

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Algeria Monthly Briefing August 2022

Algeria Summary 15 August 2022

The latest World Bank Algeria Economic Update indicates that the non-hydrocarbon sectors in Algeria will recover to their pre-pandemic levels in 2022. Algeria resumes commercial operations with Spain after the Professional Association of Banks and Financial Establishments (ABEF) announces on July 29 that it will lift restrictions on banking operations for foreign trade with the European country. State-owned energy group Sonatrach, Italy-headquartered energy giant and French-headquartered energy Total sign a \$4 billion oil and gas production-sharing contract on 19 July for the Berkine field in Algeria's southeast region. Energy minister Mohamed Arkab, together with Nigerian and Nigerien counterparts, sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop a 4000km Trans-Saharan gas pipeline designed to carry 30 cubic metres per year of gas to the European market. Algerian president Abdelmadjid Tebboune suggest that his country could join the BRICS economic group, joining historical ally Russia, which is already part of the group.

World Bank: Algeria's hydrocarbon sector to support growth in 2022...

The latest **World Bank Algeria Economic Update** published on 3 August under the title "*Renforcer la résilience en période favorable*" (strengthening resilience in favourable times), indicates that the non-hydrocarbon sectors in Algeria are expected to recover to their pre-pandemic levels in 2022.¹ The financial institution also expects hydrocarbon exports to remain high, leading to a current account increase and a marked increase in fiscal revenues.² The World Bank's update is part of a series of semi-annual publications to analyse economic development trends and the outlook for Algeria. The latest version reflects data available as of 17 June 2022.

Despite the positive 2022 forecast, the World Bank has projected a decline in hydrocarbon export prices and volumes in 2023-2024 while the uncertainty surrounding the evolution of the global economy will lead to a gradual deterioration in external and budget balances in Algeria.³ The World Bank's **Maghreb** country director, **Jesko Hentschel**, also warned that despite a rebound in Algeria's economic activity, challenges remain, especially in the current global context:

*"Compounded by highly volatile oil prices and the uncertainty of global economic dynamics...Going forward, pursuing reform efforts to boost private sector activity will be key to stimulate inclusive growth and to create jobs."*⁴

The report concludes that inflation also remains a growing concern in Algeria as it is globally. The World Bank suggests that prudent fiscal and monetary policies and reforms promoting more competition will assist in limiting inflationary pressures and support more sustainable and inclusive growth.⁵

Algeria resumes trade exchanges with Spain...

Algeria resumed commercial operations with **Spain** after Algeria's Professional **Association of Banks and Financial Establishments (ABEF)** announced on 28 July that it was lifting restrictions on banking operations

¹ World Bank, 3 Aug 2022

² World Bank, 3 Aug 2022

³ Esi-Africa, 4 Aug 2022

⁴ Esi-Africa, 4 Aug 2022

⁵ Esi-Africa, 4 Aug 2022

for foreign trade with the **European** country.⁶ Banking institutions operating in Algeria received a new directive noting that the decision to “*stop any commercial operations with Madrid*” had ended.⁷ The ABEF’s announcement new directive to banks came after “*an evaluation of the previous decision and consultations with relevant actors in the field of foreign trade.*”⁸

Spanish newspaper, **El Pais**, interviewed a European official in Algeria on 29 July who noted that the decision will allow Spanish businesses to resume exports to Algeria.⁹ The **Algerian-Spanish Circle of Commerce and Industry** also welcomed the decision noting that many Algerian companies suffered under the freeze on trade, especially those that import industrial and agri-food products.¹⁰

ABEF previously issued a directive on 9 June to all domestic financial institutions to “*freeze export and import operations to and from Spain and stop any bank domiciliation to conduct commercial operations with Madrid*” (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Jun 2022*).¹¹ Media from both countries wrote that the decision had caused complete commercial paralysis between the two countries, except for gas exports.¹² The directive came hours after the Algerian presidency announced the suspension of the 2002 **Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation** with Spain following a diplomatic clash between the two after Spain recognised **Morocco’s** sovereignty over **Western Sahara**.¹³

