valley for Battery Science](#)

The Energy Department will establish a research hub for batteries and energy storage at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Ill., and spend up to \$120 million over the next five years, the department announced on Friday.

[Federal Government to Sell Wind Farm Leases](#)

The federal government plans to sell leases for wind farms off the coasts of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Virginia, the first time it has sold competitive leases for wind energy on the outer continental shelf, officials said Friday.

[Denmark Moves To Cool Its Red-Hot Solar Energy Market](#)

Denmark's energy minister introduced legislation earlier this month that would cool the country's red-hot solar market. The new rules trim generous subsidies that in conjunction with the falling price of panels had triggered exponential growth in the number of residential solar energy systems added to the grid this year.

[Solar Industry Borrows a Page, and a Party, From Tupperware](#)

GOODYEAR, Ariz. — The neighbors had gathered on the patio of a sun-baked ranch here, eager to hear the party's hosts talk about their products and how they could enhance their lives. But in place of the timeworn arrangement of plastic storage containers or cosmetics on the coffee table, the couple was showing off an array of a different sort: the 32 solar panels on the roof.

[World's First Open-Ocean Farm An Unfettered Success](#)

The Velella Project Beta-trial tested the world's first open-ocean, unanchored fish farm — a drifting "Aquapod" fish pen entrained in eddies in the lee of the Big Island of Hawaii.

[Inside Germany's Bold Plan to Tap Deep-Sea Resources](#)

Thirty-five hundred meters beneath the surface of the ocean, hydrothermal vents are spewing minerals from mid-ocean ridges, creating billowing plumes of photogenic "black smoke" and providing chemical energy for one of the most unique and unexpected ecosystems on the planet. This flocculent flow ultimately settles on the seafloor, producing metal-rich sulfide rock deposits that have begun to attract attention from mineral-mining companies.

[Calif. agency to buy desalting plant's entire output](#)

SAN DIEGO - A regional water agency approved a contract Thursday to buy the entire output of what would be the Western Hemisphere's largest seawater desalination plant, clearing the way for construction to begin early next year.

[Great Desert Garbage Patches](#)

Ocean garbage patches get a lot of attention, but a lot of trash is blowing across some of the most treasured and remote parts of America's desert wilderness, according to a new study out of the University of Arizona.

Biologist Erin Zylstra mapped and added up all the wind-dispersed plastic trash bags and latex balloons in two protected parts of the Saguaro National Park in Arizona. She

was surprised to discover that these particular kinds of very mobile trash outnumbered desert tortoises and western diamondback rattlesnakes. Like in the oceans, the bags and balloons pose potential threats to wildlife.

[Army Vows to Speed Eforts to Keep Mississippi Open](#)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, responding to pressure from Midwestern lawmakers, has agreed to speed up measures to keep the drought-shrunken Mississippi River open to barge traffic.

With falling water levels threatening to halt traffic on the nation's busiest waterway within weeks, a contingent of heartland senators met with Army Corps officials yesterday to press for the release of more water from a major tributary and the blasting of submerged rocks that obstruct traffic.

[Some wish Islam would inform climate debate](#)

The Quran, Islam's holy book, is filled with more than 1,500 verses to nature and Earth. Yet the voice of Islamic leaders is missing from the global dialogue on warming.

That disappoints Muslim environmental activists, who believe the powerful pull of Islam could be the ideal way to change behavior in both poor countries, where many people's main source of information is the mosque, and in some wealthy countries like Qatar where Islam remains important even as rapid growth has made it the world's top per capita emitter of carbon dioxide.

[Qatar permits rare protest for workers' rights](#)

DOHA (Reuters) - Qatar permitted a rare protest for workers' rights on Saturday at a government-approved rally of about 300 activists demanding action to combat climate change.

Marchers, mostly foreigners attending the November 26-December 7 talks among 200 nations on slowing global warming, chanted "Arab leaders, time to lead" and "climate action now" as they marched along the waterfront past skyscrapers in central Doha.

[Gulf states quiet on climate change pledges](#)

Doha, Qatar - Over the course of millions of years, heat and pressure deep underground blessed this sweltering nook of the Middle East with some of the biggest fossil fuel deposits in the world.

Depending on one's point of view, it's either ironic or a propos that the pint-sized state of

Qatar - whose hydrocarbon reserves have made it among the richest countries in the world - is hosting this year's annual UN climate change conference.

[UN climate boss: No support for tough climate deal](#)

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — The United Nations climate chief is urging people not to look solely to their governments to make tough decisions to slow global warming, and instead to consider their own role in solving the problem.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](#).