

ExxonMobil's Ocean Investigator sails for block 10 of EEZ



ExxonMobil's Ocean Investigator research vessel sailed on Tuesday night from Limassol port into block 10 of Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to carry out hydrocarbon explorations for the US oil giant.

The Ocean Investigator had docked at the port of Limassol on March 14.

A second research vessel of ExxonMobil's, Med Surveyor also departed from Limassol on Tuesday and headed towards Piraeus, Greece, after having completed its environmental research in block 10.

Energy programme proceeding as planned, president tells oil and gas forum



Cyprus is promoting three projects that were selected by the European Commission as projects of common interest, because of their benefits to the European energy market, President Nicos Anastasiades said on Tuesday.

The president was addressing the 9th Mediterranean Forum on Oil and Gas in Nicosia, telling delegates that recently, two of the projects had secured EU funding. Specifically, €101 million will be allocated to the CyprusGas2EU project, while the EastMed Pipeline had been awarded €34.5m for technical studies.

The CyprusGas2EU” project aims at allowing the transport of gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe. By 2020, Cyprus will construct a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) in order to import gas in the form of LNG from international markets, Anastasiades said. The EastMed Pipeline aims to transport gas from Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe via Crete and mainland Greece.

A third project, the EuroAsia Interconnector, is an electricity connection between Israel, Cyprus and Greece that is supported by all three governments.

“We intend to continue exercising Cyprus’ rights as an independent and fully integrated Member State of the European Union, proceeding with our exploration programme as planned,” said Anastasiades.

He said this was also part of a broader policy in that the discoveries of significant quantities of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as potential future discoveries, could be a driver for stabilization in the region.

“After all, together with the respect by all parties of international law and national sovereign rights, this is the kind of stable and predictable environment that we are obliged to jointly create, in order to bring in the multibillion

investments needed for developing the East Med's hydrocarbons wealth," he said.

Anastasiades also addressed Turkey's provocations in the island's exclusive economic zone recently.

The president said Cyprus' policy has traditionally been based on regional cooperation and the establishment of long-lasting relationships with all neighbouring countries.

"As we have always maintained, collaboration and synergies achieved in the hydrocarbons sector of the Eastern Mediterranean can feed into the political relations between countries, building the foundations for regional stability and peace," he said.

Initiatives undertaken by Cyprus had been "highly successful" at the bilateral and multilateral levels, with countries such as Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Greece.

At the same time, he added, the recent deal struck between Israel and Egypt was concrete proof that collaborations between countries in the region were already taking place, "and Cyprus, I can assure you, will be an active participant in future developments".

The developments were aligned with the EU's recent Energy Union strategy, which has confirmed the Mediterranean as a strategic priority for reducing EU's dependency on existing energy suppliers and routes, Anastasiades said.

"Our aim remains to support the EU in its diversification efforts, with Cyprus, as an EU member state, having a stable legal and political environment and constituting a reliable partner for both neighbouring countries and oil and gas companies." It was also necessary to lift the island's energy isolation, he said.

Next on the agenda would be the drilling activities of the ExxonMobil/Qatar Petroleum consortium in block 10, which included two back-to-back exploration wells during the second

half of this year, Anastasiades said "Over the past few years we have, in fact, made some remarkable steps towards the realization of our exploration program, which we aspire will soon establish Cyprus as a natural gas producer and a transit country," he added.

He referred to ongoing projects in the field. At present, the ministry of energy and the Aphrodite consortium were engaged in advanced discussions to establish, "the soonest possible", the development and production plan for Aphrodite.

Following the third licensing round and the decision to grant hydrocarbon exploration licences for blocks 6, 8 and 10, to ENI/Total, ENI and ExxonMobil/Qatar Petroleum respectively, "we anticipate with eagerness" the completion of the exploration programme of all licensed companies. The second wave of exploration in Cyprus' EEZ was initiated by the Total/ENI consortium, he said.

After the renewal of its exploration license for block 11, in February 2016, the consortium went ahead with its exploration programme, drilling their first well between June and September 2017. The "Onesiphoros West 1" well resulted in a technical discovery that confirmed the existence of a petroleum system and the presence of a "Zohr"-like, reservoir, the president said.

"A mere two months ago, in January, we also had the completion of the first exploration well in Block 6 by the consortium of ENI and Total. The "Calypso" well encountered an extended gas column with excellent characteristics. This discovery also confirms the presence of the "Zohr"-like play in the Cypriot EEZ," he added.

