

*April 2004*

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## Syria

*With proven oil reserves expected to last only about 10 more years and a population growing at around 2.3% per year, Syria may become a net importer of oil within the next decade. Thus, the exploration for oil and natural gas is a top priority in Syria.*

*Note: The information contained in this report is the best available as of April 2004 and can change.*

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On June 10, 2000, President Hafiz al-Asad died, and was replaced by his son, Bashar al-Asad, who promised to undertake a variety of economic, administrative, and political reforms. Progress in implementing economic reforms has been slow, however, due in part to the influence of holdovers from the regime of the elder Asad. Growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) was 1.8%



percent in 2003, which is lower than the rate of population growth. Real GDP growth for 2004 is projected at 2.4%. According to the Syrian government, the country's unemployment rate is under 10%, although according to foreign diplomats, the rate is more likely over 20%.

The ultimate goals of economic reform in Syria are to move the country away from a state-run economy and towards a more market-based, modernized one, to reduce the country's high rate of unemployment (particularly given the country's rapid population growth), and to diversify the country's economic base for the day when oil reserves run out. In recent years, Syria has moved extremely slowly and cautiously in these directions. For the most part, as of early 2004, large state corporations continue to control all strategic sectors, including oil, electricity, banking, and chemicals. The Syrian government announced in early 2002 that it had put on hold any immediate moves to privatize large state-owned enterprises, concentrating instead on increasing their efficiency.

Syria lost a major source of revenue in late March 2003, when a pipeline bringing in crude oil from Iraq was shut down due to the war. In the short-term, relatively high oil prices have made up for some of the lost revenue. In November 2003, the United States Congress passed the "Syria Accountability Act," which was signed into law by President Bush in December. The Act provides for economic sanctions against Syria in response to its continuing support for terrorism, offering a menu of options from which the president can choose. At present, a decision on implementing the Act is still pending, and no new sanctions have yet taken effect. The volume of merchandise trade between the United States and Syria is modest -- around \$400 million per year -- but there are U.S. companies involved in a developing Syria's oil and gas sectors.

## **OIL**

Syria's oil industry faces many challenges in the years to come. Oil output and production continues to decline due to technological problems and depletion of oil reserves. Since peaking at 590,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) in 1996, Syria's oil output has fallen, to an estimated 535,000 bbl/d in 2003, as older fields, especially the large Jebisseh field discovered in 1968, have reached maturity. Syrian oil production is expected to continue its decline over the next several years, while consumption rises, leading to a reduction in Syrian net oil exports. If this trend continues, it is feared that Syria could become a net oil importer within a decade. Export levels, which had been temporarily buoyed by illegal imports from Iraq, fell sharply after the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

Syria hopes to reverse the trend toward declining oil exports through intensified oil exploration and production efforts, plus a switch from oil-fired to natural-gas fired electric power plants. Syria also has opened up new blocks for oil and natural gas exploration, with the Oil and Mineral Resources Ministry receiving bids from several international companies in December 2001 on five exploration areas. Awards for these blocks were made in January 2003, with Shell receiving exploration rights in the Damascus-Palmyra area

and India's ONGC Videsh receiving another onshore block. Independents Ocean Energy and Stratic Energy also received awards. In 2003, three new exploration deals were announced, with companies receiving awards including Canada's Tanganyika and PetroCanada, China's CNPC, and Devon Energy and Gulfsands Petroleum of the United States. Another round of awards took place in January 2004, with companies involved including U.S. independent IPR Transoil, India's ONGC, and Croatia's INA Naftaplin. Another 14 onshore blocks are being offered in the current 2004 bid round.

Syria's main oil producer (by far) is al-Furat Petroleum Co. (AFPC) a joint venture established in 1985 and owned by the Syrian Petroleum Company (SPC), Shell, and PetroCanada. AFPC's fields are located in the northeastern Syria -- particularly the Deir ez-Zour region, where commercial quantities of oil were discovered in the late 1980s -- and are producing about 400,000 bbl/d of high quality light crude.

