



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Israel Strikes Gold: Confirms Major Gas Find

Lebanon to UN: Protect Gas from Israel Drilling

Lebanon has asked the United Nations to protect the country's gas reserves along the maritime border with Israel, after a huge gas field was discovered off Israel's Mediterranean coast.

The appeal was part of a growing dispute between the two countries over natural resources beneath the eastern Mediterranean. The United Nations demarcated the land border separating Israel and Lebanon in 2000, but there is no official naval border separating the warring countries.

In recent months, Lebanon has accused Israel of drilling in fields that extend into Lebanon, an allegation Israel denies. Noble Energy maps show the fields to be entirely within Israel's territorial waters.

"Some of the discovered wells are in joint fields between Lebanon" and Israel, Lebanese Foreign Minister Ali Shami said in a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, urging that Lebanese interests be protected.

Lebanon has not released evidence that Israel's gas finds extend into Lebanese territory, though it says it sent maps to the UN in 2010 proving the allegation.

The militant group, Hezbollah, which is part of the Lebanese government, accused Israel of stealing gas from Lebanon and vowed to defend Lebanese resources with an arsenal of thousands of rockets like the ones it rained on Israel during a 2006 war. [Associated Press]

Exploratory drilling off Israel's northern coast has confirmed the existence of a major natural gas field — one of the world's largest offshore gas finds of the past decade — leading the country's infrastructure minister to call it "the most important energy news since the founding of the state."

Houston-based Noble Energy, in cooperation with several Israeli partner companies, reported the field, named Leviathan, has at least 16 trillion cubic feet of gas at a likely market value of tens of billions of dollars and should turn Israel into an energy exporter. "If it acts correctly, levelheadedly and responsibly, Israel can enjoy not only the benefit of using the gas, but it can also turn into a gas supplier in the Mediterranean region," the infrastructure minister, Uzi Landau, said in a statement. "The large reserves of natural gas will enable Israel's citizens to enjoy the benefit of clean and inexpensive electricity, as well as the expected profits for the state."

The find means that Israel, with a long history of dependence on foreign energy and hostility and boycotts from many of the biggest energy powers, could find itself in a much more advantageous position in the coming decade.

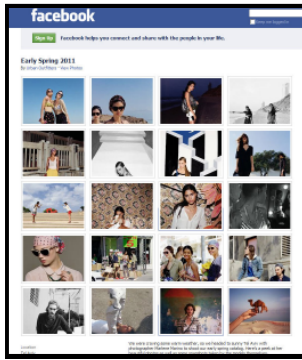
Gideon Tadmor, the chief of Delek Energy said that this new find could impel neighboring countries, including Cyprus, Lebanon, and Syria, to explore and possibly develop their potential gas fields. He warned that Israel needed to move quickly to be the first to export its gas. Delek estimates that if it moves aggressively, it could begin producing gas from Leviathan in five to six years.

Last year, the United States Geological Survey estimated that more than 120 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas reserves, equivalent to 20 billion barrels of oil, lie beneath the waters of the eastern Mediterranean. That would put it in the same league as the North Sea (29 billion barrels at its peak) but far short of Saudi Arabia, at 275 billion barrels.

In reaction to the Israeli announcement, Lebanese politicians said they would move more quickly in exploring their own gas potential.

Sever Plocker, an economic columnist for Yediot Aharonot newspaper, said that it was far from clear that the new discovery could be developed profitably. Gas prices could fall, the techniques needed to extract the gas were likely to be complicated and expensive to develop, and exporting natural gas required enormous investments for pipelines or the means of transforming the gas into liquid to be moved on tankers, he said. "Creative thinking is our great natural resource, not gas," he wrote. "It is our obligation to guard it with utmost care." [NY Times]

Retailer “Urban Outfitters” Shoots Catalogue in Tel Aviv



The trendy clothing company Urban Outfitters has put out its “Early Spring Catalog”. This season’s catalog takes its models and photographers to Israel!

Urban Outfitter’s Facebook page states it was an easy decision for them: “We were craving some warm weather, so we headed to

sunny Tel Aviv with photographer Marlene Marino to shoot our early spring catalog.” The Facebook page and blog showcases Marino’s beautiful photos as well as some pictures taken by the models themselves. [isRealli – The New Blog of the State of Israel]

Saudi Arabia to Release Vulture De-tained as Spy for Israel's Mossad

Saudi Arabia will release a vulture, tagged with a GPS tracker by Tel Aviv University, that was caught in the country and accused of spying for Israel’s Mossad.



Prince Bandar bin Saud Al Saud mocked at the allegations by locals and the media, which claimed that the vulture was part of a “Zionist plot.” “These systems are fitted to birds and animals, including marine animals. Most countries use these systems, including Saudi Arabia. We have taken delivery of this bird, but we will set it free again after we have verified its systems,” Saud was quoted as saying.

“Some of the Saudi journalists rushed in carrying the news of this bird for the sake of getting a scoop without checking the information. They should have asked the competent authorities about the bird before publishing such news,” Saud added.

The bird, identified as a Griffon vulture, which can have a wing span of 8’, was called a bald eagle by Saud. Following its detention, Israeli officials quickly declared that it was part of a program studying migratory patterns. “The device does nothing more than receive and store basic data about the bird’s whereabouts, and about his altitude and speed,” an official at Israel’s Park and Nature Authority said.

Israel is the subject of feverish conspiracy theories across the Arab world. In December, an Egyptian governor floated the possibility of Mossad being behind a string of shark attacks at an Egyptian resort. [ANI]

WikiLeaks: Israel Preparing for “Large Scale War”

Israel’s army chief told a US Congress delegation in late 2009 he was preparing for a large war in the Middle East, probably against Hamas or Hezbollah, leaked US diplomatic cables showed.



“I am preparing the Israeli army for a large scale war, since it is easier to scale down to a smaller operation than to do the opposite,” Lieutenant General Gabi Ash-

kenazi was quoted as saying in a cable from the US embassy in Tel Aviv. The document, dated November 15, 2009, was quoted from a WikiLeaks-released US embassy cable.

“The rocket threat against Israel is more serious than ever. That is why Israel is putting such emphasis on rocket defense,” Ashkenazi told the US delegation led by Democrat Ike Skelton, the cable showed.

The army chief noted that Iran has some 300 Shihab rockets that can reach Israel and stressed that the Jewish state would have only between 10 and 12 minutes warning in case of an attack. However, it was Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon that posed the most acute threat, he cautioned.

According to the quoted cable, Hezbollah is thought to have more than 40,000 rockets, many of which are believed capable of reaching deep into Israel. US officials meanwhile reportedly estimate the militant group has acquired an arsenal of around 50,000 rockets.

A 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel killed 1,200 Lebanese, many of them civilians, and 160 Israelis, most of them soldiers. And in his comments made nearly a year after Israel on December 27, 2008 launched the deadly Gaza war, Ashkenazi said “Israel is on a collision course also with Hamas, which rules Gaza.” “Hamas will have the possibility to bombard Tel Aviv, with Israel’s highest population concentration,” he was quoted as saying.

The Gaza war ... ended on January 18, 2009. Israel had been harshly criticized for putting civilians at risk during fighting in the densely populated Gaza Strip.

In the leaked cable, Ashkenazi was quoted as saying next time Israel will not accept “any restrictions on warfare in populated areas,” and he insisted the army had never intentionally attacked civilian targets. [AFP]