New Energy era for Europe “there for the taking”



ATHENS: Offshore gas from the Eastern Mediterranean could usher in a new era of energy independence and economic renaissance for Europe, a regional energy expert told a high-profile industry conference in Athens on Friday.

“Almost instantly, the flow of East Med gas into Europe would mean additional diversification and flexibility of supply, closely followed by enhanced competitiveness for European

industry, accelerated economic growth, and dramatic long-term improvements for public finances,” Roudi Baroudi, a veteran of more than 36 years in the oil and gas business, told the Athens Energy Conference.

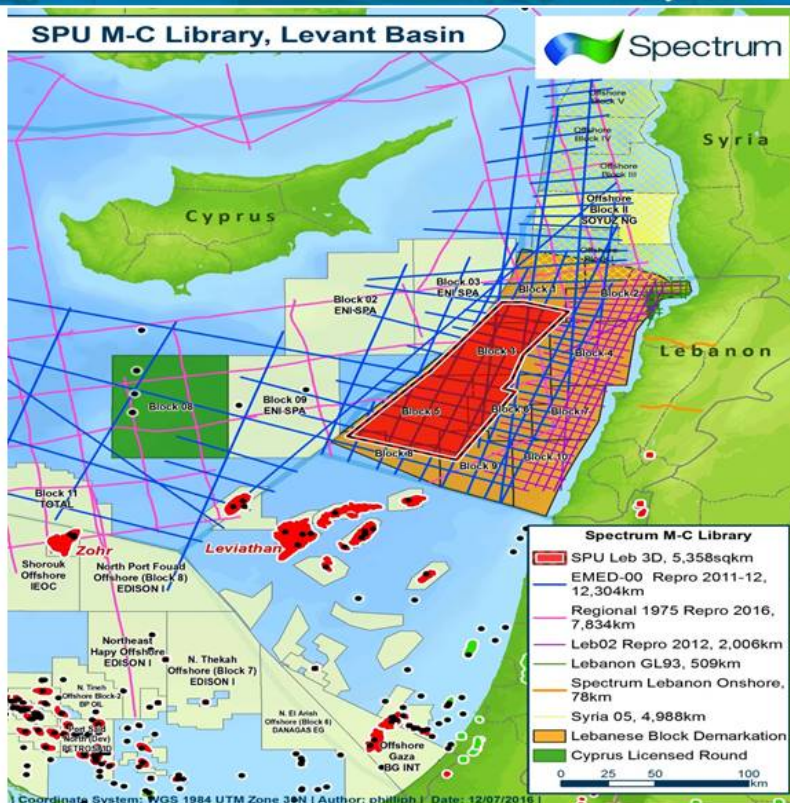
While “East Med gas would be more of a complement than a competitor to supplies already flowing ... from Russia” and other countries, he explained, other factors were also likely to help Europe diversify its energy supply, putting downward pressure on prices and “reducing the potential impact of possible interruptions elsewhere”.

Baroudi, who currently serves as CEO of Energy and Environment Holding, a Doha-based independent consultancy, has advised governments, companies, and multilateral institutions on energy matters, even helping to craft policy for agencies of the European Union and the United Nations. Speaking on the sidelines of the conference, which drew a broad audience including senior figures from both the public and private sectors, he said the timing “could not be better” for Europe.

“Shale gas has made America another energy superpower alongside Russia and OPEC, and liquefied natural gas is now a fully fledged global commodity,” he said. “Plus, the East Med producers will be sitting on Europe’s doorstep, and several countries are already gearing up to start taking massive LNG shipments. Decades of benefits for hundreds of millions of people, all there for the taking.”

Athens Energy Forum 2018

Energy Security and Strategic Investments:
The Way Forward



Athens Energy Forum 2018

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Game-changer: "Shale O&G puts America on global energy stage"

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And expected producer countries like Cyprus, Greece, and Lebanon, Baroudi added, stand to gain even more. "For a variety of historical reasons, most of these countries have not yet achieved the levels of development enjoyed in most of the European Union," he told the conference. "Given the potential rewards for their peoples, the governments involved have nothing less than a moral responsibility to take advantage of propitious circumstances by tapping the oil and gas wealth within their respective social, economic, and geopolitical reaches." Baroudi also has emphasized some of East Med countries are not party to UNCLOS but all countries are signatories to the UN Charter. Therefore, Baroudi reminded that all these countries are under an obligation to "settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered."

