



OFFSHORE DRILLING SOUTH AMERICA COLOMBIA

Petrobras, Ecopetrol ordered to halt drilling natural gas well offshore Colombia

Andrea Jaramillo, Bloomberg September 15, 2024

(Bloomberg) – A Colombian judge ordered Ecopetrol SA and Petroleo Brasileiro SA to halt the drilling of an offshore gas well in the nation's Caribbean waters after an Indigenous community sought legal protection.

The community in the area of Taganga, near the city of Santa Marta, claimed their consent should have been requested before the companies were allowed to drill the Uchuva-2 well, according to a copy of the document published Friday by Caracol Radio. Petrobras is the operator of the Tayrona block with a 44.4% stake and Ecopetrol has the remaining 55.6%.

The Colombian company is expected to publish a statement commenting on the decision. Petrobras didn't immediately reply to a request for comment.

Set to face a shortfall of natural gas at the start of next year, Colombia's hopes are riding on the future potential of its deepwater wells. Ecopetrol's offshore chief, Elsa Jaimes, said in an interview last month that production from Caribbean waters could come online as early as 2029, depending on approvals from local communities and securing environmental licenses.

The judge's ruling to halt the drilling of Uchuva-2, which began in June, isn't the only setback Ecopetrol is facing.

Last month, Colombia's environmental licensing authority suspended the process to allow drilling of a separate offshore oil well that would set a new world drilling record. The state energy company and Occidental Petroleum Corp. have said they plan to start drilling the Komodo-1 well later this year at a depth of roughly 3,900 m (nearly 13,000 ft).

The Uchuva-2 ruling also represents another major offshore exploration setback for Petrobras. In Brazil, it has been blocked from drilling at a key section of the Equatorial Margin due to so-called "environmental concerns."



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