

Montenegro: Gov transfers the oil exploration rights to Croatia for disputed border area

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Montenegrins have given up on oil and gas exploration near disputed peninsula Prevlaka, unlike Croat neighbors who announced a tender looking for unexplored quantities of "black gold"! Government of Montenegro on Thursday amended the decision on setting units for oil and gas exploration in these waters in a manner that the territory near Prevlaka has been excluded from the map. The reason is, as they state, adjustment to the international protocol on temporary regime along the Croatian border from 2002nd.

- By this decision of units marked for exploration and production of hydrocarbons has been excluded part of the area within the territorial sea, which is covered by the mentioned protocol, which is located in the temporary jurisdiction. Bearing in mind that at the beginning of April this year Croatian side displayed in its official map units for exploration and exploitation contracts in the area that we consider controversial (area of 1,800 square kilometers) and which designated as its continental shelf, and that the two states are not discussed, although we required that, with adoption of such decision Montenegro protect its interests in the marine area.

The response on which seabed lies unexplored amount of "black gold" near Prevlaka, Montenegrin or Croatian, and who is their owner, is somehow given precisely in the sea demarcation line between the two countries, which is under dispute.

- The problem of boundaries has not been resolved yet, so that is why we did not start this business - said Vladan Dubljevic, the Ministry of Economy for "Novosti". - Montenegro does not want to continue to emphasize the further problems around this sensitive issue, so that they would not offer something that could be the subject of international dispute. We estimated that at this moment would be wiser not to be exposed to risks, but to turn to tender for oil and gas exploration and production in the area south of Ulcinj towards the open sea.

The Americans began the first serious research in the area of Prevlaka in 1970th, through the company "Chevron", which for a decade has examined that part of the Adriatic Sea. Then in this work included the British and their company "Star petroleum" and they estimated that there was "black gold" in this area and it was payable to get into the job. Unfortunately, the war started and Yugoslavia was broken apart, so that the talks on this research have begun again just recently.

It is known that the Croats have disputed border in Prevlaka, which has been established at the time of SFRJ, so it raises the question whether deputies in the Montenegrin Assembly can vote that the state controls the job.



- Oil deposits do not follow administrative or national borders. Therefore, if the existence of joint deposits would be determined, it should be made an agreement on mutual satisfaction and benefit, say Montenegrin parliamentarians.

Both Zagreb and Podgorica have exchanged messages for a long time about no outstanding issues between the two countries. However, the story in practice is different. Some analysts in Montenegro consider that the problem of Prevlaka should be left to international arbitration. There are those who believe that Montenegro's entry into NATO (where Croatia is) would solve the issue much easier, while a good part of the opposition believes that the peninsula has been already handed over to the neighbors and it has been done secretly by the current regime.

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Deputy of PzP Koca Pavlovic believes that there is obviously some secret illegal agreement that Milo Djukanovic made with Croatian leaders at the expense of the state of Montenegro.

- I am convinced today that this is about corruption at the highest level which has all the elements of high treason. In addition to the enormous material damage inflicted on the state of Montenegro, which is measured in billions of EUR, with this acting the Government irreparably undermines the territorial integrity of our country in the area of Prevlaka - Pavlovic said.

AF: In addition to borders on the land, it also should be drawn the line on the sea, and precisely this is something what most impinge on the interests of Montenegro. It is very important on whose waters will move ships, and military, passenger and freight, who will allow and who will charge fees. This area, on the other hand, has been also indicated as the rich deposits of oil and natural gas.