AFPC's main oil field is al-Thayyem, although production there has been declining since 1991. Another important field -- Omar/Omar North -- began production in February 1989 at 55,000 bbl/d. Shortly thereafter, operator Shell was pressed by the cash-strapped Syrian government to step up production (against Shell's advice) to 100,000 bbl/d. The result was serious reservoir damage, and in April 1989, output plummeted to 30,000 bbl/d. Currently, Omar produces about 15,000 bbl/d from natural pressure and 30,000 bbl/d from water injection. Other AFPC fields include al-Izba (light oil), Maleh (34° API gravity oil), Sijan, and Tanak. Production from fields run by SPC peaked in the late 1970s at more than 165,000 bbl/d.

SPC's fields include: 1) Karatchuk -- Syria's first discovery, located near the border with Iraq and Turkey; 2) Suwaidiyah -- a giant heavy oil field located south of Karatchuk in the Hassakeh region (and extending into northwestern Iraq) which currently produces around 85,000 bbl/d; 3) Jibsah -- a major field producing both oil and gas; 4) Rumailan -- a small field near Suwaidiyah which produces heavy oil; and 5) Alian, Tishreen, and Gbebeh -- three small, depleting fields producing heavy oil. China's CNPC signed a contract with

SPC in March 2003 to undertake an enhanced oil recovery project for Gbebeh, which is to increase production from the current 4,500 bbl/d to 10,000 bbl/d.

Other Syrian oil fields include Maleh, Qahar, Sijan, Azraq, and Tanak. Jafra, discovered in late 1991 and located near Deir ez-Zour, is operated by TotalFinaElf and has current production of around 60,000 bbl/d. Besides conventional oil reserves, Syria also has major shale oil deposits in several locations, mainly the Yarmouk Valley stretching into Jordan.

Oil exploration activity in Syria has been slow in recent years due to unattractive contract terms by SPC, and poor exploration results. For these reasons, only a few companies out of more than a dozen operating in the country in 1991 remain in Syria at present. The recent bid rounds are an attempt to reverse this trend, but it is unclear how successful this will be. Officials of TotalFinaElf publicly expressed their intention to scale down their Syrian operations in May 2002, and ConocoPhillips announced in February 2004 that it was ending its operations in Syria.

### **Refining/Downstream**

Syria's two refineries are located at Baniyas and Homs. Total current production from these refineries is 239,865 bbl/d (132,725 bbl/d and 107,140 bbl/d, respectively). Syria is planning to construct a third refinery, with an initial capacity of 60,000 bbl/d (possibly increasing to 120,000 bbl/d), at Deir ez-Zour to supply products to the eastern part of the country. A feasibility study on this project reportedly was completed in January 1998, but it has not been implemented. In addition, Syria plans to upgrade its two current refineries, both of which are in urgent need of overhauling, to replace output of fuel oil with lighter products.

Syria markets all of its crude oil, including that produced by foreign companies, solely through state marketing company Sytrol. Prices for Syrian Light, a blend of light and sweet crudes produced primarily from the Deir ez-Zour and Ash Sham fields, and heavy Suwaidiyah crude, produced from the

Suwaidiyah and Jebisseh fields, are tied to the price of dated Brent and are adjusted monthly. Since January 1994, Sytrol has had a clause in its term contracts prohibiting customers from re-selling Syrian crudes without written permission from Sytrol. This is intended to curb spot trading in Syrian crudes and especially sales to Israel. Besides crude oil, Syria also exports fuel oil and other products. Syria is a member of OAPEC (the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries), although not of OPEC.

Syria's major oil export terminals are at Baniyas and Tartous on the Mediterranean, with a small tanker terminal at Latakia. Baniyas can accommodate tankers up to 120,000 dead weight tons (dwt), and has a storage capacity of 437,000 tons of oil in 19 tanks. Tartous can take tankers up to 210,000 dwt, and is connected via a pipeline to the Baniyas terminal. Latakia can handle oil tankers up to 50,000 dwt. All three terminals are operated by the Syrian Company for Oil Transport (SCOT), a sister company of SPC.

