

# U.S. judge halts Keystone XL oil pipeline in blow to Trump, Trudeau



WINNIPEG, Manitoba/NEW YORK, Nov 9 (Reuters) – A U.S. judge in Montana has blocked construction of the Keystone XL pipeline designed to carry heavy crude oil from Canada to the United States, drawing praise on Friday from environmental groups and a rebuke from President Donald Trump.

The ruling of a U.S. Court in Montana late on Thursday dealt a setback to TransCanada Corp, whose stock fell 1.7 percent in Toronto. Shares of companies that would ship oil on the pipeline also slid.

TransCanada said in a statement it remains committed to building the \$8 billion, 1,180 mile (1,900 km) pipeline, but it has also said it is seeking partners and has not taken a final investment decision.

The ruling drew an angry response from Trump, who approved the pipeline shortly after taking office.

It also piles pressure on Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to assist the country's ailing oil sector by accelerating crude shipments by rail until pipelines are built. Clogged pipelines have made discounts on Canadian oil even steeper than they were earlier this year when Scotiabank warned that they may cost the country's economy C\$16 billion.

U.S. District Court Judge Brian Morris wrote that a U.S. State Department environmental analysis of Keystone XL "fell short of a 'hard look'" at the cumulative effects of greenhouse gas emissions and the impact on Native American land resources.

"It was a political decision made by a judge. I think it's a disgrace," Trump told reporters at the White House.

The ruling was a win for environmental groups who sued the U.S. government in 2017 after Trump announced a presidential permit for the project. Tribal groups and ranchers also have spent more than a decade fighting the planned pipeline.

"The Trump administration tried to force this dirty pipeline project on the American people, but they can't ignore the threats it would pose to our clean water, our climate, and our communities," said the Sierra Club.

The State Department is reviewing the judge's order and had no comment due to ongoing litigation, a spokesman said.

The pipeline would carry heavy crude from Alberta to Steele City, Nebraska, where it would connect to refineries in the U.S. Midwest and Gulf Coast, as well as Gulf export terminals.

Shares of Canadian oil producers Canadian Natural Resources Ltd and Cenovus Energy lost 2.7 percent and 2.2 percent respectively.

Canada is the primary source of imported U.S. oil, but congested pipelines in Alberta, where tar-like bitumen is

extracted, have forced oil shippers to use costlier rail and trucks.

Two pipeline projects have been scrapped due to opposition, and the Trans Mountain line project still faces delays even after the Canadian government purchased it this year to move it forward.

“You have to wonder how long investors will tolerate the delays and whether the Canadian government will intervene again to protect the industry,” said Morningstar analyst Sandy Fielden.

Ensuring at least one pipeline is built is critical to Trudeau’s plans, with a Canadian election expected next autumn.

“I am disappointed in the court’s decision and I will be reaching out to TransCanada later on today to show our support to them and understand what the path forward is for them,” Natural Resources Minister Amarjeet Sohi told reporters in Edmonton, Alberta.

Alberta has felt the financial pressure, and an industry source said the provincial government last month solicited proposals from companies on ways to move crude faster by rail. The source said proposals included ideas such as buying rail cars and investing in loading terminals.

“I’ve never seen (the Alberta government) so active on this front,” said the source, who asked not to be identified because the matter is politically sensitive. “That is a shift.”

Alberta Energy Minister Margaret McCuaig-Boyd said the province has sent a proposal to Ottawa to move crude faster by rail that includes making more tank cars available.

“We’re giving away our resources cheap,” she told reporters.

“We need market access.”

Neighboring Saskatchewan stands to lose C\$500 million in annual royalties if the discount for Canadian crude remains steep, Saskatchewan Energy Minister Bronwyn Eyre said.

“People have placed quite a lot of hope in that (Keystone) project, so it’s a major setback,” she said in an interview.

Morris, in his ruling, ordered the government to issue a more thorough environmental analysis before the project proceeds. He said the analysis failed to fully review the effects of the current oil price on the pipeline’s viability and did not fully model potential spills and offer mitigation measures.

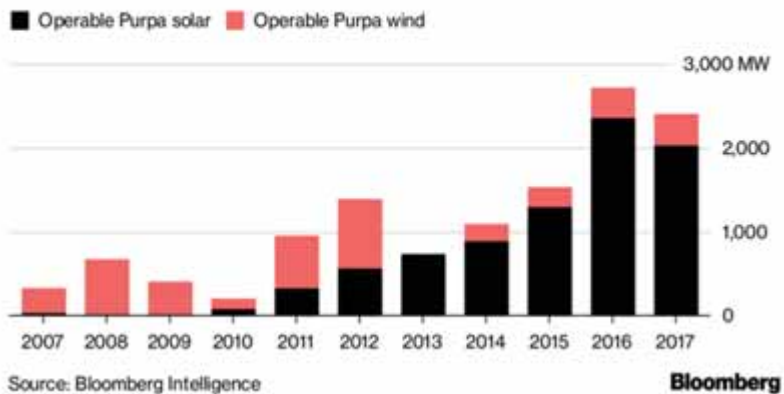
The ruling likely sets Keystone back by up to one year, said Dan Ripp, president of Bradley Woods Research. (Reporting by Rod Nickel in Winnipeg, David Gaffen in New York and Brendan O’Brien; Additional reporting by Roberta Rampton and Timothy Gardner in Washington, Julie Gordon in Vancouver and David Ljunggren in Ottawa; Editing by Jeffrey Benkoe, David Gregorio and Cynthia Osterman)

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**US 40-year-old renewable energy law is due for a revamp**

## Purpa Power

Purpa-qualified nameplate capacity by online year



A 40-year-old law that's been key to the growth of renewable energy in the US may be due for an overhaul. Much has changed since the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act, called Purpa, was established in response to the Arab oil embargo of the early 1970s. Concerned about energy shortages, Congress wrote the law in part to encourage alternative energy. But that era of scarcity has since been replaced by one of abundance. And utilities say that Purpa should change with the times. They say power markets have outgrown the 1978 statute, and that it's burdening customers with billions in extra costs. "Changes to the market need to be reflected in the law," said Adam L Benschoff, executive director for regulatory affairs at the Edison Electric Institute, an industry association. "We're certainly missing an opportunity to reduce costs for customers." They may get their wish. Neil Chatterjee, the new chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which oversees US power markets, has indicated that his agency should take a look at the law. But he hasn't outlined a timeline or scope of that effort. As it's written, Purpa requires utilities to purchase power from renewable energy projects under certain circumstances.