Spain’s prime minister, **Pedro Sanchez**, officially endorsed Morocco’s autonomy plan for Western Sahara in March as “*the most serious, realistic and credible basis for settling the dispute*” (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Apr 2022*).¹⁴ The endorsement spurred diplomatic tensions as Morocco considers the Western Saharan territory as its own; however, the Algeria-backed **Polisario Front** separatist movement demands a sovereign state.¹⁵ Following Spain’s announcement of support for Morocco, Algeria’s government recalled its ambassador on 19 March from Madrid for “*consultations*”.¹⁶ Political tensions with Morocco over Western Sahara have also hampered Algeria’s export potential and resulted in the closure of the **Maghreb-Europe** gas pipeline to Spain in October (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Nov 2021*).¹⁷ The pipeline transports over 13,500 million cubic metres of natural gas annually.

Algeria signs new energy deals with Italy and France...

State-owned energy group **Sonatrach**, **Italy**-headquartered energy giant **Eni** and **French**-headquartered **TotalEnergies** signed a \$4 billion oil and gas production-sharing contract on 19 July for the **Berkine** field in Algeria’s southeast region.¹⁸ President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** (2019-present) who hosted Italian prime minister **Mario Draghi** on 18 July, said the 25-year agreement would provide **Rome** (Italy) with “*significant volumes of natural gas*” as Europe pushes for energy alternatives to **Russian** supplies.¹⁹ The agreement was signed under Algeria’s 2019 hydrocarbon law that allows for production sharing with foreign partners, which will see Algeria increase gas exports to Italy increase by four billion cubic meters.²⁰ TotalEnergies also said that its partners in the agreement will “*develop additional liquid hydrocarbon resources while reducing these*

⁶ Africa News, 29 Jul 2022

⁷ Middle East Monitor, 29 Jul 2022

⁸ Middle East Monitor, 29 Jul 2022

⁹ El Pais, 29 Jul 2022

¹⁰ Africa News, 29 Jul 2022

¹¹ Middle East Monitor, 29 Jul 2022

¹² Middle East Monitor, 29 Jul 2022

¹³ Bloomberg, 11 Jul 2022

¹⁴ Reuters, 18 Mar 2022

¹⁵ Reuters, 18 Mar 2022

¹⁶ Middle East Eye, 19 Mar 2022

¹⁷ Middle East Monitor, 20 Apr 2022

¹⁸ Al-monitor, 19 Jul 2022

¹⁹ Al-monitor, 19 Jul 2022

²⁰ Al-monitor, 19 Jul 2022

fields' carbon intensity through a dedicated carbon reduction program."²¹ However, the deal drew heavy criticisms from Algerian opposition groups who argued that the government is selling out natural resources.

Sonatrach and Eni previously signed an agreement on 26 May to boost gas exploration and development of green hydrogen in Algeria, as Rome pushes to reduce its reliance on Russian energy (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Jun 2022*).²² Italy received about 40% of its gas imports from Russia before Russia invaded Ukraine in February and has been actively seeking to diversify its energy supply mix as the war escalates. Top executives from Eni and Sonatrach signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) in Rome in a ceremony witnessed by Tebboune and Draghi.²³ Following his meeting with Draghi, Tebboune said:

*"Every time production increases, we will be able to supply it to Italy, which can then send it to the rest of Europe. As far as electricity is concerned, we have agreed with our Italian friends to set up a submarine cable from Algeria to Italy."*²⁴

This agreement is part of a deal signed by Sonatrach and Eni in April, announcing that they would steadily increase gas supplies starting this year, eventually reaching 9 billion cubic metres (bcm) of extra gas per year by 2023-2024 (see *ARC Briefing Algeria May 2022*). Officials said that gas volumes expected from the regions covered by the new May deal are equal to about 3 bcm per year and will increase the export capacity of Algeria to Italy through the **Trans-Mediterranean Pipeline (TransMed)**.²⁵ The agreement will also cover the economic and technical evaluation for a green hydrogen pilot project in **Bir Rebaa North (BRN)** in the Algeria desert, to support the decarbonisation of the **BRN gas plant** managed by the Sonatrach-Eni joint venture.²⁶