SCOT also is in charge of Syria's pipelines, including: 1) a 250,000-bbl/d export line from SPC's northeastern fields to the Tartous terminal, with a connection to the Homs refinery; 2) a 500,000-tons/year refined products pipeline system linking Homs refinery to Damascus, Aleppo, and Latakia; 3) a 100,000-bbl/d spur line from al-Thayyem and other fields to the T-2 pumping station on the old Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) pipeline; 4) a spur line from the al-Ashara and al-Ward fields to the T-2 pumping station.

Flows through the IPC pipeline ended in March 2003 during the invasion of Iraq. According to press reports, there has been some border trade in crude oil, which is being bartered for electricity supplied to Iraq, but the volumes involved are minimal.

## **NATURAL GAS**

Syria's proven natural gas reserves are estimated at 8.5 trillion cubic feet (Tcf). Most (around three-quarters) of these reserves are owned by SPC, including about 3.6 Tcf in the Palmyra area, 1.6 Tcf at the al-Furat fields, 1.2 Tcf at Suwaidiyah, 0.8 Tcf at Jibsah, 0.7 Tcf at Deir ez-Zour, and the

remainder at al-Hol, al-Ghona, and Marqada. About half of Syria's gas is non-associated, with the rest either associated (with oil) or "cap" gas. In June 1999, a new natural gas field, called North al-Faydh, reportedly was discovered by SPC. The field reportedly has production potential of 35 million cubic feet per day (Mmcf/d).

In 2002, Syria produced about 205 billion cubic feet (Bcf) of natural gas, a slight decline from the 215 Bcf produced in 2000 after a steady increase over the preceding decade. Syria plans to increase this production in coming years as part of a strategy to substitute natural gas for oil in power generation in order to free up as much oil as possible for export. A number of new gas-fired power projects are currently under construction or being planned. Another possible source of natural gas is imports. Syria signed agreements with Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon in early 2001 for an onshore pipeline network (the "Arab Gas Pipeline") which would link the four countries and make Syrian imports of natural gas from Egypt a possibility. The section of the pipeline running from Egypt to northern Jordan currently is in the final stages of construction. An agreement was signed in January 2004 between Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon for the extension of the pipeline into Syria and Lebanon, but construction had not begun as of March 2004.

Meanwhile, Syria has begun exporting a small quantity of natural gas to Lebanon. In May 2001, Syria signed a deal with Lebanon to build a 26-mile pipeline that would supply power stations in Lebanon with natural gas from Syria. While implementation of the deal was delayed until late 2003, construction is now underway on a short pipeline linking Syria's Homs-Baniyas natural gas pipeline with the Zahrani power plant in Lebanon, which is being converted to burn natural gas.

A key challenge for the Syrian natural gas industry is logistical, with reserves located mainly in northeastern Syria, while population is centered in western and southern Syria. SPC currently is working to increase Syria's natural gas production through several projects. The Palmyra area in central Syria is the site of much of this activity, including development of the Al Arak gas field,

which came onstream at the end of 1995. Other gas fields in the Palmyra area include Al Hail and Al Dubayat -- both of which are "sweet gas" and two "sour gas" fields -- and Najib and Sokhne, which came onstream in 2000. Syria is attempting to expand output at Najib through its central area gas project. Foreign energy companies have been invited to submit proposals on gas projects in the Palmyra region. Several have reportedly held discussions with the Syrian government on the project, but no contracts have been awarded.

In October 1997, Syria announced discovery of a large new natural gas field in the Abi Rabah area of the Palmyra region. In addition to supplying a new (completed in 1997), 375-megawatt, power plant at Zaisoun in central Syria, the Palmyra fields have been linked with a new pipeline to Aleppo, as well as to the Tishreen power plant in Damascus and the Mhardeh power plant in Homs. Najib, the fourth and final field to be developed in the Palmyra region, started production in 2000 at a capacity of 100 mmcf/d. A modest-sized new discovery was reported in the Palmyra area in August 2002 by the Croatian company INA Naftaplin, which tested at about 9 Mmcf/d.