If a developer can build a project for less than a utility can build a new power plant, then they can request a contract to sell power to the utility. But utilities argue that developers have figured how to take advantage of the system. They're asking for immediate fixes to prevent market abuses, and curb

instances in which developers break up their projects into smaller ones to qualify for higher rates, according to the Edison Electric Institute. Reducing the threshold for mandatory purchases could also be looked at. "We're asking for Purpa to be modified in a way that more truly reflects avoided cost and stops some of the gaming," said Benschhoff. Purpa proponents, including solar and wind developers, reject the notion that it's outdated, saying it's essential to giving renewables a leg up in states that aren't traditionally green leaning. "Purpa has been a backdoor option to get some renewable projects to states that have few other policy levers that are incentivising renewable energy," said Timothy Fox, vice president at ClearView Energy Partners LLC. "If the implementation of Purpa is reformed, we could see a slowdown in some of the states with more conventional resources," he said. About 15% of US solar capacity and 3% of wind planned to come online in the next few years may rely on Purpa, according to Bloomberg Intelligence.

The solar industry argues that any changes should be focused on making sure the law is enforced. "It's been a highly successful policy tool and continues to be a highly successful policy in markets where there is not otherwise access," said Abigail Ross Hopper, who heads the Solar Energy Industries Association. Pushback from utilities is unsurprising, she said, since "we're threatening their market, we're threatening their monopoly." It's all a far cry from when Charles Copeland was working as an engineer on an abandoned building in New York City's Lower East Side back in the 1970s. He designed a solar collector system for a group of residents that generated power for the building and sent the excess to Con Edison. The utility sued the residents, but the Public Service Commissioner ruled in favour of the building, and the ruling became a crucial forerunner of Purpa. Forty years later, Copeland says the law is as essential as ever. "It's even more urgent now, in terms of global warming," he said.

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# Gold and oil looking for a floor while gas prices spike



The commodity sector remains on the defensive with rising supply hurting a diversified group of raw materials from crude oil to grains. Growth concerns in the world's two biggest economies into 2019 put industrial and semi-precious metals under pressure while gold struggled to build on the recent recovery amid a strong dollar with a hawkish Federal Open Market Committee staying on course to hike rates further over the coming months. The US midterm election yielded no major surprises with the Democrats, while taking control of the House, failing to create a 'Blue Wave'. The Republicans did not see a 'Red Repeat' but still managed to strengthen their Senate majority. A relief rally was seen in stocks, bond yields resumed their climb while the dollar, after some initial weakness, strengthened once the Federal Reserve indicated it would keep raising rates gradually over the coming months. The initial impact of the election on commodities has been limited but over time we may keep an eye on the following: Late-cycle US economic growth not receiving a further boost through tax cuts Unfunded infrastructure spending impacting industrial metals, budget deficit and bond yields Opposition against Trump's deregulatory energy agenda

could impact the long-term prospect for US oil production growth. A divided US government potentially weakening the dollar over time. The biggest headline grabber was crude oil, which continued its slump as Iran sanctions worries faded and the world's biggest producers continued to ramp up production. Overall the energy sector was close to flat on the week with the strongest natural gas surge in two years helping to offset the weakness in crude oil and products. Natural gas is up by more than 10% on the week as a cold blast across the eastern part of the US has increased the focus on stock levels which will enter the winter peak demand period at a 15-year seasonal low. In just six weeks market speculation has seen a dramatic turnaround from focusing on Brent oil at \$90/barrel before year end to the current speculation of \$60/b. WTI crude oil was the biggest loser of the two crude oil benchmarks as surging US production and rising stocks and lower refinery demand, due to maintenance, saw the price slump by more than 22% from the October peak and thereby returning to bear market territory.

The ebb and flow of the current trade war remains a concern and its impact is being felt across several key commodities from soybeans to copper and even gold through its strong correlation to the Chinese renminbi. With the US midterms out of the way, and with Trump having lost some of his room for manoeuvre on the domestic stage, he may choose to double down on his international efforts. Not least the trade war and this has led to some pessimism as to what Trump and China's Xi Jinping can achieve when they meet at this month's G20 summit in Argentina. US soybean farmers continue to feel the impact of a season which has both yielded a record crop and a collapse in demand from China due to tariffs. The price of CBOT beans continues to linger below \$9/ bushel, some 20% below the peak back in March when the outlook was much different. The impact can be seen in the monthly supply and demand estimates from the US Department of Agriculture. Since June they have continued to raise their forecast for how many beans



will be left over in US bins by the end of this current marketing year, which runs to October 1 next year. Industrial metals, more than other sectors, have felt the pressure from a prolonged trade war's potential negative impact on global growth and demand. Copper has, however, managed to settle into a wide \$2.55/lb to \$2.85/lb range following the June to July sell-off with support coming from signs a tightening physical market. Chile's Codelco, the world's largest copper producer, posted the lowest quarterly output this year after reporting declines across all its mines due to lower ore grades. A challenging outlook for supply due to lower grades and lack of investment has already led to speculation that a structural deficit may emerge over the coming years, something that could see copper and other industrial metals move higher.

Not least if both China and the US were to opt for increased investment in infrastructure projects. Gold is currently stuck in a range between \$1,210/oz and \$1,240/oz with the October recovery primarily driven by short-covering from hedge funds. Back then they found themselves holding a record and, in the end, unsustainable short position amid emerging signs of safe-haven and diversification demand as the stock market rout unfolded and bond yields jumped. Following a 55% reduction during the past three weeks the tailwind from buyers covering bearish bets has now faded. With risk appetite for stocks and the dollar returning together with the Federal Reserve continuing to hike rates, the bears at this stage are once again looking to take control. Not helping the sentiment has been and even bigger sell-off in silver, which remains troubled by its link to under-pressure industrial metals. In the belief that the stock market recovery is on its last leg and that a strong dollar remains unsustainable we maintain the view that investors will continue to look for alternative investments. This will be done both as a hedge against the risk of inflation and an emerging positive correlation between stocks and bonds. Gold is currently trading within a 31-dollar range. A break below \$1,201/ oz and more importantly \$1,191/oz

would see the bears back in charge. Potential buyers, meanwhile, are likely to sit on the fence and wait for a break above \$1,243/ oz, a move that would force renewed fund short-covering. The rout in crude oil extended into a fifth week driven by the themes of rising supply from the world's three biggest producers, the US, Russia and Saudi Arabia, together with rising US stocks. WTI crude oil entered bear market territory after slumping by more than 22% while Brent crude broke below the psychologically important \$70/b level.

