

RSK and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Activist Briefing

RSK was set up expressly to provide an "independent " consultancy service to the oil and gas industry. RSK ENSR have established themselves as one of the UK's leading 'environmental consultancies' with a client portfolio ranging from major oil and gas companies, power generation and distribution companies, central government departments, financial institutes, legal practices and major information technology companies to statutory conservation bodies, local councils, local enterprise companies, training and enterprise councils and a broad range of manufacturing industry. Major clients include BP, Shell, Esso, Enron, Elf, Texaco and AMEC.

This company exists to smooth the way for multinationals, conducting Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, archaeological surveys and communications and training aids. They help remove any obstacles to the project going ahead: *"Should a proposed project be subject to public inquiry, we work with the legal team and act as expert witnesses preparing and presenting evidence. We go on to help our clients obtain whatever further consents and approvals might be needed."* Their mission statement not surprisingly makes no mention of any commitment to the environment or to ecological principles, only to profit.

The Situation in Azerbaijan:

(According to our campaign's fact finding mission and partner organisations there:) Azerbaijan is subject to continual government surveillance. Human rights abuses and retribution for protesting contribute to an environment in which open debate of the project is difficult. There is active participation on the part of the regional appointed officials to quiet any dissent or even criticism. Government & pipeline critics are liable to arbitrary arrest & detention, torture & intimidation. Azerbaijan has one of the most corrupt governments in the world (in '99 only 3 were worse!). Social/non-oil development money is instead going to more oil construction. There is an all-powerful state president within an authoritarian system. The country is in effect now a colony of Western oil companies. People are afraid to dissent, though there is civil unrest & riots. In spite of all this, when not observed people did express objections to the pipeline – they've already seen the effects of BP pipelines. The promises that have been made to local people will not be met, it's already been admitted. There's been next to no consultation, despite the claims in the ESIA (Environmental and Social Impact Assessment) done by RSK, & 'public' or route information has not been available. The 'project sponsors' should ensure that the concerns and demands of the people of Azerbaijan are freely expressed and fully addressed before the project moves forward.

RSK's Involvement with the Project

- "RSK conducted Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) in Azerbaijan. An ESIA was carried out modelling likely impacts of leaks at various sensitive locations. The main issues arising from the study were the protection of watercourses and archaeological sites, and the protection of sensitive sites. Public meetings were held to enable the public to have input to the project & later to present the report's findings.
- Finally, at the construction stage, we supply environmental and archaeological officers to work as part of the construction team. They are present to oversee the work and to help the client and contractors attain the highest practicable standards.
- AETC (Azerbaijan Environment & Technology Centre), owned by RSK, was commissioned by BP to conduct an "environmental key issues report" to help choose the route of the pipeline through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. "

What we think:

- "protection of...sites." This is bollocks. Archeological sites of interest older than Stonehenge are

being destroyed in Azerbaijan, and spring water, an important industry in the country, would be threatened in the event of an oil leak or seepage. The desert in the proposed Gobustan National Park is under consideration for world heritage status, has 10,000 year old rock carvings, & a rare reptile. BP will happily sacrifice all this, on behalf of the local people, for profit, enabled by RSK.

- The company is still involved in the process of building the pipeline.

Other involvement in oil pipelines

Additionally, RSK operates **Pipeline Manager GIS** software which is used for pipeline maintainance. This software is being used in both Azerbaijan and Georgia. Pipeline Manager already covers more than 5,000 km of pipelines (as well as providing a host of other services for pipelines the world over).

What they say:

Archaeological Surveys

"Our archaeologists provide a full range of cultural heritage services [– surveys, management of excavations etc.] Archaeological officers are often an essential part of any construction team ... If they make any significant finds it may be necessary to stop construction for a short while and bring in a team of archaeologists to investigate a site."

(RSK are a seemingly 'independent' PR Company who tell greenwash lies to try to make the oil companies seem less blatantly destructive.)

Communications and Training

"Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the benefit of publicising positive environmental measures... RSK ... produces a range of training and communications aids aimed at target audiences which include staff, customers, business partners and other stakeholders such as local communities or government departments... "

(They tell lies and repress/distort people's grievances. Without companies like RSK people would stand up to oil companies more. As it is, BP is being propped up by bullshitting companies like RSK!)

CONCLUSION: Summary of important bits!

> RSK did the Environmental and Social Impact Assesment (ESIA) in Azerbaijan. This is a sham, a pack of lies and is just PR for BP. They failed to consult or even inform local people and ignored their worries.

> Ancient rock carvings and precious spring water supplies are threatened by the pipeline. RSK did not point out their importance.

> RSK worked with the authoritarian government in Azerbaijan whilst conducting the ESIA. Many people were afraid to voice their dissent in front of this corrupt regime which has a history of human rights abuse.

> RSK are going to be involved in the construction stage of the pipeline. They will almost certainly supply 'pipeline maintence software' for the project. We are not sure exactly how, so let's try and find out from them!

> They tell lies and repress/distort people's grievances. Without companies like RSK people would stand up to oil companies more. As it is, BP is being propped up by bullshitting companies like RSK!