Syria's Jibсах natural gas treatment plant, which came online in 1988, accounts for more than one-quarter of the country's total natural gas processing capacity. Jibсах's capacity was increased 88% in a project completed during the first half of 1997, and now is being increased again (to 105 mmcf/d from 60 mmcf/d currently). Other Syrian gas processing plants include: the Deir ez-Zour Gas Treatment Plant (since 1991); the Jafra Gas Separation Plant (late 1996); and the Palmyra Gas Processing Plant (late 1996).

In September 2001, several months ahead of schedule, an important new, integrated natural gas project (called "Desgas") was completed in the Deir ez-Zour region, three years since a \$430 million service agreement was signed between SPC on the one hand, and ConocoPhillips and TotalFinaElf on the other. The new complex utilizes approximately 175 Mmcf/d of previously-flared, "associated" (found together with oil) natural gas, in the Deir ez-Zour

oil fields. TotalFinaElf and ConocoPhillips each hold 50% interest in the project, with ConocoPhillips as lead operator. ConocoPhillips announced in February 2004 that it intended to end its operations at Deir ez-Zour in the future, likely by letting the current contract lapse in 2005. The Deir ez-Zour complex now includes a natural gas gathering system and processing plant, plus a 155-mile pipeline to carry 150 Mmcf/d of natural gas to the grid serving western Syria. Natural gas also is being transported to the Tabiyeh oil field for processing and reinjection/enhanced oil recovery.

As increased volumes of natural gas feedstock become available, and given abundant phosphate reserves, Syria is adding capacity to produce fertilizer. At present, Syria has two nitrogenous fertilizer plants and one phosphate-based unit, both located at Homs.

## **ELECTRIC POWER**

As of January 2002, total installed Syrian electric generating capacity was around 7.6 gigawatts (GW), with fuel oil and natural gas the primary fuels, and 1.5 GW of hydroelectric capacity. With Syrian electric power demand growing, adding electricity supply capacity is an important national priority. Also, Syria is aiming to replace its oil-fired power plants with natural-gas-fired plants, in order to free up oil for export and to avoid becoming a net oil importer in a few years. Since then, existing power stations have undergone maintenance and four new generating plants have been built (including the 600-MW al-Zara gas/oil plant near Hama, completed by Mitsubishi in November 2000). Also planned are the 300-MW Zeizoun plant and the 630-MW Tishreen hydro station. Overall, Syria hopes to add 3,000 MW of power generating capacity by 2010, at a probable cost of around \$2 billion, but progress toward implementing these projects has been slowed by a lack of investment capital. Foreign-owned power projects are still not under consideration.

While power generation capacity in Syria now appears adequate, the country's power distribution network remains a problem. Transmission losses are estimated as high as 25% of total generated capacity due to a variety of

factors including poor quality wires and transformer stations. In December 2000, the European Investment Bank (EIB) agreed to lend Syria 75 million Euro for expansion and upgrading of the country's power transmission network (in February 2001, the EIB agreed to lend another 115 million Euro). The project, scheduled for completion by 2005, will involve construction, upgrading, and expansion of sub-stations, overhead power lines, and underground cables. In addition to the EIB, funds for this project is coming from Arab Gulf states and the Syrian government. Also, in March 2001, Kuwait agreed to loan Syria \$65 million to help double the size of a natural-gas-fired power plant at Nasriyeh, northeast of Damascus. Nasriyeh currently has capacity of 300 MW.

In March 2001, a project to link the electric power grids of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan was completed, with an inauguration ceremony attended by Egyptian President Husni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah. Linking the three countries' grids together creates a network of approximately 45 GW. The link between Jordan and Syria is via 400-kilovolt cable, while the Jordanian-Egyptian link is via underwater cable in the Red Sea.

