

Will Venezuela scrap its pipeline deal with **Ecopetrol**?

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Colombia's government has revealed that **Petróleos de Venezuela SA** is planning to terminate its contract with **Ecopetrol** concerning the binational Antonio Ricaurte Gas Pipeline, citing insufficient investment to restore the infrastructure. The development has introduced fresh uncertainty into efforts to revive cross border energy cooperation between Colombia and Venezuela.

Colombian Energy Minister Edwin Palma disclosed that Venezuela's state energy company intends to withdraw from the pipeline agreement after raising concerns about the lack of funding required to repair the ageing infrastructure. The pipeline has remained largely inactive in recent years and requires substantial technical rehabilitation before it can resume normal operations.

The Antonio Ricaurte pipeline, which stretches roughly 225 kilometres between Venezuela's Zulia region and Colombia's La Guajira department, was originally designed to transport natural gas between the two countries and has a capacity of approximately 500 million cubic feet per day.

The possible termination of the contract reflects the broader complexities surrounding energy cooperation between the two neighbours. The pipeline has been largely dormant since the late 2010s due to political tensions, Venezuela's economic crisis, and international sanctions targeting the Venezuelan energy sector.

Despite these challenges, both governments had recently signalled renewed interest in restoring the pipeline as part of a broader strategy to stabilise regional energy supplies. Colombia has been exploring options to import Venezuelan natural gas in order to address potential domestic supply gaps as production from some Colombian gas fields gradually declines. However, PDVSA's reported decision to abandon the contract could significantly complicate these plans.

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complicate those plans.

Against this backdrop, Minister Palma said that Bogotá intends to hold discussions with the United States government to explore the possibility of easing sanctions that currently restrict commercial energy transactions with Venezuela.

Colombia believes that a relaxation of sanctions could facilitate renewed trade and investment in the cross border energy sector. The sanctions regime has been a major obstacle for companies attempting to engage in joint energy projects with Venezuelan entities.

In parallel, Colombia has authorised licences allowing the resumption of imports of around 1.26 million gallons of liquefied petroleum gas per month from Venezuela. The move is seen as part of a broader effort to diversify energy supplies and reduce pressure on domestic markets.

Energy cooperation between Colombia and Venezuela has historically played an important role in regional integration. The Antonio Ricaurte pipeline was originally built with Venezuelan investment in 2007 and once facilitated gas exports from Colombia to Venezuela before flows were reversed in later years.

Today, however, the infrastructure symbolises both the potential and fragility of cross border energy partnerships in Latin America. Political uncertainty, ageing infrastructure, and international sanctions have repeatedly interrupted attempts to revive the project.

If PDVSA proceeds with terminating the contract, Colombia may be forced to accelerate alternative strategies to secure gas supplies, including liquefied natural gas imports and expanded domestic exploration. For now, the future of the pipeline remains uncertain, highlighting how geopolitics continues to shape energy security across the region.

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