

## The Afghan Papers - Part 19

Wed, 20 Jan 2016 16:00:00, newstips66, [category: afghanistan, post\_tag: afghanistan-waste-exhibit-a-kajaki-dam, category: elon-musk, post\_tag: elon-musk-scam, post\_tag: elon-musk-tesla-fires, category: energy-dept-slush-fund, category: lithium-batteries, post\_tag: lithium-ion, post\_tag: more-than-300m-spent-and-still-not-done-a-senate-subcommittee-is-looking-at-waste-by-a-pentagon-task-force-it-would-do-well-to-review-the-reasons-why-a-major-hydroelectric-power-plant-sits-unfinishe, post\_tag: news-video-coverage, post\_tag: the-afghan-papers-part-1, post\_tag: the-many-covered-up-deaths-of-tesla-motors, post\_tag: troll-farms-in-electric-cars, category: web-spying, category: worldnews]

### Afghanistan: Is miraculous \$1T mineral discovery just war PR ops?

American news media was all aflutter yesterday over a [story by James Risen in the New York Times](#) about an Immaculate Detection of massive mineral wealth in US-occupied Afghanistan. Finally, some positive news from America's longest-running war in history! Afghanistan is suddenly poised to become "the Saudi Arabia of lithium." Let's occupy the place forever, and say farewell to our dependence on foreign lithium for iPhones and Blackberrys! A handful of essential follow-up reads: Armbinder in [The Atlantic](#), a [Christian Science Monitor](#) post by Ben Arnoldy, Blake Hounshell in [Foreign Policy](#), and this Wired Danger Room item by Katie Drummond, all of which point to documents on the "Afghan motherlode" dating back to 2007 and earlier.

[T]he military (and [observers of the military](#)) have known about Afghanistan's mineral riches for years. The U.S. Geological Survey and the Navy concluded in a 2007 report that "Afghanistan has [significant amounts of undiscovered nonfuel mineral resources](#)," including "large quantities of accessible iron and copper [and] abundant deposits of colored stones and gemstones, including emerald, ruby [and] sapphire." Not to mention that the \$1 trillion figure is — at best — a guesstimate. None of the earlier U.S. military reports on Afghan's mineral riches cite that amount. And it might be prudent to be wary of any data coming out of Afghanistan's own Mines Ministry, which "has long been considered one of the country's most corrupt government departments," [The Wall Street Journal](#) reports.

And the timing of the "discovery" seems just a little too convenient. As [Blake Hounshell at Foreign Policy](#) notes, the Obama administration is struggling to combat the perception that the Afghan campaign has "made little discernible progress," despite thousands of additional troops and billions of extra dollars.

[No, the U.S. Didn't Just 'Discover' a \\$1T Afghan Motherlode \(Wired News\)](#) Oh, and the graphic above this piece is a [US Geological Survey Geologic and Mineral Resource Map of Afghanistan](#) from... 2006. [Here's a PDF.](#)

**Update:** James Risen was upset by critical reaction to the *New York Times* piece. In an interview with a Yahoo News blogger (heh), he said he thinks [bloggers sit around "jerking off into their pajamas."](#) The quote was [edited to be more family-friendly](#). Risen later apologized for the outburst, saying he was taken aback by all the internet criticism. The Yahoo item is a good read, Risen is no slouch, and sometimes nuance is lost online. But as a blogger, I choose to remain personally and irreparably offended by the remark 'til the end of all time (or 'til we get out of Afghanistan, whatever comes first).