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# Durra Gas Field; Iraq in the triangle of Iran-Saudi Arabia and Kuwait conflicts

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## Authors

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**Summary :** The development and exploration of the Durra gas field was delayed each time due to a problem, but this time Saudi and Kuwaiti officials said that the matter is serious, although Iran announced its seriousness in owning the field and starting work in its name. However, the success of the strategy is any party and how to determine and how to develop the gas field and the prospects for Saudi-Iranian relations in the meantime will have an impact.

The Durra gas field in the Gulf, known to the Iranians as Arch and the Iraqis as Jamal, has heated up negotiations to draw or define water borders between partner countries in the region.

Visits and talks continue between the foreign ministers of the four countries, but the repeated statements of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that [the Durra gas field is an exclusive right of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait](#) prompted [the Iranian foreign minister to invite](#) his Kuwaiti counterpart to Tehran.

Also, on July 30, 2023, after his visit, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister made a statement regarding the water borders between Iraq and Kuwait, which angered the Iraqi street and the first deputy of the Iraqi Parliament and lawmakers rejected the proposed water agreement with Kuwait.

According to the agreement, Iraq will not have the right to the gas field, but Umm Qasr will become part of Kuwait and the port houses will be destroyed.

A technical delegation from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil is scheduled to visit Iraq on August 10, 2023, for talks with Iraqi officials regarding the shared oil fields. Kuwait refers to the 1993 United Nations agreement, but Iraq rejects it, so in the latest development, [the Iraqi prime minister](#) denied on the evening of August 6, 2023 that any government had made concessions on Iraqi territory since 2003, which means that the previous agreement is unacceptable.

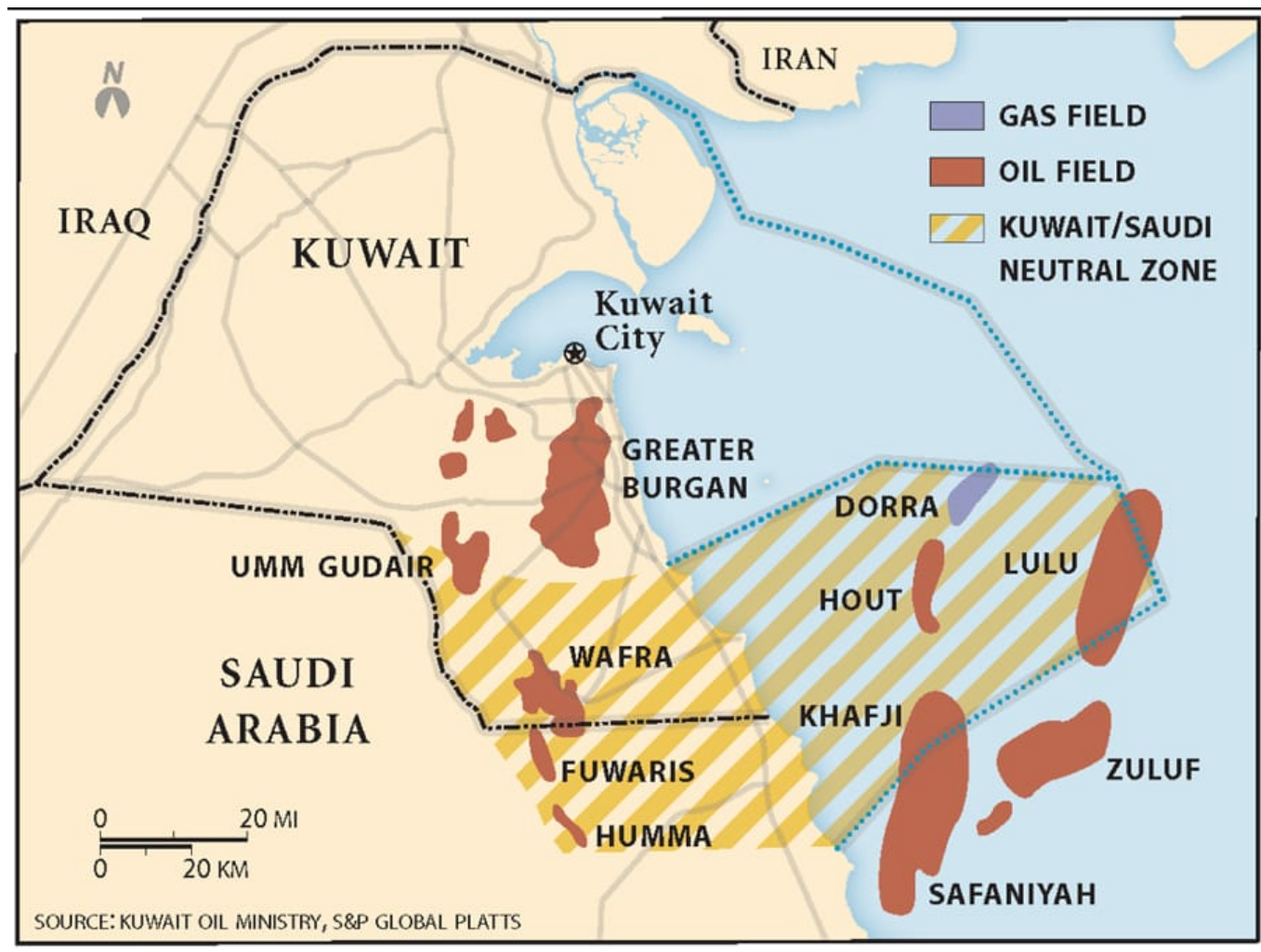
In fact, the Durra gas field is not the only field in the Middle East in dispute over ownership and use rights, but the [Al-Fakkah oil field](#) in the southern provinces of Maysan and Khuzestan, the Meghd oil field in the West Bank, [and the Heglig oil field](#). The field between Sudan and South Sudan and [the fields of Kirkuk governorate and the disputed governorates between the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan region](#).

