

# THE HUNT FOR PRIVATE SOVEREIGNTY

A number of people have pointed to this story about the gaping holes in the nativist Republicans' border fence that just happen to coincide with the property lines of powerful GOP donors. Several of you have even pointed out that Ray Hunt—a big Bush donor and PFIAB member—happens to own a chunk of the property that the wall skirts.

Just 69 miles north, Daniel Garza, 76, faces a similar situation with a neighbor who has political connections that reach the White House. In the small town of Granjeno, population 313, Garza points to a field across the street where a segment of the proposed 18-foot high border wall would abruptly end after passing through his brick home and a small, yellow house he gave his son. "All that land over there is owned by the Hunts," he says, waving a hand toward the horizon. "The wall doesn't go there."

In this area everyone knows the Hunts. Dallas billionaire Ray L. Hunt and his relatives are one of the wealthiest oil and gas dynasties in the world. Hunt, a close friend of President George W. Bush, recently donated \$35 million to Southern Methodist University to help build Bush's presidential library. In 2001, Bush made him a member of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, where Hunt received a security clearance and access to classified intelligence.

Over the years, **Hunt has transformed his 6,000-acre property, called the Sharyland Plantation**, from acres of onions and vegetables into swathes of exclusive, gated communities where houses sell from \$650,000 to \$1 million

and residents enjoy golf courses, elementary schools, and a sports park. **The plantation contains an 1,800-acre business park and Sharyland Utilities, run by Hunt's son Hunter, which delivers electricity to plantation residents and Mexican factories.**

The development's Web site **touts its proximity to the international border and the new Anzalduas International Bridge now under construction, built on land Hunt donated.** Hunt has also formed Hunt Mexico with a wealthy Mexican business partner to develop both sides of the border into a lucrative trade corridor the size of Manhattan.

But I haven't seen anyone comment on what Hunt seems to be building in South Texas. He has donated land for a bridge, built a development that spans the border, for which Hunt's own family members provide the utilities. He has done so in partnership with rich Mexicans he declines to name. "A lucrative trade corridor the size of Manhattan."

This is not just about a Bush crony getting a pass on being evicted to make way for a futile racist-inspired wall. This is about a Bush crony building his own little principality that will—I'm guessing—turn the labor of poor Mexicans into McMansions on the US side of the border. This has all the trappings of a little world that supersedes the sovereignty of the US.

Which gets rather eerie when you couple this information with the fact that Ray Hunt was one of the first people to invest in oil in Kurdistan (I say "first" in the post, but he was just one of the first).

Does it surprise you that the first company to sign an oil deal with Iraqi Kurds is Hunt Oil, a company with very close ties to Bush and our country's intelligence infrastructure?

Texas' Hunt Oil Co. and Kurdistan's regional government said Saturday they've signed a production-sharing contract for petroleum exploration in northern Iraq, the first such deal since the Kurds passed their own oil and gas law in August. A Hunt subsidiary, Hunt Oil Co. of the Kurdistan Region, will begin geological survey and seismic work by the end of 2007 and hopes to drill an exploration well in 2008, the parties said in a news release.

Nope. It doesn't surprise me, either. But I am interested in what it portends for long-term plans in Iraq.

First, some background. The Hunt family that owns Hunt Oil (it's privately held, so we don't get to scrutinize financial statements) is one of the big money Texas donors behind the Bush family political empire. Ray Hunt, the current chair of the company, is also on the board of Halliburton and the King Ranch, meaning he probably knows to duck when he goes quail hunting with Dick Cheney. Hunt is also on the board of trustees for Shrub's new presidential library, which has just announced its plans for a wacky democracy institute that will give cover for more imperialism around the world. Oh, and Hunt is also on PFIAB, which means he gets to review a huge amount of intelligence information and then refuse to reveal its classification and declassification activities—not to mention weigh in on whether or not the President's illegal intelligence activities are illegal or not.

It's also worth noting that one of Hunt Oil Company's planes has been spotted taking off and landing at a CIA training

facility.

In short, Hunt Oil Company is as wired in as oil companies get—which is saying something.

Now do you see why I find it interesting that Hunt Oil Company is the first company into Kurdistan's oil fields?

You see, in addition to making Hunt richer, both these deals appear designed to really screw with the sovereignty of an established country: Iraq, in the case of the Kurdistan deal, and the US, in the case of the "Sharyland Plantation." They provide spooked up Hunt with little back doors in and out of key countries.

Now why do you suppose one of Bush's closest cronies is investing in all these back doors?

Update: I should have added—this kind of ambiguous sovereignty is precisely what attracted the likes of Jack Abramoff to floating casinos and Native American reservations. I've always suspected—though it's just a suspicion—that there's a money-laundering function that we're not aware of (thanks partly to the Republican candidate for President's rather selective investigation of Abramoff, I might add). Crony capitalists don't like real sovereign spaces because they're much more diligent about enforcing their own laws.