Israeli Gas Field Near Lebanon Starts Production

by Simon Henderson **(/experts/simon-henderson)**

Mar 4, 2024

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Simon Henderson (/experts/simon-henderson)

Simon Henderson is the Baker fellow and director of the Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy at The Washington Institute, specializing in energy matters and the conservative Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

Brief Analysis

The floating storage vessel anchored above the offshore field could be a tempting target for Hezbollah.

On February 22, natural gas started flowing from the Karish North field about sixty miles off the coast of northern Israel to the *Energean Power*, a huge floating production storage and offloading vessel (FPSO) moored close by. The gas will be processed onboard before being sent ashore south of Haifa via a seabed pipeline. Gas liquids, effectively oil, will also be recovered and stored onboard for loading onto tankers, which will transport them to export markets every few weeks.

Owned by the Greek-British license holder Energean, the FPSO has been operating since mid-2022, recovering gas from the Karish field **(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israels-karish-offshore-gas-field-facts-and-figures)** further south. Connecting it to the Karish North field will enable the operators to make fuller use of the giant vessel's capacity. The two fields are small compared to the Leviathan and Tamar fields, which produce most of Israel's gas, but they will add useful extra volumes nonetheless.

For instance, gas from Karish prevented potential shortages when Tamar stopped producing for several weeks at the start of the Gaza war last October. Later, Energean's CEO told the *Financial Times*, "We had to produce to keep the lights on in Israel."

Ironically, neither Karish nor Karish North would be in Israeli waters if Lebanon had persisted in its 2020 claim that their maritime border lies further south. In October 2022, U.S.-mediated talks convinced both countries **(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/securing-or-insecuring-israel-assessing-israel-lebanon-maritime-agreement)** to accept the current boundary. Moreover, Lebanon's hopes of finding economically viable quantities of offshore gas at Qana, located just a few miles from Karish North, were dashed **(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gaza-wars-impact-energy-security-east-mediterranean)** in October 2023. And just last week, the consortium that drilled at Qana—grouping TotalEnergies

(France), Eni (Italy), and QatarEnergy—pulled out of negotiations with Beirut for more exploration licenses in the area.

As for the *Energean Power*, the FPSO will be vulnerable to hostile action so long as tensions remain heightened between Hezbollah and Israel. The group has **launched drones (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/dont-look-down-struggle-over-lebanons-airspace)** in the vessel's direction in the past; today, Israeli warships are stationed nearby to protect it. Further south, the Leviathan production platform is well within range of Hezbollah munitions, while the Tamar production platform and nearby Ashdod Onshore Terminal are at risk from residual Hamas rocket fire out of Gaza.

Israel's gas reserves are small in global terms but have made the country self-sufficient in energy. Ultimately, the safety of these resources and the international companies that service them comes down to the implied threat of retaliatory force. This deterrence will continue to be tested.

Simon Henderson is the Baker Fellow and director of the Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy at The Washington Institute. ❖

RECOMMENDED

ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

Once Again, a "Palestinian Babies" Story Merits a Washington Post Apology

Mar 3, 2024

◆

Robert Satloff

(/policy-analysis/once-again-palestinian-babies-story-merits-washington-post-apology)

BRIEF ANALYSIS

The Islamic State on the March in Africa

Mar 1, 2024

◆

Aaron Y. Zelin

(/policy-analysis/islamic-state-march-africa)

BRIEF ANALYSIS

Profile: Iraqi Media Network

Feb 29, 2024

◆

Ameer al-Kaabi,
Michael Knights,
Hamdi Malik
(/policy-analysis/profile-iraqi-media-network)

TOPICS

Energy & Economics (/policy-analysis/energy-economics)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Israel (/policy-analysis/israel)

Lebanon (/policy-analysis/lebanon)