This was otherwise the week when the US re-introduced sanctions against Iran, an event that back in early October helped drive Brent crude above \$87/b on worries that the global market would be left shorthanded. In order to provide other producers enough time to increase production, the US administration chose to grant waivers to eight countries to carry on buying Iranian crude for up to six months. Adding to the weakness this week was the US Energy Information Administration which in its Short Term Energy Outlook for November raised its US crude output forecast for 2019 by 0.3mn barrels/day to a record 12.06m b/d while cutting global demand growth by 0.1m to 1.4m. However, the EIA also said that global refinery demand, estimated to be lower by 2mn barrels/day due to maintenance, would begin to pick up and return to normal during the coming weeks. Having responded to Trump's request for additional barrels to prevent the price from spiking, the subsequent 17-dollar selloff since early October has now instead increased the likelihood of production being scaled back to support the price. Ole Hansen is head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank.

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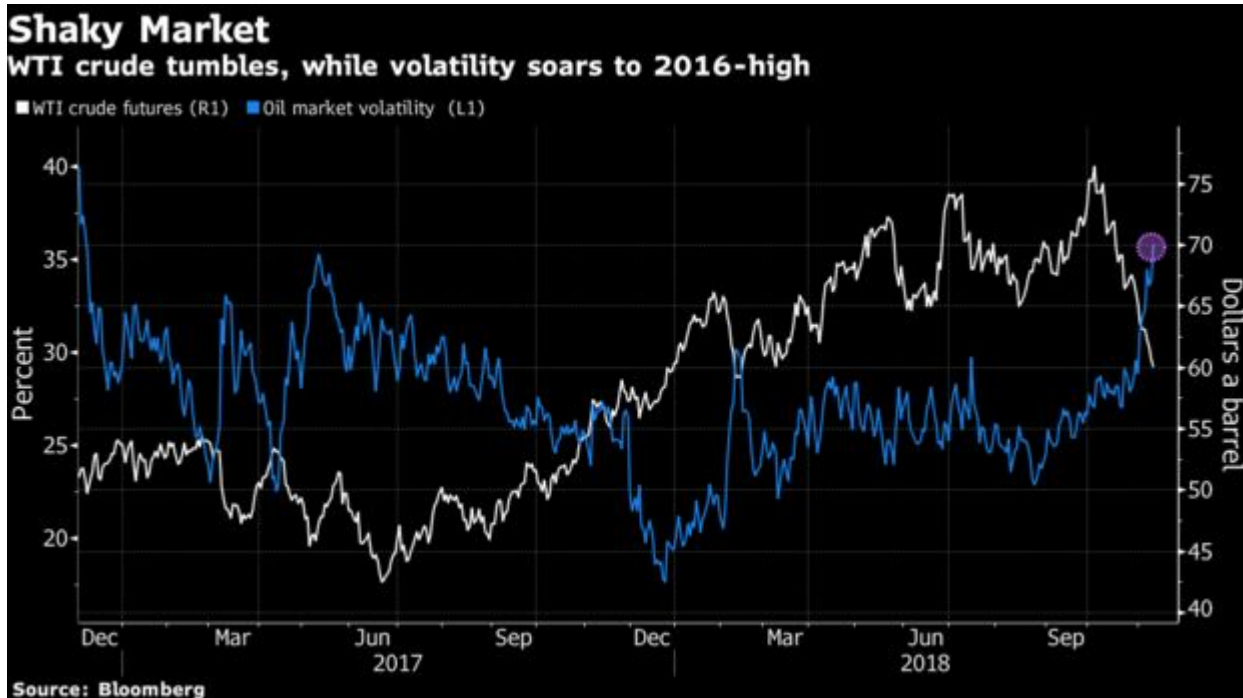
# Oil's Rapid Run of Declines Kicks Up Pressure as OPEC Gathers



It's all eyes on OPEC as U.S. oil prices fell for 10 consecutive days, wiping out any gains for the year.

Futures in New York slid 0.8 percent to settle at \$60.19 a barrel on Friday, a day after falling into a bear market on concerns growing supplies will overwhelm the market, as the U.S. offered nations waivers to continue buying Iranian oil. The plunge will push OPEC and its allies into a corner as they gather in a highly-anticipated meeting this weekend that could yield a signal on future production cuts.

"The Iranian sanctions were supposed to be a game-changer in the market," said Michael Loewen, a commodities strategist at Scotiabank in Toronto. Producers have been "attempting to pump as much oil as possible right now to soften the blow of those Iranian sanctions, yet Trump comes out and gives waivers."



Crude's slump from its early-October peak above \$76 a barrel comes as U.S. production is at a record, OPEC output is at the highest since 2016, more Iranian crude might make it to market than previously thought and demand growth remains a concern.

[Click here for the latest on speculators' oil positioning](#)

WTI futures fell 4.7 percent this week. Total volume traded was about 44 percent above the 100-day average on Friday, while a measure of oil market volatility jumped to the highest level since late 2016.

Brent futures for January settlement fell 47 cents to end the session at \$70.18 a barrel on the London-based ICE Futures Europe exchange, the lowest since April 9. The global benchmark crude traded at a \$9.82 premium to January WTI.

A potential agreement by OPEC to return to output cuts would mark the second production U-turn for the group this year. For Saudi Arabia – the world's biggest crude exporter – it would be the third time in recent years that the kingdom has delivered a supply surge only to quickly backtrack on it.

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# A radically realistic climate vision



By Barbara UnmüBig/Berlin

According to the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's main scientific authority on global warming, keeping global temperatures from rising more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is a feasible goal. The IPCC's stance represents a move in the direction of the kind of "radical realism" that many civil-society actors have long advocated.

The IPCC does not bet on geo-engineering proposals – for example, deep-ocean sequestration of massive amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide, or "dimming the sun" by spraying the atmosphere with aerosols – to combat global warming. These largely theoretical solutions could have untold consequences for people and ecosystems, worsening not only the climate crisis, but also the other social and ecological crises we

face.

Instead, the IPCC focuses on how we can avoid crossing the 1.5°C threshold in the first place. We must, it asserts, decarbonise the global economy immediately to ensure that global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions decline by about 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.