In a press release issued on 25 July, Sonatrach also announced that it had made two gas discoveries, "by its own effort", and a third of oil, in collaboration with its partner Eni. The discoveries are expected to significantly boost Algeria's energy production. Eni said in the statement that "the development of these discoveries will be fast-tracked, thanks to their proximity to existing BRN/ROD facilities."²⁷

In early January, Sonatrach announced investments of \$40 billion between 2022 and 2026 in oil exploration, production and refining and gas exploration and extraction. The group's chief executive officer (CEO), **Toufik Hakkar**, said on 3 July that Sonatrach's output reached 79m tonnes of oil equivalent in the first five months of 2022, up 2% year-on-year.²⁸ Hakkar anticipates annual revenues to reach \$50 billion by the end of 2022 (See *ARC Briefing Algeria July 2022*).²⁹ He also noted that the energy company's total exports in 2021 grew by 75% on an annual basis to reach \$35 billion.³⁰ The company's spending on exploration also increased by 70% to \$21.5 billion.³¹

... while Algeria, Nigeria, and Niger sign MOU on gas pipeline to Europe

Energy minister **Mohamed Arkab**, together with his **Nigerian** and **Nigerien** counterparts **Timipre Sylva** and **Mahamane Sani Mahamadou**, signed an MoU on 28 July to develop a 4000km **Trans-Saharan** gas pipeline. The energy ministers were also joined by the CEO of Sonatrach, Toufik Hakkar, who will manage the pipeline in Algeria.³² The pipeline is designed to carry 30 cubic metres of gas per year to the European market.³³ Arkab stated the energy ministers have pledged to realise the project in "the shortest time possible" and

²¹ Al-monitor, 19 Jul 2022

²² Aljazeera, 26 May 2022

²³ Aljazeera, 26 May 2022

²⁴ Africa News, 26 May 2022

²⁵ Africa News, 26 May 2022

²⁶ Aljazeera, 26 May 2022

²⁷ Eni, 25 Jul 2022

²⁸ Sonatrach, 3 Jul 2022

²⁹ Zawya, 24 Jun 2022

³⁰ Zawya, 24 Jun 2022

³¹ Bloomberg, 3 Jul 2022

³² Middle East Monitor, 29 Jul 2022

³³ Middle East Monitor, 29 Jul 2022

take the first steps through the start of technical studies.³⁴ Arkad said that the MoU is an expression of the will of the three parties:

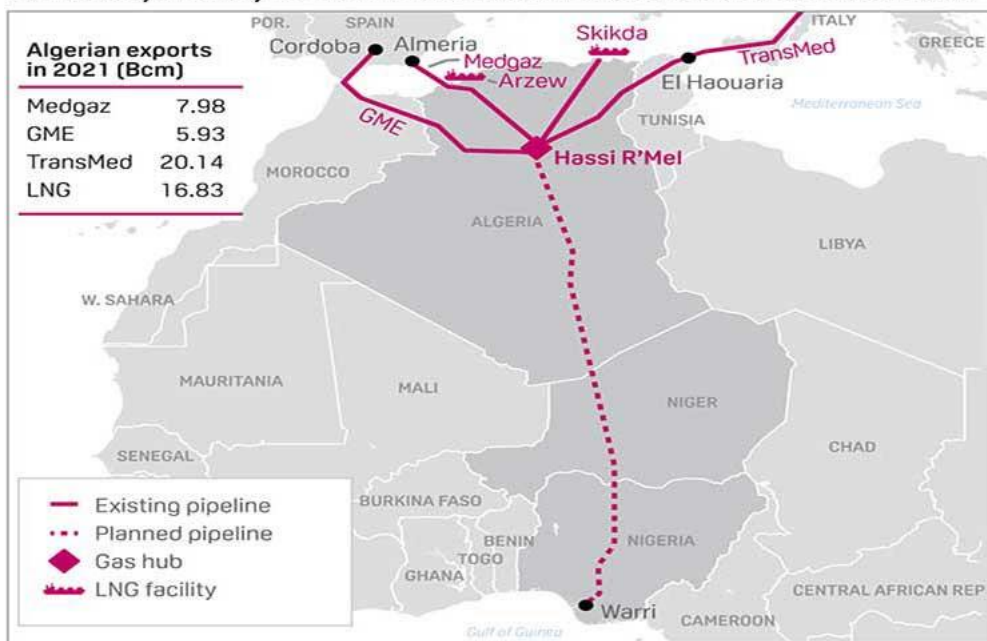
*“To embody this ambitious and major project...and is considered a strong signal for the world about commencement to embody this important project”.*³⁵