He also sounded notes of caution, however. For one thing, he

stressed the need for producer countries to ensure proper management of the proceeds from gas sales to pay social justice. For another, he reinstated on the same countries to avoid international tensions that might impede development of the sector.

Roudi Baroudi Remarks at the 8th Mediterranean Oil and Gas Forum 2017 in Nicosia, Cyprus.





These are truly historic times for the Eastern Mediterranean. The region still has more than its share of problems, but we could be on the verge of a new era – and the energy industry is well-positioned to show the way.

Energy is the lifeblood of modern economies, and all of the science points to massive reserves of oil and (especially) natural gas off the coasts of several Eastern Med countries, including Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon. If responsibly managed, this resource will contribute both directly and indirectly to significant GDP growth, giving these countries the capacity to make long-overdue investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, transport, and other sectors. In turn, these investments will improve overall competitiveness, raise standards of living, reduce poverty, and set the stage for self-sustaining growth over the long term.

For our region, though, “responsibly managed” means more than just following international business, governance, environmental, and safety standards: it also means finding a way to build and maintain economic and political trust, both between nation-states and within individual societies. Whether we like it or not, we are all partners in this endeavor, so we share an interest in achieving the kind of stability that encourages private investment, reduces trade barriers, and accelerates economic activity across the board. If long-time rivals provide sufficient political and/or diplomatic space for our emerging energy industry to take root, the resulting economic benefits will flow to all concerned, alleviating many of the symptoms – and even some of the causes – of the region’s various problems.

No discussion of this topic is complete without emphasizing the central role to be played by Cyprus. Although every country involved will retain some of its gas production for domestic use, for most of us the real game-changer will be a massive boost in export revenues. There are two ways to get gas to markets in Europe and elsewhere – pipelines and liquid natural gas (LNG) carriers – and Cyprus is clearly the best gateway for both.

Its geographical location, ample coastline, and unique geostrategic position make it: 1) the perfect collection and distribution point for the output of neighbors like Lebanon and Israel; 2) an ideal terminus for one or more pipelines to Turkey and the European mainland; 3) the only viable location for a regional LNG plant; and 4) a natural middleman between regional governments whose relationships are troubled or non-existent. Because of these and other qualities, including its membership in the European Union, Cyprus should be the cornerstone on which the entire edifice of regional energy growth is built.

What is more, the Republic of Cyprus (ROC), has taken serious steps to make the most of these circumstances by establishing

a presence at several steps along the region's energy value chain. It has moved quickly and effectively to make the island an indispensable regional energy hub by passing suitable legislation, setting up a national energy company, and drawing up a world-class regulatory regime. It also has **already signed EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt, Lebanon and Israel**, attracted oilfield support, communications, and other service firms, and has now held three successful licensing rounds for exploration and production rights, securing the participation of major IOCs from around the globe.

The only significant **hurdle** still standing is the decades-old division of the island, where the internationally recognized ROC controls only the southern two-thirds, while the rest is under the **Turkish control through the** "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC"). Here too, however, both sides have demonstrated strong commitment to a negotiated reunification, and while the latest round of talks has been delayed by an uptick in tensions, there is **still reason** to expect **a resumption**.

Among these reasons is the fact that the new US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson – whose previous career as head of ExxonMobil makes him singularly well-equipped to understand the importance of Cyprus – has already taken a direct interest in the peace process. We can only hope that the US, the UN, and the EU will exert even more positive pressure to help the talks succeed, including the powerful inducement of having at least some of the region's gas exports pass through Turkey, which is already one of the world's most important energy corridors.

TRNC. The governments of Greece and the United Kingdom also have critical parts to play in helping the Cypriot people to achieve reconciliation and start reaping the rewards thereof.

The other question mark in the Eastern Med is my homeland, Lebanon, and while a lot of time has been wasted in the past

few years, efforts to get its house in order are finally back on track.

Until recently, political infighting had blocked Parliament's election of a new president for more than two years, the Parliament extended its own mandate for nearly three years, and the prime minister and Cabinet were basically caretakers because of widespread perceptions that they lacked legitimacy. Even before this multi-sided impasse, rival political camps were so mutually suspicious that cooperation was impossible.