Achieving this will require not just transforming economic activity, but also confronting destructive power dynamics and social inequalities. "Radical Realism for Climate Justice," a new anthology published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, sets out strategies developed by international civil-society and social movements to bring about such change.

In line with the IPCC's core message, we urgently need a politically managed decline in fossil-fuel production. This means putting a brake on oil, coal, and gas production and exploration. As the group Oil Change International notes, it does not mean abrupt or panicked action that could lead to a "sudden and dramatic shut-down of fossil fuel production, stranding assets, damaging economies, and harming workers and communities reliant on the energy sector."

In building up the renewable-energy sector, we should avoid replicating systems that have driven inequality and entrenched damaging power dynamics in the fossil-fuel sector and other industries. This means replacing the market-based, investor-focused approach to energy production with one that treats energy as a public good, while engineering a shift toward social ownership and management of energy supplies.

Rooted in energy sovereignty and self-determination, this approach would spur faster decarbonisation, including by weakening vested interests' power to resist change. It would also facilitate the restructuring of energy systems to serve social and ecological needs.

Another system-level transformation that would facilitate major emissions reductions would be the creation of a zero-waste circular economy, whereby everything we produce and consume returns safely to nature or is recycled and reused. Consider textiles production, which in 2015 generated

greenhouse-gas emissions totalling 1.2 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents. These massive emissions – more than the combined total for all international flights and maritime shipping – reflect a “fast fashion” culture that produces garments as cheaply as possible, with the expectation of constant turnover in people’s wardrobes. If each garment were replaced half as often, the industry’s total greenhouse-gas emissions would plummet by 44%.

A zero-waste circular economy for textiles would include not just more use of the clothes that are produced, but also improved recycling and repurposing of materials, to avoid emissions-producing waste-disposal processes like incineration. The biggest gains would come from the introduction of less wasteful production processes.

Important steps should also be taken regarding land use (encompassing agriculture and zoning changes). As the international peasant’s movement La Via Campesina shows, the industrial food system’s emissions – including those from production, fertilisers, transport, processing, packaging, cooling, and food waste, and from deforestation associated with the expansion of industrial agriculture – account for 44-57% of the global total.

A peasant agro-ecological production system based on food sovereignty, small-scale farming, and agro-ecology could, La Via Campesina argues, halve carbon emissions from agriculture within a few decades. This approach is proven to work: small-scale farmers, peasants, fishers, indigenous communities, rural workers, women, and youth already feed 70% of the world’s population, while using only 25% of its agricultural resources.

There is also a need to restore natural ecosystems that have been destroyed. Forests and peatlands, in particular, can sequester several hundred gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. Their restoration would protect not just biodiversity, but also local people, including the indigenous communities whose land-tenure rights have been systematically violated. In fact, retaining and expanding the land area under management by

indigenous peoples and local communities could protect over 1,000 GtCO<sub>2</sub> worth of carbon stocks.

According to a report by the Climate, Land, Ambition, and Rights Alliance, ecosystem-based approaches in the land sector and agro-ecological changes to food production and consumption systems – including more local ownership – could deliver 13 GtCO<sub>2</sub>eq per year in avoided emissions, and almost 10 GtCO<sub>2</sub>eq annually in sequestered carbon by 2050. The result would be 448 GtCO<sub>2</sub> in cumulative removals by 2100 – around ten times current global annual emissions.

Limiting global temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is our best hope of containing the effects of a climate crisis born of historical injustices and deep-rooted inequities. The only way to succeed will be to undertake a shift to a new socioeconomic system. This means abandoning the single-minded obsession with GDP growth – which has facilitated the proliferation of wasteful production and consumption patterns and fuelled economic and social inequality and injustice – in favour of a public-goods approach that serves genuinely to make people's lives better. Demanding such a transformation is not “naive” or “politically unfeasible.” It is radically realistic. In fact, it is the only way we can achieve social justice while protecting our environment from devastating climate change. – Project Syndicate

\* Barbara UnmüBig is President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

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## **US-based LNG firm Excelerate**



# Energy opens office in Doha



US-based LNG company Excelsior Energy L.P. marked the opening of its new office in Doha with a celebration at the Four Seasons yesterday.

The Woodlands, Texas-based Excelsior Energy is a market leader in floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) regasification solutions.

The new office was registered and is operated under the administration of the Qatar Financial Center.

Excelsior's managing director Steven Kobos said, "The opening of our Doha office demonstrates Excelsior's long-term commitment to the LNG industry, given that Qatar is the largest exporter of LNG globally.

"This strategic location will allow us to better serve our partners and support their efforts in expanding Qatar's LNG export capacity to emerging markets worldwide."

In June of this year, Excelsior and Nakilat entered into an agreement for a joint-venture company, with Nakilat acquiring a 55% interest in Excelsior's floating storage regasification unit (FSRU) – 'Exquisite', the first such vessel to join the Nakilat fleet.

Currently in operation in Pakistan, 'Exquisite' is the most utilised FSRU in the industry, having delivered more regasified LNG ashore than any other FSRU in history. The vessel will be receiving its 150th cargo of LNG from Qatargas later this year.

The event witnessed the presence of many dignitaries and government officials, business leaders, associates and partners, and Excelerate leadership.

Among the distinguished guests present at the celebration were Nakilat chief executive officer Abdullah al-Sulaiti and chief of mission and Chargé d'Affaires of the US embassy in Doha, William Grant.

Excelerate Energy is part of a privately-held US energy group that also includes Kaiser Francis Oil Co, an E&P company with production in the US and Canada along with significant midstream assets, and Cactus Drilling Company, the largest private drilling company in the US.

Excelerate is the pioneer and market leader in innovative floating LNG solutions, providing integrated services along the entire LNG value chain with an objective of delivering rapid-to-market and reliable LNG solutions to customers.

Excelerate offers a full range of floating regasification services from FSRU to infrastructure development to LNG supply.

Besides Doha, Excelerate has offices in Buenos Aires, Chittagong, Dhaka, Rio de Janeiro, and Singapore.

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## **Oil market on alert as Iran sanctions hit**



LONDON: US sanctions against importers of Iranian oil threaten the crude oil market's precarious balance and risk surging prices, all under Saudi Arabia's watchful gaze, according to experts.

"In the next weeks all eyes will be on Iranian exports, whether there will be some cheating around US sanctions, and on how quickly production will fall," said Riccardo Fabiani, an analyst for Energy Aspects.

