

Looking onshore

After a nearly 50 year break, the hunt is back on

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A sight we might see in Lebanon (Sanjay Acharya | Wikipedia | CC BY-SA 3.0)

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Although Lebanon's seven onshore exploration wells — drilled between 1947 and 1967 — all turned up dry, that does not mean there are no hydrocarbons buried beneath Lebanese territory. In fact, the search for onshore oil or gas resources is ongoing, despite complications related to security problems along Lebanon's northern and northeastern borders with Syria. US based NEOS GeoSolutions plans to conduct aerial onshore surveying

soon. In an email response to questions for this special report, the Lebanese Petroleum Administration (LPA) says, "The project is under mobilization and [we] expect the wheels up before the end of the month." A NEOS press release from January 2014 says, "Our neoBASIN survey has been designed to map the regional prospectivity of northern Lebanon by integrating legacy well and 2-D seismic data with newly acquired airborne geophysical datasets. Among other things, our geoscientists will work with the program's underwriters to identify the relationships among key geologic features that extend into the survey area from offshore structures and from Syria's onshore petroleum systems, as well as to efficiently highgrade acreage across the survey area."

The airborne survey will cover 6,000 square kilometers — more than half of Lebanon's total area. A map included with NEOS' press release shows the survey area covering the whole of Lebanon stretching from Beirut and north. The LPA's statement says analyzed data from the survey should be ready in the spring of 2015. More traditional 2-dimensional seismic surveying being shot by the UK's Spectrum — which carried out 2D and 3D offshore surveys in Lebanese waters — began in 2013, but is currently on hold because of security concerns. Spectrum has so far shot 100 kilometers of a planned 500 kilometers of linear surveying. The LPA says "scouting and seismic line routing design are completed" for the remaining survey areas but "the project involves long hours presence on-site in remote areas exposing the crews to all sort of possible threats that are not few these days." Results, of course, will not be ready before surveys are finished. NEOS representatives in Lebanon were not available for comment and Spectrum did not respond to an interview request for this article.

On the legal side, the 2010 law governing offshore exploration and production is strictly limited to offshore. The LPA wrote a new onshore law and submitted it to the Ministry of Energy and Water in January. Since then, the LPA says, the draft was sent to "all ministries," some of which suggested changes that have been incorporated into a newer version of the legislation. The final draft "will be transmitted to the parliament within [a] few days. Ratification date can be decided by the parliament only."



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