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New Saudi Oil Export Pipelines Bypassing Hormuz & Bab Al-Mandeb

Facts & Prospects

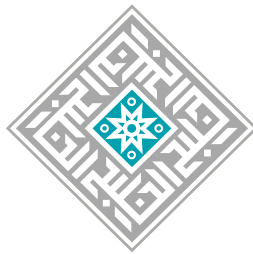
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Energy security in Saudi Arabia has never been just a slogan. It is a stack of alternatives and options developed over decades, many of which are currently being used, with further expansion already planned. One such alternative is the East-West Pipeline (Petroline), an alternative export route that the Kingdom spent more than forty years and tens of billions of dollars building precisely to ensure that its oil exports would not live or die by the Strait of Hormuz. That bet paid off when crossing the Strait became highly disrupted in February of this year. Now, Riyadh is moving to further strengthen its resilience, making sure that it has sufficient alternative export routes for its oil so that if missiles and drones hit any one of them, others are ready to take over the job with high efficiency.

With that in mind, Mr. Amin Nasser, CEO of Saudi Aramco, declared on 23 September 2026 that “engineering and feasibility work is underway on a fourth and fifth crude export route, with the Sumed (Suez-Mediterranean) pipeline through Egypt as one potential channel.” No destinations, capacities, or construction timelines were disclosed.

Two days following that statement, Mr. Patrick Pouyanné, CEO of France’s TotalEnergies, confirmed that Saudi Arabia “has begun to work” on an oil pipeline to the Omani Port of Duqm, which could provide Saudi crude with a direct outlet to the Arabian Sea without passing through the Strait of Hormuz. The pipeline’s exact starting point, capacity, route, and construction timetable have not been disclosed, while Saudi Aramco has declined to comment.

It is therefore becoming evident that Saudi Arabia is serious about the construction of new oil export pipelines as part of its broader effort to diversify export routes. The prospective projects, including a potential connection to Sumed and another terminating on the Omani Arabian Sea coast, will support the Kingdom’s effort to reduce its dependence on the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab Al-Mandeb.

A Link to the Sumed Pipeline

The Sumed pipeline in Egypt runs from Ain Sukhna on the Gulf of Suez to the Sidi Kerir terminal near Alexandria on the Mediterranean Sea, covering a distance of 320 km. It was built in response to the Suez Canal closure in June 1967 and became operational in 1977. The pipeline consists of two parallel 42-inch lines and has a design capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day (b/d).



“Energy security in Saudi Arabia has never been just a slogan. It is a stack of alternatives and options that are in place since decades and currently used while planned to be expanded in the coming months and years”

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The Sumed Pipeline

The pipeline provides a reliable alternative route for transporting crude oil from the Red Sea to European markets and Mediterranean refineries, bypassing the Suez Canal. It has proved to be particularly useful for large crude tankers that are unable to pass the waterway, and during periods of tough congestion or serious geopolitical disruptions.

The Kingdom already has ownership shares in Sumed, which is operated by the Arab Petroleum Pipelines Company, a joint venture established in 1974 by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. In addition to the shares of Saudi Aramco (15%) in the pipeline company, ownership stocks include those of Egypt's EGPC¹ (50%), Abu Dhabi's IPIC² (15%), Kuwait Investment Authority (5%), Kuwait Investment Co. (5%), Kuwait Metal Pipe Industries Co. (5%), and QatarEnergy (5%).

The East-West Pipeline (Petroline)

An extension of the Sumed pipeline has already been proposed to connect Ain Sukhna to the Saudi coast near Sharm Al-Sheikh and link to the Saudi 7-million b/d East-West Pipeline in Yanbu on the Red Sea. In such a case, the capacity of Sumed would have to increase either through the construction of parallel lines or by adding higher pumping capacity. The pipeline already has three boosting units and two main pumping stations with ten 11,000-horsepower pumps. In addition, the storage and loading capacity of the terminal at Sidi Kerir would need to be expanded. It already has 28 floating roof tanks with a total capacity of around 20 million barrels and five Single Buoy Moorings (SBMs) for tanker loading.

The expansion of the Sumed pipeline and the Sidi Kerir terminal would be more than enough if the Kingdom decided to add more capacity to its East-West Pipeline, with preliminary talks reported in July this year aimed at allowing its Arab neighbors without a Hormuz bypass — Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar — to put barrels in the Saudi westbound line.

Linking the East-West Pipeline to Sumed will surely provide an alternative direct export route for Saudi oil to Mediterranean markets, while a new outlet on the Omani Arabian Sea coast will create a reliable alternative for exporting that crude to Asian consumers.



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**Riyadh makes sure
that it will have
enough alternative
export routes for its
oil so that if missiles
and drones hit one of
them, many others
will be here ready to
do the job with high
efficiency**
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1 The Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation
2 The International Petroleum Investment Company



An Oil Pipeline to the Arabia Sea

According to Rystad Energy, a Norway-based energy research and consultancy firm, the project of building an oil pipeline between Saudi Arabia and the Omani Arabian Sea coast is still at the feasibility-study stage. The pipeline is estimated to run 1,000-1,200 km and cost up to US\$10 billion. It would have a daily capacity of not less than 5 million barrels.

Rystad Energy believes that Ras Markaz, near the Duqm Port, is among the final destinations under consideration for the project. At Ras Markaz, the Saudi-Omani oil pipeline would benefit from the availability of up to 200 million barrels of storage capacity directly located on the Arabian Sea with the Indian Ocean behind it.

It is evident that a pipeline from the oil-bearing eastern province of Saudi Arabia to the Arabian Sea coast of Oman would allow Saudi crude, particularly barrels bound for Asian markets, to reach the open sea without crossing the Strait of Hormuz. It would also avoid the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait, across which Asian-bound tankers must pass after loading Saudi crude pumped through the East-West Pipeline to Yanbu.

In addition to visibly neutralizing and considerably diminishing the significance of both Hormuz and Bab Al-Mandeb in terms of oil trade and transportation, the Saudi-Omani oil pipeline project would have positive impacts not only on the economies of the Arab Gulf countries — especially Oman — but also on global markets.

It is worth mentioning that Saudi Arabia has extensive experience in building and managing transboundary oil export pipelines. As early as the 1940s and 1950s, the Kingdom, through Aramco, built the 1,664-km, 0.5-million-b/d Trans-Arabian Pipeline (Tapline), stretching from the Saudi eastern province to the Lebanese Mediterranean coast and crossing several countries along the way. Before its closure in 1990, the Tapline helped turn many villages into cities and supported the emergence of new ones. It also contributed to the economic development of many communities along the route by providing infrastructure, employment, and new economic opportunities to communities along the pipeline corridor.



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