As part of its strategy to save oil for hard currency exports, Syria has plans to build several natural gas, combined-cycle power plants, and to convert the country's major oil-fired plants to natural gas. Two of Syria's largest power stations -- the Mahrada and Baniyas plants -- have been converted from fuel oil to natural gas in recent years. Natural gas for these two plants comes from the Palmyra fields. Syria also plans to increase natural gas usage at the dual-capacity (fuel oil or natural gas) Tishreen power plant. Gas for Tishreen is to come from the Omar treatment plant. In addition to these plants, Suwaidiyah Station II had five new natural gas turbines installed in 1989, while Suwaidiyah I operates mainly on associated gas from nearby fields.

On May 19, 1999, the director-general of Syria's Atomic Energy Commission signed an agreement with Russia on cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear power, including construction of two nuclear reactors in Syria. On February 23, 1998, Syria and Russia had signed an agreement on the peaceful use of

nuclear energy, and in July, 1998 the two countries had agreed on a timetable for a 25-MW light-water nuclear research center project in Syria with the participation of Russia's Atomstroyeksport and Nikiet. The project appears to have been abandoned, however, due to lack of financing. Russia's Minister of Atomic Energy stated in January 2003 that the project is no longer under discussion.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

**Head of State:** President Bashar al-Asad (assumed office on July 17, 2000, following the death of his father, Hafiz al-Asad)

**Prime Minister:** Muhammad Naji al-Utri (since September 10, 2003)

**Independence:** 17 April 1946 (from League of Nations mandate under French administration)

**Population (7/03E):** 17.6 million

**Location/Size:** Middle East, at eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, between Turkey and Lebanon/71,498 sq. miles (slightly larger than North Dakota)

**Major Cities:** Damascus (capital), Aleppo, Latakia, Homs

**Languages:** Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian, French and English widely understood

**Ethnic Groups:** Arab 90.3%; Kurd, Armenian, other 9.7%

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim 74%, Alawite, Druze, and other Muslim sects 16%, Christian (various sects) 10%, Jewish (tiny communities in Damascus, Al Qamishli, and Aleppo)

## ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

**Finance Minister:** Muhammad al-Atrash (since 12/01)

**Economy and Foreign Trade Minister:** Ghassan al-Rifai (since 12/01)

**Currency:** Syrian Pound

**Market Exchange Rate (3/29/03):** \$1 = 53.3 Syrian pounds

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (2004F):** \$22.4 billion

**Real GDP Growth Rate (2003E):** 1.8% **(2004F):** 2.4%

**Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices, 2003E):** 4.3% **(2004F):** 3.7%

**Unemployment Rate (2004F):** under 10% (official statistic); 20% or higher (unofficial estimate)

**Merchandise Exports (2004F):** \$7.4 billion

**Merchandise Imports (2004F):** \$5.9 billion

**Merchandise Trade Balance (2004F):** \$1.5 billion

**Major Trading Partners:** Germany, Italy, Lebanon, France, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Spain

**Major Export Products:** Petroleum, fruits and vegetables, textiles, cotton

**Major Import Products:** Manufactured goods, machinery, food and livestock, chemicals and chemical products

**Oil Export Revenues/Total Export Revenues (2003E):** around 50%

## **ENERGY OVERVIEW**

**Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources:** Ibrahim Haddad (since 12/01)

**Minister of Electricity:** Munib bin-Asad Saim Al-Dahar

**Proven Oil Reserves (1/1/04E):** 2.5 billion barrels

**Oil Production (2003E):** 535,000 barrels per day (bbl/d), of which 528,000 bbl/d was crude oil

**Oil Consumption (2003E):** 279,000 bbl/d

**Net Oil Exports (2003E):** 256,000 bbl/d (not counting smuggled Iraqi oil, which was reportedly is in the 150,000 bbl/d-200,000 bbl/d range before March 2003)