The US will from Monday target buyers of Iranian oil in order to deprive Tehran of its main source of income.

Going after Iran's oil money will hit Tehran where it hurts, but it also means hitting a major pillar of the global oil market – Iran is the OPEC cartel's third-largest producer – with major consequences for world supply.

Iran exported the equivalent of 2.5 million barrels a day in April, before the announcement of sanctions turned buyers away.

"Even if the United States grants exemptions, Washington will demand that the volume imported from Iran be significantly reduced," said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo, who expects prices to rise.

However, oil prices have fallen by nearly \$15 in less than a month, after peaking in early October at their highest level in two and a half years, with a barrel of Brent at over \$85.

“The mantra right now is to go to Saudi Arabia but its exports have remained flat at around 10 or 10.2 million barrels a day,” said Samir Madani, an analyst at Tanker Trackers, which specialises in satellite tanker tracking.

“The big increase right now is Iraq at 4.2 million, which I’ve never seen before,” he added.

The US, which is in the process of becoming the world’s leading producer thanks to its shale oil operations, could meet part of the demand, but lacks export capacity, said the analyst.

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## **Oil tanks while US midterm theatre reaches financial markets**



By Ole Hansen

Global stock markets bounced and the dollar weakened following

comments from President Trump that trade discussions with China were “moving along nicely” and after he supposedly, and later denied, ordered a draft of a US-China deal.

Commodities struggled despite the weaker dollar with crude oil heading for its worst week since February in response to rising production and a potential lower-than-expected Iran sanctions impact.

The dollar reached a fresh 16-month high against a basket of currencies before running into long liquidation in response to Brexit optimism, China announcing additional measures to stimulate its economy and not least the above-mentioned trade comment from President Trump.

Trump and China’s Xi Jinping will meet at the G20 meeting in Argentina between November 30 and December 1.

Earlier this week, the US president threatened to apply tariffs on all remaining Chinese imports but then a phone call, the first in six months, between the two leaders suddenly lifted expectations that a solution could be found. We would strongly suggest that this is nothing more than theatre designed to boost the market ahead of next Tuesday’s midterm elections.

The increased risk appetite failed to extend to commodities with the Bloomberg Commodity Index trading lower for a fourth consecutive week. The index, which tracks 24 major raw materials across energy, metals and agriculture, was hurt by a continued selloff in energy and post-Brazilian election profit taking in sugar and coffee.

The weaker dollar especially against the Chinese renminbi helped give the metals a boost. John Hardy, Saxo Bank’s Forex Strategist noted that: “We have speculated over the last couple of days that the CNY boost could be a move by China to pull the currency well away from its assumed floor (7in USDCNY terms) ahead of the G20 meeting”.

These developments, nevertheless, helped lift industrial metals, and with that demand for semi-precious investment metals such as silver and platinum.

Both of these have struggled to keep up with gold during the

past few weeks. Silver showing signs of life with a break above \$14.85/oz signalling a possible extension, initially to \$15.23/oz.

The biggest mover was crude oil which was hit by a triple dose of price negative news which further help support the negative momentum that had built up following the sharp rejection above \$80/barrel just a few weeks ago.

Instead Brent crude has returned to its \$70/b to \$80/b range that prevailed between April and August.

While we still maintain the view that Brent crude oil could reach \$80/b before year-end, the risk of an extension above has been sharply reduced this week with the change in sentiment being caused by these three major drivers:

- n The EIA reported last week that US oil production jumped 3.8% in August to reach a fresh record of 11.346mn barrels/day, a staggering year-on-year jump of 2.1mn barrels/day. Russia meanwhile said its October production reached 11.412mn barrels/day, a post-Soviet record.

- n Reuters and Bloomberg Opec production surveys for October both showed that production, despite the drop from Iran, had reached the highest level since 2016.

The most noticeable increases came from Libya (+170k b/d), Saudi Arabia (+150k b/d) and UAE (+80k b/d). Iran's production only slipped by 10k b/d and is down 400k b/d since May when sanctions began to bite.

- n The US is expected to give eight countries, including China and India, waivers from the Iran sanctions. This move should ensure that Iranian exports will be impacted by less than originally feared, thereby helping prevent the sanctions from lifting the price of oil.

While US oil production is rising at a record pace, Opec has now abandoned the collective agreement to keep production capped.

This comes in response to threats during the past few months that US sanctions against Iran could trigger a price spike which relatively quickly would lead to demand destruction and much lower prices.

After breaking the uptrend from early 2017 and the 200-day moving average Brent crude looks set to test support at \$70/b, the lower end of the range that prevailed between April and August. We believe crude oil will find support before long and begin a climb back towards the higher end of the mentioned range.

The reasons being a sharp reduction in hedge fund longs, reduced spare capacity leaving the market exposed to a future disruption and not least the yet unknown impact of US sanctions against Iran.

Gold had a roller-coaster week which left it close to unchanged for the period. This followed a mid-week sell-off when rising stocks, dollar and bond yields sent it looking for support.

On Monday, we raised some concerns about gold's short-term ability to move higher after finding that hedge funds had cut what was a record bullish bets by 74% in just two weeks.

With the tailwind from short-covering beginning to fade, we concluded that gold was increasingly in need of supporting fundamentals to carry it higher.

The above-mentioned reversal in the dollar, not least against the Chinese renminbi, combined with a steady increase in holdings across exchange-traded funds backed by gold, helped support a strong bounce which from a technical perspective has left the yellow metal with two key levels to focus on in the short term.

After finding resistance at \$1,240/oz, the 38.2% retracement of the April to August sell-off, gold then challenged and found support at \$1,211.6, the first line in the sand as per the below chart. We maintain a bullish outlook for gold and would only begin to worry about a deeper correction should the price drop below \$1,192/oz.

A weaker dollar would not only support gold given its inverse correlation, it would also support a pick-up in demand from emerging market consumers and central banks who have suffered from greenback strength.

However, next week's US midterm elections will help determine



the direction of the dollar and potentially also gold. Should Trump, against current expectations, lose both the Senate and Congress, his domestic agenda would be left crippled.

Instead he would likely divert his focus towards his international agenda. Given his comment that a trade war is easy and winnable this could lead to a reduced appetite for seeking a compromise with China.

Ole Hansen is head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank.