Despite these headwinds, some crucial preparatory steps were taken. The Lebanese Petroleum Administration was created in 2012, and while political squabbles delayed its work, the LPA still found a way to lay the foundation for the country's nascent energy sector: all the necessary mechanisms are in place or ready to be rolled out, including tender procedures and draft terms for the fiscal regime.

It is my pleasure to report that other pieces are now falling into place as well. The former commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Michel Aoun, has been elected president, and he enjoys more broadly based support than any of his recent predecessors. He also has made a welcome habit of insisting that Lebanon can only regain its former glory by ensuring and enforcing the rule of law, something that will be essential if the Lebanese are to keep the proceeds of gas exports from being squandered by incompetence or pilfered by malfeasance.

There is a new prime minister too, and he and his Cabinet likewise enjoy relatively strong acceptance. Last but not least, most political factions have gotten serious about holding new parliamentary elections. The usual debate over constituency size and other rules may cause a delay, but most signs point in the right direction.

As many had hoped, the LPA has moved quickly to take advantage of improving political conditions. Most tellingly, it has

initiated the country's first licensing round, inviting bids for offshore exploration in five of the 10 blocks it has delineated in Lebanon's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). At least two of the five blocks are pretty straightforward: Block 4 lies entirely within Lebanon's EEZ, directly off the coast, while Block 1 lies in the northwest corner, where demarcation has already been agreed with Cyprus. **(As far as I know there is no delimitation agreement between Lebanon and Syria. Actually there is a maritime dispute stemming from the tabling by Lebanon of coordinates for its northern EEZ boundary to the UN to which Syria objected in writing).**

Blocks 8, 9, and 10 are more complicated because all three are in the south, where Lebanon's maritime claims overlap with Israel's. The area in question is less than 5% of Lebanon's EEZ and an even smaller slice of Israel's **claimed EEZ**, which would have been negotiated away under normal circumstances, but the two countries have technically been at war for almost 70 years, punctuated by repeated outbreaks of actual hostilities and even more numerous threats thereof.

The situation is difficult but not impossible. The **US and the UN, as well as Cyprus have rendered their good offices in order to find ways to solve the dispute** by holding separate talks with Israeli and Lebanese officials, and whatever their other disputes, both sides now have a shared interest in avoiding anything that might hinder energy development. With so much at stake in terms of attracting foreign investment, securing export revenues, and accelerating GDP growth, the cost of another shooting war would simply be too high.

Conversely, the benefits – not just for Lebanon and Israel, but also for their neighbors and their would-be customers – of getting down to business are too attractive to pass up. Reliable supplies of cheap, clean natural gas from the Eastern Med would improve energy security for Turkey, the EU, and other consumer nations. Europe in particular would benefit from lower energy costs, reducing a major burden on households

and restoring economic competitiveness. Perhaps most importantly, an East Mediterranean gas boom touched off by diplomacy would set an inspiring example for other regions haunted by longstanding disputes.

Beirut is not out of the woods yet. It still needs to settle several issues, including the establishment of a transparent and accountable Sovereign Wealth Fund to make sure that the benefits of future energy revenues flow to the general population rather than to small groups of economic and political elites. But at least the guiding principles are clear: steer clear of unnecessary frictions with Israel, follow international best practice, and protect the ensuing revenues. Other obstacles may well emerge, but none will be insurmountable if these three rules are followed. REB remarks for Nicosia 2 March 2017

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US Secretary of State Tillerson calls Anastasiades



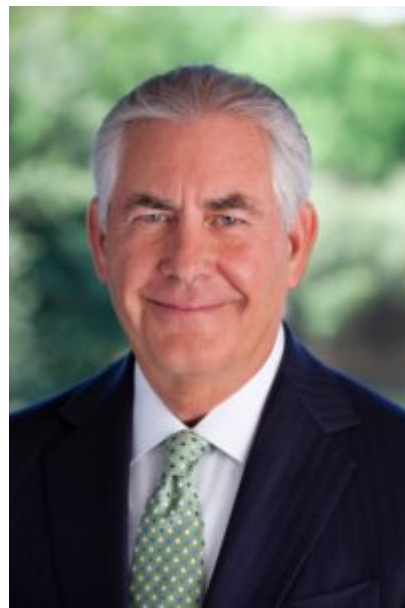
New US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and President Nicos Anastasiades held a telephone conversation on Tuesday evening – the first since the American official took office.