The three energy ministers committed at a meeting on 20 June in **Abuja** (Nigeria), to accelerating work on the development of the pipeline (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Jul 2022*). It was further stated that the pipeline will enable Europe to tap directly into their countries’ significant gas reserves:

*“Thus, diversifying its supply in the wake of the current energy crisis, while creating critical sources of revenue for African gas markets”.*³⁶

In February, the three countries agreed in terms of the **Declaration of Niamey** to revive the decades-long delayed 4,128-km project, which is estimated to cost \$13 billion.³⁷ The planned pipeline will connect **Warri** in Nigeria to the **Hassi R'Mel** gas hub in Algeria, passing through Niger.

ALGERIA, NIGER, NIGERIA INK TRANS-SAHARAN GAS LINK DEAL



Source: S&P Global Commodity Insights

The project was proposed more than 40 years ago and an agreement was signed between the countries in 2009, but progress stalled.³⁸ Algeria and Nigeria signed an MoU for the pipeline in 2002; however, progress was limited due to delays in the passage of Nigeria's oil sector reform law, the **Petroleum Industry Bill**, which was finally passed in July 2021 (see *ARC Briefing Nigeria July 2021*).³⁹ However, amid the current international energy crisis and European efforts to curb Russian gas imports, the stalled project is now seen as an opportunity to monetise Nigeria's gas resources and help meet European demand.⁴⁰ Nigeria also took steps in June to move forward on another long-awaited pipeline, which would pass through **West Africa** and Morocco to Europe.⁴¹

³⁴ S&P Global Commodity Insights, 21 Jun 2022

³⁵ Middle East Monitor, 29 Jul 2022

³⁶ S&P Global Commodity Insights, 21 Jun 2021

³⁷ S&P Global Commodity Insights, 21 Jun 2021

³⁸ Al Jazeera, 23 Jun 2022

³⁹ S&P Global Commodity Insights, 21 Jun 2022

⁴⁰ S&P Global Commodity Insights, 21 Jun 2022

⁴¹ Al Jazeera, 23 Jun 2022

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune states wish to join the BRICS grouping

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has suggested that Algeria, Africa's largest natural gas exporter and fifth largest economy, could join the **BRICS** economic group.⁴² BRICS is a collection of five emerging economies - **Brazil**, **Russia**, **India**, **China**, and **South Africa**. The group is increasingly seen by many analysts as an ideological and economic counterweight to the **United States (US)** and its allies in the **West**.⁴³ The economic bloc represents nearly a quarter of the world's gross domestic product (GDP).

Speaking on the matter in a televised interview, Tebboune said on 31 July that Algeria wants to join BRICS because it interests the government as an alternative power centre and "*constitutes an economic and political force*".⁴⁴ While highlighting that Algeria meets several of the economic criteria for joining BRICS, it should not "*get ahead of things*".⁴⁵

Tebboune's comments come after Russian President **Vladimir Putin** (1999-2008 & 2012-present), whose country is heavily sanctioned for its invasion of Ukraine, said on 23 June at the **14th BRICS Summit** hosted virtually by **Beijing**, that BRICS leaders would move "*towards the formation of a truly multipolar system of inter-government relations*".⁴⁶ Tebboune was one of the international leaders invited to participate in the virtual summit by the group, whereby Putin also called on the economic bloc to cooperate in the face of "*selfish actions*" from the West and launch an alternative global reserve currency to compete with the US dollar. Western sanctions placed on Russia for its war in Ukraine have pushed it to seek new markets and bolster ties with countries in Africa and **Asia**. Reports suggest that China is also pushing for the inclusion of **Nigeria**, **Egypt**, **Senegal**, **Argentina**, **Indonesia**, **Kazakhstan**, **Saudi Arabia**, **United Arab Emirates**, and **Thailand** in BRICS.⁴⁷