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## **Shell accelerates share buybacks as profits soar**



Royal Dutch Shell's profits soared to a four-year high in the third quarter, boosted by rising oil and gas prices as the company accelerated its giant \$25bn share buyback programme. Although the \$5.6bn quarterly profit slightly missed forecasts for a fourth quarter, investors took heart from a nearly 60%



rise in Shell's cash generation to \$12.1bn, as deep cost savings in recent years filtered through.

Excluding one-off charges, cashflow was the highest in 10 years at \$14.7bn, the company said yesterday.

"Good operational delivery across all Shell businesses produced one of our strongest-ever quarters," chief executive Ben van Beurden said in a statement.

The Anglo-Dutch company launched a three-year \$25bn share buyback programme in July, making good on a promise to boost shareholder returns following the 2016 acquisition of BG Group, in a show of confidence in its cash generation and profit growth outlook.

Shell said it completed the first tranche of buybacks in October for \$2bn and was launching a second tranche yesterday of up to \$2.5bn by January 28.

This year's sharp rise in oil prices to a four-year high of around \$85 a barrel has boosted revenues for oil and gas companies.

Shell's net income attributable to shareholders in the quarter, based on a current cost of supplies (CCS) and excluding identified items, rose 39% to \$5.624bn from a year ago.

That compared with \$4.691bn in the second quarter, and a company-provided analysts' consensus of \$5.766bn.

Profits benefited from stronger oil and gas prices as well as bigger contributions from trading operations, though that was offset by weaker refining margins, tax and currency exchange effects.

Chief financial officer Jessica Uhl said Shell will stick to its \$25 to \$30bn capital expenditure plans in the coming years despite rising waging and services costs.

Debt levels remained stubbornly high.

Shell's debt ratio versus company capitalisation, known as gearing, declined to 23.1% in the quarter from 23.6% at the end of June.

Oil and gas production in the quarter fell 2% from a year earlier to 3.596mn barrels of oil equivalent.

Output was expected to rise in the fourth quarter due to lower maintenance, Shell said.

## Credit Suisse

Credit Suisse defended its global markets trading arm yesterday, even as losses at the division took the shine off a jump in quarterly profit as the bank wraps up a three-year revamp under chief executive Tidjane Thiam.

The unit, the focus of Thiam's cuts and a source of billions of dollars of losses over years, still has an important role to play after the restructuring to focus on managing billionaire's wealth and scale back investment banking, Thiam said.

Third-quarter group net income jumped 74% to 424mn Swiss francs (\$422mn), helped by the ongoing wind-down of its so-called Strategic Resolution Unit – a home for assets that have been a drag on the bank's past performance.

But that missed analysts' average estimate of 449mn francs in a Reuters poll.

Credit Suisse said a \$250mn cut to funding costs coupled with investments into its equities business should help the division raise returns next year.

ROTE was 6.3% in the first nine months of 2018.

## Spotify

Spotify sent its shares tumbling as much as 10% yesterday after the world's most popular paid music streaming service said it would continue to sacrifice profit margins to generate future growth.

The Swedish company came close to making its first-ever operating profit in the third quarter, years ahead of schedule, which the company said was because it had not been spending heavily enough to hire more engineers.

Spotify reported an operating loss of €6mn after previously guiding investors to expect losses between €10-90mn.

The company tightened its expectations for full-year 2018 monthly active listeners to between 199mn to 206mn users.

Analysts, on average, had been predicting 208mn users by the end of the year.

Monthly subscribers, which deliver 90% of revenue, rose to 87mn, up from 83mn in the second quarter ending June, it said. The latest results matched the average forecast in a Thomson Reuters analyst poll.

Total users rose to 191mn, including free, advertising-supported listeners.

### The New York Times

The New York Times said yesterday that digital subscriptions topped three million in the past quarter, keeping the prestigious daily profitable in a difficult environment for the news media.

With a gain of 203,000 online-only subscribers in the third quarter, the newspaper is now getting nearly two-thirds of its revenue from subscriptions, helping offset weakness in advertising and print circulation.

The Times posted a net profit of \$24.9mn in the quarter, down from \$36mn in the same period a year ago, as total revenues rose eight% to \$417mn.

While its profits are modest, the Times has been among the most successful legacy news organizations navigating the transition to digital news amid sharp declines in print readership.

The quarterly update showed a 7% year-on-year increase in advertising, led by digital.

But ad revenues for the first nine months of the year are down 2.5% and the company said it expects flat advertising revenues in the fourth quarter.

According to the Times, revenue improved in part due to an agreement with Long Island daily Newsday to print and transport its publications, and the renting of four additional floors in the New York headquarters.

### Teva Pharmaceutical

Teva Pharmaceutical Industries raised its 2018 earnings

outlook, said it was seeing “a very strong launch” for its long-awaited migraine treatment Ajovy and expects to launch generic EpiPen in the fourth quarter.

Teva raised its full-year forecast for adjusted EPS to \$2.80-\$2.95, from a previous estimate of \$2.55-\$2.80 and its shares were 8.5% higher in early US trading.

The company also said it was on track with plans to reduce its workforce by 14,000, having let over 9,000 employees go so far.

Net debt decreased by \$800mn to \$27.6bn.

Teva said it earned 68 cents per share excluding one-time items in the July-September period, down from \$1 a year earlier.

Analysts had forecast Teva would earn 54 cents a share excluding items on revenue of \$4.53bn, according to I/B/E/S data from Refinitiv.

Teva confirmed its revenue fell 19% to \$4.53bn due to generic competition to its multiple sclerosis drug Copaxone, price erosion in its US generics business and a loss of revenue from the divestment of some of its products and the discontinuation of some activities.

#### Indivior

Embattled drug maker Indivior said yesterday the hit to revenue this year from a cheap copy of its top-selling opium addiction drug would be less than feared, as cost cutting helped it to deliver a 22% rise in quarterly profit.

Indivior has been battling the introduction of a cheaper generic version of its film-based opioid addiction treatment Suboxone, and has also faced distribution challenges with its new injectable opioid addiction drug, Sublocade.

Third-quarter adjusted net income rose to \$58mn, ahead of analysts' average forecast of \$49mn, according to Jefferies.

Revenue came in at \$245mn, down 11% from a year earlier, but ahead of the average forecast by 3%.

#### Banco Bradesco

Bradesco chief executive Octavio de Lazari said yesterday that

the bank, Brazil's second-largest lender, sees the possibility of lower default ratios and higher profitability in the coming quarters.

Recurring net income rose to 5.47bn reais (\$1.47bn) in the quarter, from 4.81bn reais a year ago, the bank said in a securities filing.