In these piece based on the sources, we try to shed light on the issue of ownership of the Durra gas field. Does Iraq have any rights in this field? What about Iran? We also discuss the importance of the Durra-Arsh-Jamal gas field in the new system of energy supply lines to the country and the world, and the possibility of severing relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran because of the Durra-Arsh gas field! Because there are 60 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves out there!

## **Durra gas field - Arash - Jamal**

The Durra gas field was discovered in 1960, when the boundaries were not fully defined and natural gas was not as valuable as it is today. The field is located in an area declared by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as a divided PNZ neutral zone with an area of 5,770 square kilometers and undefined borders.

However, by virtue of [the Uqair Protocol](#) of December 2, 1922, which defined the borders between Iraq, the Sultan of Najd<sup>[1]</sup> and the Sheikdom of Kuwait, the governments of Najd and Kuwait enjoy equal rights until the British Government Office concludes further agreements. Look at the map below about the location of the Durra gas field.



Source: Middle East Economic Survey Miss [MEES](#)

According to some estimates, the field's reserves amount to 60 trillion cubic feet, of which between 10-13 trillion cubic feet and 300 million barrels of oil can be economically invested 1 billion cubic feet of gas per day [\[2\]](#), while [the entire European Union](#) needs 400 billion cubic feet cube. of natural gas annually, and the post-war dispute between the European Union and Russia over natural gas is [half of the amount produced](#) annually from the Durra field. in it.

Developing oil and gas fields in the area claimed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which have different names for Iran and Iraq, has always been difficult due to differences in resource use, while governments have focused on onshore oil fields and they are doing wafra oil field and Al-Hout field and Khafaji.

Indeed, until recently there was no talk of developing the Durra gas field, and in 2013 Saudi Arabia and Kuwait suspended talks over differences in pipeline routes and gas production sharing, which included the gas produced passing under the joint Saudi-controlled area. to reject.

In 2014-2015, the two countries suspended production from the joint oil fields and the Durra gas project, but recently, especially [in 2019, the two sides agreed](#) to resume production from the fields in the neutral or joint zone.

[In late 2020](#), the two sides formed a joint team to review and prepare a plan for the development of the Durra gas field, which can be technically and commercially developed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Since last year, due to the return of demand for natural gas and its transformation into an important geopolitical commodity in local, regional and international relations, the issue of developing this field has emerged and made Saudi

Arabia and Kuwait put aside their differences for the future. Fills but also changes occur in the gas pipelines.

In practice, the issue of developing and producing gas and oil from the Durra gas field was raised in December 2022, after an agreement between Saudi Aramco and the Kuwaiti Gulf Oil Company, which will [increase gas production from the field to 1.84 billion cubic feet per day](#). A thousand barrels of liquefied gas!

If [the Durra gas field is developed](#), it will have five to six platforms connected to 200 kilometers of 30-inch pipelines and various equipment, in addition to 100 kilometers of submarine cables and, above all, the installation of various facilities and equipment for gas refining operations with two oil platforms, All this together is a big technical undertaking.

## **Iraq; Um Qasr and the Durra field - Jamal gas?**

[A delegation from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil](#) is scheduled to visit Iraq on November 10 to discuss how to deal with the oil fields shared between the two countries. Also, [on the fourteenth of this month](#), a legal committee will visit Iraq to determine the details of the water borders.

In fact, according to the talks, the demarcation of the water borders [between Iraq and Kuwait](#), which is scheduled to be resolved in the middle of this month, has more to do with Umm Qasr and the destruction of the houses erected in the port. If Iraq wants to withdraw from the proposal and agreement signed by the United Nations since 1993, but Iraq wants to withdraw from the previous agreement with Kuwait,

According to the proposal, which the governor of Basra participated in preparing, the Umm Qasr waterway will fall on Kuwait and those built in Umm Qasr must be demolished, which aroused concern in the streets of Basra and organized demonstrations last August.

[Jamal Al-Halbousi](#), an expert in international border affairs and the former head of the Iraqi delegation to negotiate with Kuwait, called on the Iraqis not to allow Iraqi officials to sign the current agreements with Kuwait, saying that "signing the agreement is a loss of Iraq's rights to land and water. [Al-Halbousi and replaced](#) him with Muhammad Bahr al-Uloun, the Iraqi envoy to the United Nations and deputy foreign minister.