Algeria is a historically strong ally of **Moscow** and abstained in March when the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** voted overwhelmingly to pass a resolution demanding Russia withdraw from Ukraine. The two also share military and trade ties. The press service of the Russian Southern Military District announced on 9 August that joint Russia-Algeria anti-terrorism exercises, called **Desert Shield 2022**, will be held in Algeria for the first time in November.⁴⁸ Algeria is also one of the largest importers of Russian-manufactured weapons. **German** data website **Statista** states that Moscow's arms sales to Algiers accounted for 80% of trade between the two countries in 2017-21.⁴⁹ Algeria's exports to Russia in 2020 amounted to \$8.83m and constituted mainly of hydrogen, tropical fruits, locust beans, and food products.⁵⁰

⁴² NDTV, 1 Aug 2022

⁴³ Morocco World News, 1 Aug 2022

⁴⁴ Morocco World News, 1 Aug 2022

⁴⁵ NDTV, 1 Aug 2022

⁴⁶ ENCA, 23 Jun 2022

⁴⁷ ISS Africa, 2 Aug 2022

⁴⁸ Middle East Monitor, 9 Aug 2022

⁴⁹ Morocco World News, 1 Aug 2022

⁵⁰ Morocco World News, 1 Aug 2022

Planner

1-2 Nov 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** Arab League Summit;

November 2022 **Algiers (Algeria) Desert Shield 2022** Russia-Algeria anti-terrorism exercises.

Chronology

Chronology

11 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. An Algerian court has sentenced the country's former national solidarity minister, **Djamel Ould Abbas**, to three years in prison and fined him one million dinars (\$7,000);

10 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *North Africa Post*. The **United States (US)** has decided to support **Morocco** with integrated air defence networks against missile and drone attacks, dealing another hard blow to the **Western Sahara** separatist militia, the **Polisario Front**, which is armed and funded by Algeria;

9 Aug 2022 **Moscow (Russia)** *Middle East Monitor*. The press service of the **Russian** Southern Military District announces that joint Russia-Algeria anti-terrorism exercises, called **Desert Shield 2022**, will be held in Algeria for the first time. The exercises are scheduled to be held in November.

9 Aug 2022 **Baku (Azerbaijan)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign affairs minister, **Ramtane Lamamra**, arrives in **Baku (Azerbaijan)** for a two-day working visit as a special envoy of President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune**;

8 Aug 2022 **El-Bayadh (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service* The chairman and chief executive officer (CEO) of state-owned power company, **Sonelgaz Group, Mourad Adjal**, announces that Algeria is ready to increase the amount of electricity to **Tunisia** in case of additional demand;

8 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign affairs minister, **Ramtane Lamamra**, receives the new Russian ambassador to Algiers, **Valerian Shuvaev**. Lamamra also receives the new Libyan ambassador to Algiers, **Salah Mohamed Bagda**;

8 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. **Libya** has appointed **Saleh Mohamed Himma Bakda** as its new ambassador to Algeria after the position has remained vacant for more than four years;

7 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign affairs minister, **Ramtane Lamamra**, holds discussions with his **Malian** counterpart, **Abdoulaye Diop**, who is on a visit to Algeria as part of the regular political consultations between the two countries;

7 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Morocco World News*. Algerian news outlet **La Sentinelle** cries foul at a "smear campaign" against Algeria after **France** and **Canada** issued travel advisory notices warning their citizens about increased terrorism, banditry and kidnapping risk levels in the North African country;

6 Aug 2022 **Xinjiang (China)** *Middle East Monitor*. A delegation of 32 envoys and senior diplomats from 30 Muslim-majority countries, including **Algeria**, pay a visit to China's **Xinjiang** autonomous region at the invitation of the country's foreign affairs minister to learn about the region's economic and social development. Following the event, a press release by the ministry stated that the envoys expressed that "freedom of religious belief and various rights of Muslims are duly guaranteed";