Bradesco said that loan-loss provisions were 3.512bn reais in the third quarter, 23.3% lower year on year, amid a gradual recovery in Brazil's economy.

In July, Bradesco lowered its year-end target for loan-loss provisions from 16bn to 19bn reais to 13bn to 16bn reais.

Bradesco's loan book reached 523.5bn reais, up 1.5% in the quarter, helped mostly by retail banking.

In the last 12 months, loan book growth reached 7.5%, above the top of its 2018 target range of 3% to 7%. Lazari also said that the pace of loan book growth is expected to rise next year but avoided specifics.

## ING

Top Dutch bank ING posted yesterday a 43.6% year-on-year drop in net profit for the third quarter, blamed on a multimillion-euro settlement with Dutch authorities in a money laundering probe.

Net earnings fell to €776mn (\$883mn), in large part to the €775mn the Amsterdam-based lender said in September it paid to settle a criminal investigation into money laundering which found that ING had failed to ensure its accounts were not misused.

The amount included a €675mn fine and a reimbursement of €100mn which ING underspent on staffing to prevent money laundering.

"The third quarter of 2018 for ING was deeply marked by the settlement agreement with the Dutch public prosecution service," chief executive Ralph Hamers said.

The scandal saw ING axe its chief financial officer Koos Timmermans after a two-year probe by Dutch authorities that found many white-collar crime suspects held accounts at the

bank.

The case threatened to seriously damage ING's reputation and triggered calls for the resignation of its directors.

But the dispute has not deterred customers, with ING saying it expanded its client base by 200,000 in the third quarter.

The bank now has 38mn retail customers world-wide.

Revenue was up by 6.5% to 2.12bn euros year-on-year "driven by continued growth in loans with strong margins", tight cost control and continued low-risk costs, although these were higher than in 2017, ING said.

ING employs more than 52,000 people in 40 countries around the world.

## ArcelorMittal

ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steelmaker, expects its financial results to improve in the coming months as global economic growth drives demand and US tariffs lead to higher prices for the metal.

Arcelor reported a 42% year-on-year increase in third-quarter core profit (EBITDA) to \$2.73bn, roughly in-line with analyst expectations, while sales rose 5% to \$18.5bn.

Steel tariffs worked to Arcelor's advantage in the third quarter, as 5% higher prices offset an equally large decline in steel shipments in the North American region, as the US market weakened.

Total shipments of steel also fell 5% in the July-September period, due to supply problems stemming from a disruptive power outage in France and a furnace blast in Poland.

The company plans to invest €2.4bn (\$2.7bn) in its newest asset, to increase Ilva's production and to make the plant more sustainable.

Meanwhile, asset sales demanded by the European Commission as a precondition for approving the takeover led to a \$500mn impairment in the third quarter, Arcelor said.

This drove down the group's net result by 25% to \$0.9bn.

The company's net debt remained stable at \$10.5bn in the third quarter, as \$1.7bn was invested in working capital.

## Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk, the world's top maker of diabetes drugs, reported encouraging sales of its main growth drivers yesterday as it announced more job cuts amid a restructuring to cope with intensifying pricing pressure in the US.

Novo said it had expanded its share buyback programme by 1bn crowns to 15bn crowns and free cash flow this year is now seen at 29-33bn crowns from a previous guidance of 27-32bn crowns.

Third-quarter operating profit totalled 11.81bn crowns, below an average forecast of 11.93bn crowns in a Reuters poll of analysts.

## Danske Bank

Danske Bank pretax profit dropped 42% year on year in the third quarter to 3.59bn Danish crowns (\$547mn), missing the 3.72bn that was expected by analysts in a Reuters poll.

The result was dented by a 1.5bn crown donation, which the bank decided in July to give to initiatives to combat financial crime after a money laundering scandal at its Estonian branch.

If any income from the non-resident portfolio becomes subject to confiscation by relevant authorities, any such confiscation would be deducted from the amount to be donated, the bank said yesterday.

The scandal involves €200bn (\$230bn) in payments through Danske's Estonian branch between 2007 and 2015, many of which Denmark's largest bank said in a report in September it regards as suspicious.

When it published the report in September Danske Bank cut its forecast for 2018 net profit to 16bn to 17bn Danish crowns, from a previous forecast of 18bn to 20bn crowns due to the donation.

The bank kept that forecast yesterday.

The scandal has led the bank's former chief executive Thomas Borgen to resign and almost halved Danske Bank share price since February.

## Sberbank

Russia's largest lender Sberbank has posted a record-high quarterly profit yesterday for the turbulent third quarter, beating market expectations although the pace of profit growth declined.

Sberbank said it made 228.1bn roubles in net profit in the period July-September, posting a 1.8% rise year-on-year after a 16% jump in its profit the previous quarter.

Analysts polled by Reuters had on average expected Sberbank to post 204.3bn roubles in the third-quarter net profit.

Sberbank has outperformed rivals during Russia's economic crisis and has been reporting record quarterly profit for several quarters in a row.

In the first nine months of 2018, Sberbank said its net profit totalled 665.5bn roubles under the International Financial Reporting Standards.

## BT

British broadband company BT reported a better-than-expected 2% rise in first-half earnings and nudged its guidance for the full year higher, as outgoing chief executive Gavin Patterson said the group's recovery plan was delivering.

BT, the market leader in both broadband and mobile, said the rise in profit was mainly driven by more sales of high-end smartphones and cost savings across the business.

The group posted adjusted core earnings of £3.68bn (\$4.74bn) and said it expected earnings for the year to be at the upper end of its £7.3-7.4bn range.

Adjusted revenue slipped 1% to £11.62bn as regulated price reductions in its broadband network, which serves other operators as well as BT, and declines in its enterprise businesses offset growth in consumer.

## National Australia Bank

National Australia Bank reported yesterday a 14.2% drop in cash earnings to A\$5.7bn (US\$4.0bn) due to restructuring charges and the costs of repaying customers impacted by bank



misconduct.

NAB's profit in the year to September 30 was still up five% to AU\$5.55bn despite what chief executive Andrew Thorburn called a "challenging year".

"Our transformation is on track and benefits are emerging as we become simpler and faster," he said, pointing to growth in both housing and business lending.

### Sibanye-Stillwater

South African miner Sibanye-Stillwater's core profit plunged 40% in the third quarter, it said yesterday, after production at its domestic gold mining operations was hit by incidents that have caused 24 deaths this year.

