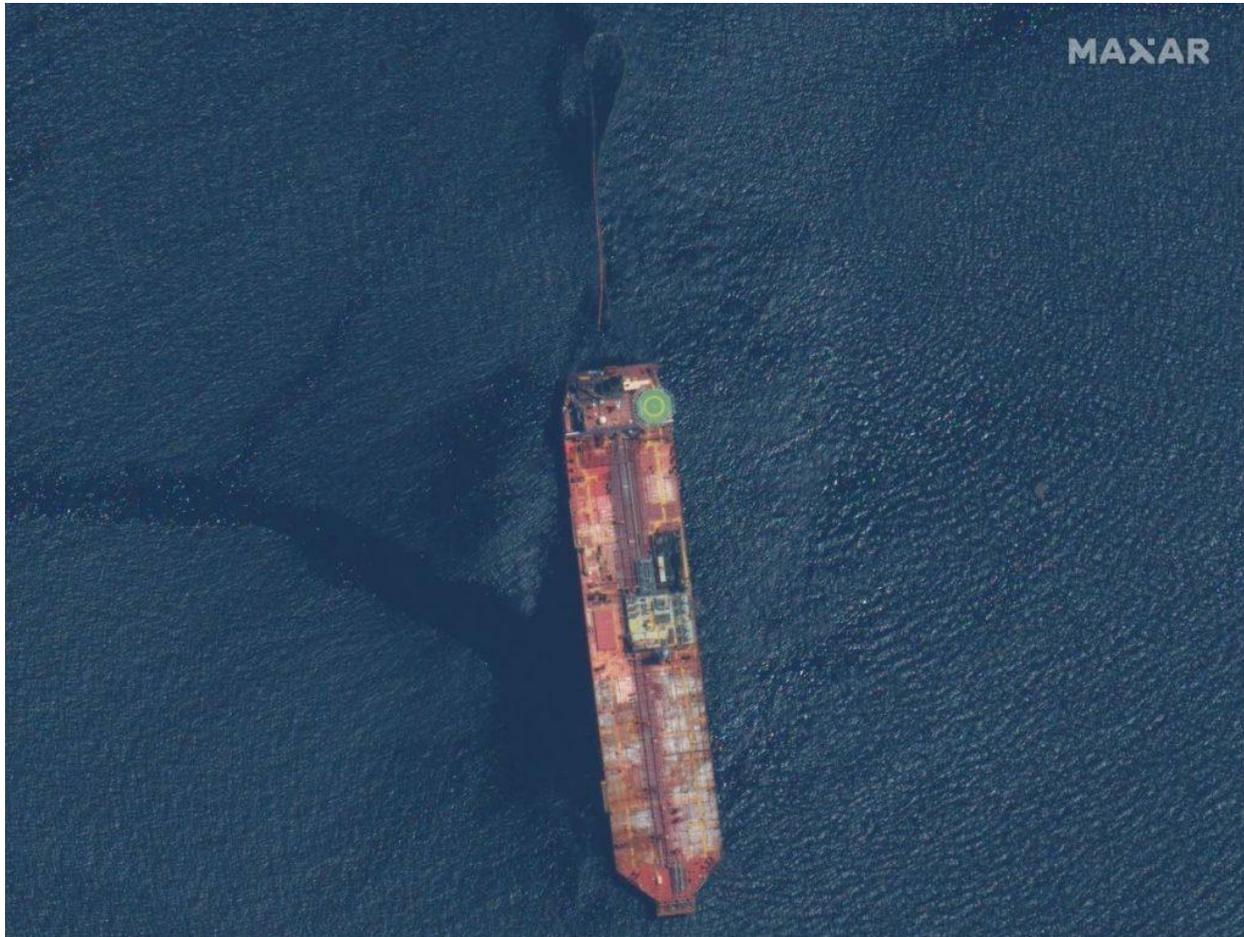


TRINIDAD and TOBAGO

NEWSDAY

Energy Ministry: No risk of oil spill from Venezuelan tanker

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THE ENERGY Ministry said there is no risk of an oil spill from Venezuelan vessel Nabarima in the Gulf of Paria.

The ministry in a release Thursday evening said it continued to closely monitor the developing situation regarding the Venezuelan FSO Nabarima. The ministry reiterated the Nabarima stores crude produced from the Corocoro field which is operated by a joint venture (PDVSA 74 per cent, ENI-Italian Multinational 26 per cent).

The ministry said production is normally stored in the FSO for transshipment by oil tankers for export but this transshipment has stopped since the US sanctions.

"The FSO is now filled to capacity (1.3 million barrels of oil). Initial reports from the Venezuelan authorities indicated that the vessel was upright and in a stable condition. There was no risk of an oil spill. Additionally, it is a double hull vessel, which should provide protection from spillage in the event that the vessel sinks."

The ministry said recent reports from the national press has stated that the vessel has tilted five degrees to the right and that it has sunk 14.5 meters at the water line. The ministry also pointed out that a report from Argus Media dated September 2 quoted a statement from ENI, the Italian Multinational energy company who has minority interest in the field. The report indicated the FSO is stable and that the recent water leak has been solved. The report further stated that plans are afoot to transfer the crude oil to another vessel to further stabilise the FSO and that there is no risk of an oil spill.

The ministry reported it has initiated official communication to get independent verification of the status of the vessel from the Venezuelan authorities.

"In addition, the (ministry), through the Venezuelan Embassy in TT has offered any assistance, technical or logistical, to the Government of Venezuela that it may require in this matter. Additionally, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is in contact with his Venezuelan counterpart for further updates as they become available."

The ministry added: "The nation needs to be reminded that Venezuela is a sovereign state and TT cannot unilaterally enter Venezuelan territory to conduct any reconnaissance or other works without being invited to so do. There exists a bilateral agreement between Venezuela and Trinidad for an oil spill contingency plan, in the event that a genuine risk exists or an active spill occurs. This agreement will guide the action of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago."