6 Aug 2022 **Konya (Turkey)** *Algeria Press Service*. Prime Minister **Aïmene Benabderrahmane**, holds talks with **Palestinian** prime minister, **Muhammad Shtayyeh** in **Konya (Turkey)**, to whom he reiterated Algeria's support for the Palestinian cause;

5 Aug 2022 **Konya (Turkey)** *Algeria Press Service*. Prime Minister **Aïmene Benabderrahmane**, represents President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** at the opening ceremony of the 5th **Islamic Solidarity Games** in **Konya (Turkey)** and is received by the president of **Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**;

3 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign affairs minister, **Ramtane Lamamra**, receives **Nigeria's** new ambassador to **Algiers, Aisha Mohammed Garba**;

3 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *North Africa Post*. Former relations with parliament minister, **Tahar Khaoua**, is sentenced to 10 years in prison for corruption;

3 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *World Bank*. According to the latest edition of the **World Bank's Algeria Economic Update**, non-hydrocarbon sectors in Algeria are expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 and trade and budget balances will also show a marked improvement;

2 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. The head of the **Movement of Society for Peace**, the largest Islamist party in Algeria, **Abderrazak Makri**, expresses his party's readiness to contribute to resolving his country's crisis with its neighbour, **Morocco**, if it retreats from "*supporting of the separatists and normalization with Israel*";

2 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** says **Algeria** supports the "*legitimacy*" of **Tunisian** President **Kais Saied**. Tebboune also denies rumours that he mediated between Saied and the secretary-general of the **Tunisian General Labour Union, Noureddine Taboubi**, to solve the ongoing political crisis in Tunisia;

2 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** has a telephone conversation with outgoing **Italian** Prime Minister **Mario Draghi** during which the two leaders welcomed the excellent bilateral relations between the two countries;

1 Aug 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *NDTV*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** suggests that Algeria could join the **BRICS** economic grouping;

30 Jul 2022 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Aljazeera*. **Morocco's** King **Mohammed VI** has called for restoration of diplomatic ties with **Algeria**, which broke off diplomatic relations with Morocco last year. During the traditional speech marking the 22nd anniversary of the king's accession to the throne, Mohammed said he aspires to establish with Algerian President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** normal relations between the "*two brotherly peoples*".

29 Jul 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Africa News*. The Professional **Association of Banks and Financial Establishments (ABEF)** announces that it is lifting restrictions on banking operations for foreign trade with **Spain**;

28 Jul 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *DW*. **Algeria, Nigeria, and Niger** sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on a gas pipeline to **Europe**;

25 Jul 2022 **Damascus (Syria)** *Middle East Monitor*. Foreign affairs minister, **Ramtane Lamamra**, speaking during a joint press conference with his **Syrian** counterpart, **Faisal Miqdad**, criticizes **Syria's** continued suspension from the **Arab League** calling its absence "*detrimental to joint Arab work*";

25 Jul 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *The Africa Report*. State-owned energy company, **Sonatrach**, announces that it had made two gas discoveries, "*by its own effort*", and a third of oil, in collaboration with its **Italian** partner **Eni**;

24 Jul 2022 **Damascus (Syria)** *Middle East Monitor*. Foreign affairs minister, **Ramtane Lamamra**, arrives in **Damascus** to meet top officials of the **Syrian** regime. The visit is scheduled for two days as part of Algeria's preparations for the **Arab League** summit in November;

22 Jul 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. Algerian authorities arrest former **Tunisian** intelligence chief **Lazhar Longo** who was allegedly sneaking through the border between the two

countries and handed him over to Tunisian authorities. Longo was fired by Tunisian President **Kais Saied** in 2021;

20 Jul 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Morocco World News*. Algeria has cancelled its contract with **Spain's** aerial firefighting work company, **Plysa**. The cancelled contract covered four Plysa firefighting aircraft. Spanish news outlet **elEconomista** quoted sources who say that Algeria's decision is due to "*the consequence of the diplomatic crisis between the two countries*";

19 Jul 2022 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Al-Monitor*. State-owned energy group **Sonatrach**, **Italy**-headquartered energy giant **Eni** and **French**-headquartered energy **Total** signed a \$4 billion oil and gas production gas and production-sharing contract on 19 July for the **Berkine** field in Algeria's Southeast region.

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