Sibanye, which also produces platinum, said adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) totalled 1.6bn rand (\$109mn) in the three months ended September, down from 2.7bn rand a year earlier.

As well as production cuts, the miner also had to defer some US sales in September until October at the request of a client, a precious metals refiner, it said.

The miner said comparable gold production from its South Africa operations fell 24% to 284,600 ounces for the quarter after rehabilitation of seismically affected production areas and the suspension of underground mining at its Cooke operations.

The firm revised its 2018 guidance for its local gold operations down to between 1.13mn ounces and 1.16mn ounces, from its previous guidance of between 1.17mn ounces and 1.21mn ounces.

Platinum group metals (PGM) production from the group's South African operations fell to 305,227 ounces in the third quarter, from 306,184 ounces a year earlier, while output at its U.S operations rose 3% to 139,178 ounces compared with the year ago period.

### Orsted

Danish energy group Orsted posted third-quarter profit well

above analyst expectations yesterday and lifted its outlook for the year, in part thanks to the contribution from new offshore wind projects.

Orsted now expects EBITDA for the year excluding new partnership deals at 13bn to 14bn Danish crowns, up from 12.5bn to 13.5bn previously guided.

Orsted is rebranding itself as a renewable energy firm after it sold its oil and gas unit to Ineos last year, courting investors interested in green investments which have seen a boost amid policies to protect the climate.

The firm, formerly known as DONG Energy, reported earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) of 2.23bn Danish crowns (\$340mn), compared with 1.85bn crowns forecast in a Reuters analyst survey.

Including profits from the Hornsea 1 partnership in the UK, Orsted said it still expects EBITDA for the year to be "significantly higher" than the 22.5bn achieved in 2017.

Analysts on average expect EBITDA of 27.3bn for 2018.

The company's power generation increased 12% between July and September compared to a year earlier.

The company also said it submitted a bid in a clean energy auction in Connecticut in September and expects to receive the outcome of the auction before the end of the year.

The bid comes after it said in August it would acquire US wind farm developer Lincoln Clean Energy.

"During the third quarter we have secured a very strong and long-term growth platform in the American market," Poulsen said in a statement.

## General Motors

General Motors profits eclipsed expectations in the latest quarter, despite the impact of tariffs and slipping sales volume, as the company unveiled a plan on Wednesday to cut jobs and reduce costs.

The company reported better-than-expected third-quarter earnings even as it sold fewer vehicles in both North America and China.

Strong pricing in those markets allowed the company to offset the hit from trade tariffs and the burden of the strong dollar in South American markets and report profits that topped Wall Street forecasts by a wide margin.

Earnings for the quarter ending September 30 were \$2.5bn – up from a loss of \$3bn in the year-ago period when results were hit by a one-time accounting charge.

That translated into \$1.87 per share, compared with Wall Street expectations for \$1.25 per share.

Revenues rose 6.4% to \$35.8bn.

GM said it experienced \$400mn in higher costs due to US tariffs on steel and aluminium but that strong pricing and cost cuts had offset the hit.

GM sold fewer cars in North America than in the comparable period in the prior year, falling nearly 10% to 833,712 units, but benefited from a higher pricing following a number of truck and sport utility vehicle launches.

The Silverado pickup truck is currently selling more than 30% above forecast, Barra said, adding that the company will have several new truck trims in dealerships within two weeks.

Sales volumes also declined in China, falling by 14.9% to 835,934 vehicles compared with the prior year.

But again, strong pricing boosted results, permitting GM to score record equity profits from China during the quarter.

GM has enjoyed especially strong sales of its Cadillac brand, which is up 20% amid robust demand in luxury and premium segments.

Executives said recent economic weakness has dented sales in smaller “Tier 3-5” Chinese markets.

These smaller cities “tend to be our less profitable part of the market,” chief financial officer Dhivya Surgadevara said.

In contrast, larger markets saw less of a drop and the luxury market “is actually up year over year.”

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# Oil prices decline as wave of supply meets global economic gloom



NEW YORK (Reuters) – Oil fell nearly 3 percent on Thursday, with U.S. crude futures hitting lows not seen since April, due to growing concerns that global demand is weakening at a time when output from the world’s major oil producers is surging.

Record production from the United States and post-Soviet Russia, along with a big move upward in output from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, has culminated in a move to the exits by speculators.

Oil has also been under pressure on growing concern over a possible slowdown in global growth as the U.S-China trade

dispute remains unresolved, and is starting to hit emerging market economies in particular.

U.S. crude prices are 17 percent below highs reached in early October. Analysts said they anticipate more selling in coming days, noting that oil was unable to capitalize on weakness in the dollar on Thursday, nor did it benefit from a rebound in equity markets. [USD/] [.N]

“The sellers seem to be in charge,” said Gene McGillian, vice president of market research at Tradition Energy in Stamford, Connecticut.

Brent crude futures LC0c1 settled down \$2.15, or 2.9 percent, at \$72.89 a barrel, while U.S. crude CLc1 lost \$1.62, or 2.5 percent, at \$63.69, its lowest close since April 9.

The declines accelerated on Thursday after U.S. futures broke through \$65, which had served as a buying level throughout the spring and summer. More than 750 million contracts changed hands, exceeding the 200-day moving average of 576 million contracts a day.

“As we drop down we see additional liquidation from speculators, and that keeps things heading south,” said Jim Ritterbusch, president of Ritterbusch & Associates.

Both benchmarks posted their biggest monthly percentage decline since July 2016 in October, with Brent down 8.8 percent for the month and U.S. crude losing nearly 11 percent.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Energy Department said overall U.S. crude output hit a record 11.35 million barrels per day in August, and it is expected to keep growing. Russia is producing 11.41 million bpd, and a Reuters survey of OPEC production showed that group pumping out more oil daily since 2016. [EIA/PSM]

The flood of oil is overwhelming any lingering worries that the market would be unable to offset further expected declines in exports out of Iran when renewed U.S. sanctions take effect

next week. [OPEC/0]

The increase in OPEC production “has really started to tamp down concerns surrounding the loss of Iranian barrels,” Tradition’s McGillian said.

China’s manufacturing sector in October expanded at its weakest pace in over two years, hurt by slowing domestic and external demand, in a sign of deepening cracks in the economy from the trade war with the United States.

“Oil investors are now betting on the potential of a global slowdown,” said Bruce Xue, an analyst with Huatai Great Wall Capital Management.