

# Manatee development hinges on T&T/Venezuela relationship

Energy expert, Anthony Paul:



Energy expert Tony Paul



## ESIA - Manatee Development Project

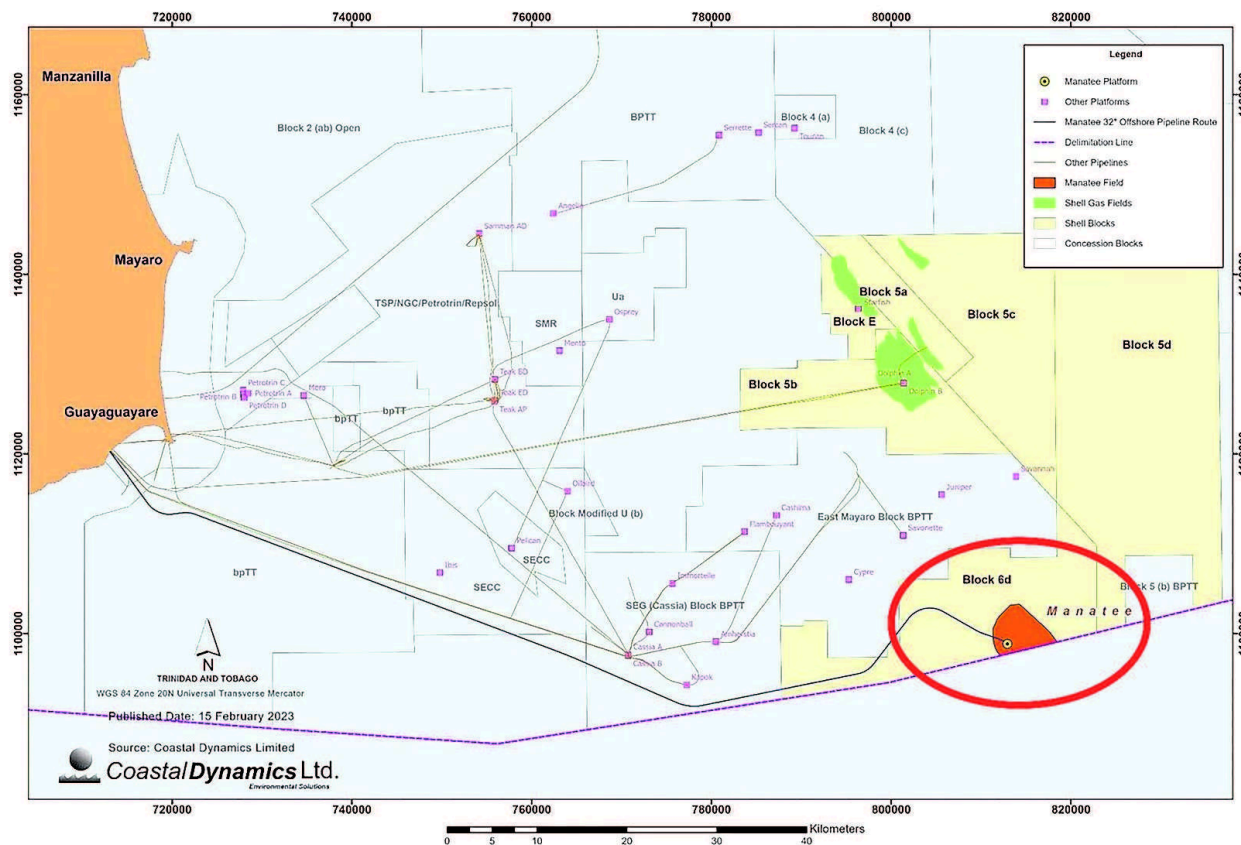


Figure 3.2: Offshore components – Manatee Development Project

The red circle indicates the location of the Manatee natural gas field, which is on the Trinidad side of the cross-border field called Loran/Manatee. Venezuela is on the other side of the border.

GEISHA KOWLESSAR-ALONZO SENIOR MULTIMEDIA REPORTER  
 GEISHA.KOWLESSAR@GUADIAN.CO.TT

Energy expert Anthony Paul suggests that if diplomatic relations between T&T and Venezuela deteriorate, this can pose a longterm risk to the stability of the Manatee cross-border maritime field, particularly in light of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar's pro-US stance.

The field is located in the East Coast Marine Area (ECMA) in T&T and is part of the cross-border Loran-Manatee discovery, shared by this country and Venezuela.

The Loran/ Manatee has been reported to hold around 10 trillion cubic feet (tcf ) of natural gas, with 7.3 tcf on Venezuela's side and the remaining 2.7 tcf on T&T's side. Manatee is expected to generate more than 600 million cubic feet per day and start production in 2027.

In an interview with Guardian Media yesterday, Paul explained the immediate outcome is nothing has changed because the sanctions put on by the US Government have not changed, noting that these are the ones that caused any delay of the Dragon Gas operations.

'The Manatee has two sides. Trinidad-only gas and unitised gas. Again, the US sanctions have stopped the unitised gas from coming so the Trinidad-only gas will continue to come. In other

words, there's no short-term change in that situation. Longer term, it depends on how the Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela relationship plays out over time and who knows how that will play out. So it's hard to say," Paul further explained.

He reiterated that at the moment, the immediate impact is no different on those specific projects.

Paul, however, noted that over the decades the diplomatic relations between T&T and Venezuela have been "extremely good."

On whether these relations could change given the current administration's support for the Trump administration, Paul said this country's relationship with Venezuela is based on diplomacy, but if that diplomatic landscape changes, then the relationship could change.

However Paul said, "I don't think Venezuela will break any agreements we have. We have a boundary treaty agreement for instance, that spells out ways that Trinidad fishermen can fish in Venezuelan waters. I don't think that will change. So I don't know that anything significant will change, except for the attitudes. And that attitude may have a longer term impact depending on the politics, both in T&T and Venezuela in the future.

"There is nothing we can say now to predict the future other than if the politics changes then things might change. But I don't think anything will change in the immediate with oil and gas," Paul added.

At the same time, he warned that if the relationship between T&T and Venezuela deteriorates then that would impact the business.

"Because the Venezuelan industry is state-owned and controlled so it's a large extent. It depends on how the relationship plays over time.

"And the Government in Trinidad could change the Government in Venezuela could change in the next five years or four years. So who knows. And the government in the US could change. Not that the US foreign policy tends to stay fairly static, depending on who's in power," Paul added.

Noting that the Caribbean has been deemed a zone of peace, Paul advised that that status must be maintained..

The Prime Minister has publicly supported the deployment of US military assets in the Caribbean to combat drug trafficking.

She stated that her government welcomed US assistance to address the region's ongoing issues with crime and violence, particularly in response to threats from the Venezuelan regime.

However, her stance has drawn criticism, as many argue that that unilateralist posture could isolate T&T from its Caricom partners.