The announcement was made by Government Spokesman Nikos Christodoulides on his Twitter account.

Christodoulides wrote the conversation focused on the suspended UN-brokered Cyprus peace process, bilateral issues but also regional affairs.

Tillerson was expected to also call later on Tuesday Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci.

Così Cipro unita aiuterebbe tutto il Mediterraneo





il Giornale.it mondo

Uno dei fattori chiave che hanno permesso a Donald Trump di vincere a novembre è stata l'enorme voglia di cambiare la politica interna.

Eppure la sua presidenza può offrire enormi opportunità anche per quanto riguarda la politica estera e Cipro, insieme al resto dei Paesi dell'Est Mediterraneo, potrebbero così essere tra i primi beneficiari della politica estera di Trump.

L'isola è divisa dal 1974, nonostante i vari tentativi di riunificazione. Trump non è il primo presidente a seminare speranze per Cipro unita, ma questa volta, dopo molti anni, ci sono seri motivi di credere che un accordo totale ed equo è possibile.

Prima di tutto la figura di Trump. È la prima volta che nella storia americana sale alla Casa Bianca qualcuno di così fondamentalmente diverso rispetto ai suoi predecessori. Molti studiosi si sono focalizzati sulle ripercussioni negative che la politica di Trump porterebbe, ma allo stesso modo sono in vista cambiamenti positivi.

Inoltre, a pesare in senso positivo, c'è la nomina del segretario di Stato. Benché Rex Tillerson abbia una scarsa esperienza nel governo, ha lavorato per dieci anni alla ExxonMobil, una compagnia con 75mila dipendenti, che opera in duecento Paesi. Prima ancora ha personalmente seguito e guidato il processo attraverso cui ExxonMobil ha raggiunto la sua invidiabile posizione in Russia, il più grande produttore di energia del mondo. Insomma, un curriculum che la dice lunga sulle sue capacità.

E non da ultimo c'è la tempistica. Cipro sta costruendo molto rapidamente il suo polo energetico regionale per l'est Mediterraneo. Dalle recenti attività di esplorazioni è stata confermata la presenza di depositi di gas naturale.

Questo sviluppo energetico di Cipro potrebbe essere un perno di vitale importanza, primo per la sua posizione geografica, insieme alla sua posizione geostrategica, e per il fatto di essere membro dell'Unione Europea e, non da ultimo, per lo sviluppo industriale della regione.

Molti protagonisti si sono già messi in gioco, incluso la ExxonMobil che, insieme al Qatar Petroleum, il più grande produttore di gas naturale, si è assicurata i diritti di esplorazione del Blocco 10 del Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone. In campo c'è anche Rosneft, una delle compagnie di energia più importanti della Russia, e Soyuzneftegaz, un'altra compagnia russa.

In questo delicato momento storico, Cipro trarrebbe ovviamente grandi vantaggi da una riunificazione. Prima di tutto,

evidentemente, attrarrebbe più investitori. Se il riavvicinamento tra il presidente russo, Vladimir Putin, e il turco, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, continua così come sostengono molti osservatori, sarà più facile portare avanti una negoziazione positiva. E questo ci fa tornare alla nuova amministrazione americana. Sia l'Unione Europea che l'Onu si sono impegnate a cercare un'intesa su Cipro ma per superare l'ostacolo «dell'ultimo miglio» potrebbe venir richiesto un impegno americano più intenso.

Cipro unificata, che diventa un polo regionale dell'energia sarebbe così un vantaggio non solo per se stessa ma ridurrebbe le tensioni tra Ankara e Atene, e tutti i Paesi vicini del Mediterraneo avrebbero vantaggi dalla stabilità ritrovata, incluso più turismo e più investimenti.

Un discorso non certo facile da realizzare: il processo di unificazione non è facile da raggiungere. Ecco perché una volontà solida dei protagonisti è così fondamentale; le potenziali ricadute positive derivanti dal settore energetico di Cipro potrebbero essere così più forti delle rimanenti obiezioni. È quindi tempo di dare un'opportunità costruttiva e dare un regalo di pace prima a Cipro poi ai paesi del Mediterraneo.

Roudi Baroudi

Ceo della Energy & Environment Holding, basata in Qatar