

Iraq picks Russia firm to fix Syria pipeline

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Iraq has invited Russia's Stroytransgaz to submit an offer to re-activate an oil export pipeline to Syria's Mediterranean terminal of Baniyas, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh said on Monday.

The company, which has contracts in Syria and Saudi Arabia, will make the offer to the Iraqi government in Baghdad no later than Jan. 10, he told Reuters.

"We will discuss with Stroytransgaz what they come up with. We are clear and serious about this project," Saleh said in an interview in the Syrian capital.

Saleh made it clear that progress on the pipeline, as well as developing a gas field near the Syrian border and exporting the product through Syria, was linked to security cooperation from the Damascus government.

"Those terrorists who have infiltrated Iraq from its borders have killed thousands of Iraqis. There is no room to compromise on this issue," Saleh said.

"Our policy is to create mutual interests with neighbouring countries so that Iraq could be a cornerstone for regional stability and economic progress," he said.

The pipeline is linked to Iraq's northern Kirkuk oilfields.

Syria has a 600-km (375 mile) border with Iraq. U.S. forces bombed the 300,000 barrel per day pipeline on the Iraqi side during the 2003 invasion that removed Saddam Hussein from power.

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