

Dragon gas deal not dead

PM says no firm US commitment but T&T moving full speed ahead



Prime Minister Stuart Young responds to a question during yesterday's post-Cabinet media briefing at Whitehall, Port-of-Spain. PHOTO BY ANISTO ALVES

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For now, the Dragon Gas deal is not dead. In fact, Government is still moving at full speed to fulfil the energy arrangement with Venezuela.

This was confirmed by Prime Minister Stuart Young at yesterday's post-Cabinet media briefing at Whitehall, Port-of-Spain, a day after he met with United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio for bilateral talks on energy, security and other issues in Jamaica on Wednesday.

While the initial communique released by the US government concerning the meeting did not

include the issue of talks about the cross-border gas field deals T&T has in place with Venezuela, Prime Minister Young yesterday said he did broach the topic with Secretary Rubio.

“I then took the discussions to the Dragon gas deal, to our relationship with Venezuela and emphasised the importance of it. Not only to Trinidad and Tobago, but I was able to set out how it would also affect the rest of the Caricom region, because of the important role we play in supporting some of our Caricom brother and sister nations throughout the region,” Young said.

“This is the benefit of a respectful relationship, this is the benefit of what we’ve built up over the past few years with the decision makers in the United States and when my predecessor and myself have spoken to you and told you we speak to persons on both sides of the aisle, we remained engaged with whoever is a government in the United States.”

However, he said the other half of the gas field in Trinidad waters, Manatee, would still be in play should the Dragon deal be impacted by US policy.

“Dragon really is the field that is going to be affected by it, we have Manatee. Manatee is going to flow by 2027, that’s taking place. Again, it gives me an opportunity to repeat the achievement that was in allowing us, with a unitised field, to pursue 2.7 TCF of gas on our side that is proceeding full speed ahead,” he said.

He pointed out that Shell is continuing work in relation to the project in Mexico and work is also being done here on the construction of the platform for the Dragon field at La Brea.

The Prime Minister said the discussion concerning the deal will continue to be held with the US government.

The deal is currently moving forward at the behest of the US government as a result of the OFAC licence granted in October 2023.

However, Young pointed out that Rubio said the US policy was not meant to harm Trinidad and Tobago.

“He explained to me the US policy that they’re applying. I understood the US policy and basically, we agreed that there is a lot of room in there for Trinidad and Tobago to achieve what is needed domestically with the Dragon gas deal, as well as the role that we play throughout the region, that they will give us support on and the achievement of the policy. I made it very clear that Venezuela is our closest neighbour, we have a relationship with Venezuela that can be a beneficial relationship again for the region and the Western Hemisphere,” Young said.

But Young admitted he could not say if the two-year licence for the Dragon gas field would be renewed.

“That is part of what the conversation was about yesterday, as was discussed between Secretary of State Rubio and myself. Our OFAC licence is in place until October, he (Rubio) recognised that the landscape is changing, for example, the introduction of tariffs or the suggestion of introduction of tariffs, so the opportunity that I got on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago yesterday, to sit down with the person who is in charge of deciding and there is a lot of discretion in there,” said Young.

He also pointed to the fact that Chevron had seen its deadline from the US government to conclude its operations with Venezuela’s stateowned Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA) moved from April 3 to May 27 as a sign that some leeway could be granted in T&T’s case.