**Crude Oil Refining Capacity (1/1/04E):** 239,865 bbl/d

**Major Crude Oil Customer:** European Union

**Major Ports:** Latakia, Baniyas, Tartus

**Natural Gas Reserves (1/1/04E):** 8.5 trillion cubic feet (Tcf)

**Natural Gas Production/Consumption (2002E):** 205 billion cubic feet (Bcf)

**Electric Generation Capacity (2002E):** 7.6 million kilowatts (80% thermal, 20% hydroelectric)

**Electric Generation (2002E):** 26.2 billion kilowatthours (60% thermal, 40% hydroelectric)

## **ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW**

**Minister of State for Environmental Affairs:** Adnan Khuzam

**Total Energy Consumption (2001E):** 0.9 quadrillion Btu\* (0.2% of world total energy consumption)

**Energy-Related Carbon Dioxide Emissions (2001E):** 51.3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide (0.2% of world carbon dioxide emissions)

**Per Capita Energy Consumption (2001E):** 51.6 million Btu (vs. U.S. value of 341.8 million Btu)

**Per Capita Carbon Dioxide Emissions (2001E):** 2.9 metric tons of carbon dioxide (vs. U.S. value of 5.5 metric tons of carbon dioxide)

**Energy Intensity (2001E):** 18,159 Btu/\$1995 (vs U.S. value of 10,810 Btu/\$1995)\*\*

**Carbon Dioxide Intensity (2001E):** 1.08 metric tons of carbon dioxide/thousand \$1995 (vs U.S. value of 0.62 metric tons/thousand \$1995)\*\*

**Fuel Share of Energy Consumption (2001E):** Oil (65.1%), Natural Gas (23.0%), Coal (0.0%)

**Fuel Share of Carbon Emissions (2001E):** Oil (78.6%), Natural Gas (21.4%), Coal (0.0%)

**Status in Climate Change Negotiations:** Non-Annex I country under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (ratified January 4th, 1996). Not a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol.

**Major Environmental Issues:** Deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; desertification; water pollution from dumping of raw sewage and wastes from petroleum refining; inadequate supplies of potable water.

**Major International Environmental Agreements:** A party to Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Hazardous Wastes, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution . Has signed, but not ratified, Environmental Modification.

\* The total energy consumption statistic includes petroleum, dry natural gas, coal, net hydro, nuclear, geothermal, solar and wind electric power. The renewable energy consumption statistic is based on International Energy Agency (IEA) data and includes hydropower, solar, wind, tide, geothermal, solid biomass and animal products, biomass gas and liquids, industrial and municipal wastes. Sectoral shares of energy consumption and carbon emissions are also based on IEA data.

\*\*GDP based on OECD Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) figures.

## **OIL AND GAS INDUSTRIES**

**Organization:** The state-owned SPC (SPC) controls all oil resources, and directly produces about one-fourth of Syrian output. Al-Furat Petroleum Company (AFPC), which is owned by SPC, Shell, and PetroCanada, is responsible for about 65% of Syrian output. Sytrol is the state oil marketing company.

**Major Foreign Energy Company Involvement:** Conoco, PetroCanada, Shell International, TotalFinaElf

**Major Oil Fields:** Deir ez-Zour and Jafra in eastern Syria; Karatchuk in the far northeast

**Major Refineries:** Syria's two refineries are located at Homs and Banias, with crude refining capacities of 107,140 bbl/d and 132,725 bbl/d, respectively.

**Major Oil Export Terminals:** Banias, Tartous, Latakia

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*Sources for this report include: Agence France Presse; AP Worldstream; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts; Calgary Herald; CIA World Factbook 2003; Deutsche Presse-Agentur; Dow Jones News Wire service; Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) ViewsWire; Europe Energy; European Report; Global Insight Middle East Economic Outlook; Hart's Africa Oil and Gas; Janet Matthews Information Services (Quest Economics Database, World of Information Country Report); Middle East Economic Digest (MEED); Mideast Mirror; Petroleum Economist; Petroleum Intelligence Weekly; Power Engineering International; Reuters; U.S. Energy Information Administration; World Oil.*

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