Indeed, Iraq's compliance with the agreements is difficult, particularly the 1993 UN agreement, which gave Kuwait many of Iraq's rights, which the Iraqis claim are outside international agreements on water borders and should be reviewed.

We should also not forget that Iraq, the Durra gas field or Jamal is not the only center of problems, but there are common oil fields in the region and other areas shared by the two countries, so a delegation from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil will visit Iraq before the technical and legal borders. demarcation. Attention is now directed to the outcome of the talks between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi technical teams, especially the legal committees, to see if they will reach a conclusion regarding the demarcation of the water borders, or they will come out without results.

## **Durra-Arsh gas field, the future of Riyadh-Tehran relations**

Iran considers itself part of the region, certainly if it does not own the entire Gulf. The Iranians also say that they are trying to negotiate, but if the other parties are not willing to negotiate about water borders and Iran's share has not been determined, it will start exploring and investing in these gas and oil fields independently, especially in the Durra gas field, which he named Arash, and [Iran claims the right. Ownership of 40% of the field](#). In fact, the water and sea borders between the parties, especially the three Gulf partners, have not yet been determined, although Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have reached a joint agreement, but there is no joint bilateral agreement between Iran and other parties alone or Iran -

However, according to recent press releases, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait intend to continue developing the Durra field. Both countries, as one negotiating body, have sent invitations to the Iranians to participate in the talks. So far, the Iranians have rejected the offer. Fundamental talks are not expected if Saudi and Kuwaiti companies continue to develop the area. The Iranians are expected to continue their development plans while pursuing what they decide to become part of their reserves. Iran is advancing faster, as a single entity, than Saudi Arabia and Kuwait because they have not yet agreed on a joint agreement and development plan. So Durra development may continue along the same lines as Pars and the North Field, with Iran and Qatar using the area independently for the benefit of those in need rather than further regional recovery.

According to (Ackerman 2022), the information indicates that there are talks between the three parties, where Saudi Arabia and Kuwait invite Iran to participate in the talks, but Iran refused, as the two sides continue their efforts to develop the fields, and it is unlikely that the talks will yield such results if Saudi companies continue. And Kuwait in developing the region, and the Iranians continued their development plans, which means that the Iranian plan will move faster than Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as the two sides have not yet agreed on a joint development plan. In this scenario, the development of the Durra gas field is expected to have the same fate as the North and Al-Farsi fields, when Iran and Qatar independently use the area for their own benefit instead of increasing and protecting the fields.

Less than four months have passed since the agreement to normalize relations between [Saudi Arabia and Iran](#), with the participation of China. Today, the future of Saudi-Iranian relations is now facing a difficult test due to the dispute over the ownership of the Durra gas and the escalation of opposition rhetoric between officials from both sides, especially officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the rights and ownership of the Durra gas field. , The development of the gas field can have a full impact on the markets of both types of gas (natural gas and liquefied natural gas LPG), in addition to what we have indicated, there are new changes so that countries not only want to meet their future needs and energy security, but also want to participate in energy networks New (supply chains), especially making and connecting new natural gas lines to consumers!

## Conclusion

Now there is a voice [inside Iran and Iraq](#) that in any case, they should not be deprived of their countries' rights and ownership of natural resources, especially the Durra gas fields, which have unprecedented reserves and production capacities, but to what extent this noise reaches the level of pressure, especially for Iraq, We have to wait, but in the case of Iran, it is natural to see Iran declaring and competing over the ownership of the Durra Earring, as it possesses sufficient capabilities and experience to stand against Saudi Arabia in order to obtain part of the ownership of the right, but Iraq is clear that Iraq, which is going through several internal crises, is unable to Competition abroad, especially against Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia insists on a daily basis that the Durra gas field is an exclusive right of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and calls on Iran to return to the negotiating table to demarcate the border in the west of the Saudi-Kuwaiti joint area according to international law, although Kuwait calls for the dialogue itself to be joint and not alone, and all This came after Iran declared that it owns 40% of the Dora field.

On the other hand, the difference between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait with Iran is that Iran wants to negotiate with each side separately, but Saudi Arabia and Kuwait want to negotiate with Iran together as one front regarding the demarcation of the water borders in the northern Gulf.

The development and exploration of the Durra gas field was delayed each time due to a problem, but this time [Saudi and Kuwaiti officials](#) said that the matter is serious, [although Iran announced its seriousness](#) in owning the field and starting work in its name. However, the success of the strategy is any party and how to determine and how to develop the gas field and the prospects for Saudi-Iranian relations in the meantime will have an impact.

Finally, these days, according to international law, different maps of water borders are being published, so that Iran and Iraq each own a large part of the Durra gas field, so each side uses its own name, Will Iran treat the case as it did with Qatar? What will Iraq do to abide by the 1993 agreement or demand new borders that include the Jamal gas field?

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[1] Previously, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was called Najd

[2] That is, gas and oil that can be invested and profited from