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## **An overview of the exploration history and hydrocarbon potential of Cambodia and Laos**

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The petroleum geology and hydrocarbon potential of both Cambodia and Laos is virtually unknown with Laos being totally frontier, whilst Cambodia has had only three wells drilled in the offshore.

No oil and gas concessions have been held in Cambodia since the revolution in 1975. The last foreign licences were the Elf/Eso and the Marine Associates groups, which both held acreage on the Khmer Shelf.

The Cambodian authorities stated in May 1990 that, under the terms of the Foreign Investment Law promulgated in July 1989, they hoped to sign contracts with major oil companies to undertake exploration for hydrocarbons on the Cambodian Shelf (Gulf of Thailand).

Consequently, the Cambodians, in association with the Soviet Union prepared six separate data packages corresponding to blocks available for licence for review and purchase by interested parties prior to submitting competitive bids for both onshore and offshore acreages.

Prior to the award of acreage to western companies in the Savannakhet basin in 1989, no exploration had been undertaken in Laos since a French consortium carried out reconnaissance exploration surveys in the Savannakhet Basin during the period 1959-60.

In 1989, the Laotian government actively began discussing acreage awards with four international oil companies. Following negotiations, three companies signed Production Sharing Contracts for acreages in the Vientiane, Savannakhet and Saravane-Attapeu basins. Exploration in Laos by three operators is currently ongoing.

It is considered that the hydrocarbon potential of the Mesozoic and Cainozoic basins of both Laos and Cambodia, although frontier and high risk, is worthy of further investigation by the industry.

The paper sets out to review the history of exploration as well as the petroleum geology and hydrocarbon potential of both Laos and Cambodia.