

储油交易显示中国的区域野心

Caribbean oil storage deal demonstrates China's regional ambitions



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圣尤斯特歇斯岛是构成荷属安地列斯群岛的五座岛屿之一，位于佛罗里达州迈阿密东南1,100英里。这座只有8.1平方英里（21平方公里）的小岛是3,000余居民的家园，并拥有名为 Statia Terminals 的巨大的储油及转运设施。

Statia Terminals 由位于德克萨斯州圣安东尼奥市的 NuStar Energy 公司拥有和运营，系加勒比地区最大的储油和运输设施之一，容量达1,130万桶。Statia Terminals 靠近美国大陆、南美以及巴拿马运河，交通便利，因此成为油轮自南美和中东向美国进行运输的枢纽。

沙特阿拉伯退出，中国介入

1995年，沙特阿拉伯的阿美石油公司签订了一份总计500万桶的储油区租赁协议。但在2010年1月，沙特阿拉伯在经营储油14年后决定退出。中国石油（中国国有企业中国石油天然气集团公司旗下的上市公司）介入并从阿美公司承接了500万桶的储油区租赁协议。

该储油区曾对阿美公司非常重要：在加勒比地区拥有500万桶储油意味着阿美公司可以在数日之内满足美国境内对石油供应的任何紧急需求，而无需耗费六周时间动用超大型油轮从沙特阿拉伯海岸向美国海湾运输石油。但随着2009年沙特阿拉伯向美国的原油运输量降至22年内最低点，该储油区的重要性已被削弱，运输量降低的原因在于经济衰退期间对燃油的需求减少，同时美国增加了向加拿大和巴西的进口量以满足美国国内对燃油的需求。2009年1月至9月期间，美国从沙特阿拉伯进口原油的数量下降了三分之一，降至平

均每天仅100余万桶。同时，中国向沙特阿拉伯进口数量增长了超过12%，增至每天80余万桶。当日本政府向阿美公司提供位于冲绳岛的免费储油区后（这并不值得惊讶），阿美公司认为退出 Statia Terminals 的时机已经成熟，并决定将储油区迁往日本，以更接近中国和其他大宗买家。

确保供应的计划

中国租赁500万桶储油设施显然是确保从加勒比地区和拉丁美洲获得石油供应的整体计划的组成部分。该计划与中国在该地区内其他有关项目密切相关，包括在拉丁美洲（尤其是委内瑞拉）的几项收购和石油交易，以及将来可能进行的对精炼厂（某些在美国境内）的收购。一些分析人士评论，中国石油的储油交易可能也与巴拿马运河拓展提议有关，因为巴拿马运河的拓展一旦完工，就可以让更多的燃料和石油货物通航。

中国石油在圣尤斯特歇斯岛进行的储油区交易证明中国对加勒比地区的兴趣在增长，且正在持续加强与该地区的联系。2007年，中国政府宣布将在2007至2010三年内向加勒比地区投资5.53亿美元。从1990年至2008年，中国和加勒比地区（即“加勒比共同体”）之间的贸易额增长了100倍，从1990年的2,000万美元增至2008年的20亿美元。中国在加勒比共同体的主要贸易合作伙伴包括安提瓜岛、巴布达岛、特立尼达岛、多巴哥岛、牙买加、巴哈马群岛和多米尼加。2009年12月，全国人民代表大会常务委员会委员长吴邦国率领由150名中国政府官员和企

业高管组成的代表团访问了巴哈马群岛。据报道，该代表团签署了一系列重大的经济交易协议，包括相互保护中国和巴哈马投资者的协议，中国对巴哈马修建通往拿骚国际机场公路的数百万美元贷款，以及中国为正在建设中的一家大型板球体育场提供额外的财务支持。

同时，圣尤斯特歇斯岛储油交易也表明中国对北美和南美能源市场的影响得到加强。据中国石油一位负责贸易的管理人员透露，租赁的储油区最初将用于燃油，但将来也可以用于储存原油。迄今，委内瑞拉是中国最大的燃油供应国。但据报道，中国石油正与美国的石油精炼公司 Valero 谈判，准备收购 Valero 位于阿鲁巴岛的精炼厂。如中国石油成功收购该精炼厂，则 Statia Terminals 储油区也可以用于储存原油。这将加强中国对北美和南美原油市场的影响，因为中国石油一旦获得在该地区生产燃油的能力，则其对原油的需求也会随之增长。因此，有理由将中国石油收购圣尤斯特歇斯岛的储油区视为“南美石油交易增长的里程碑，或依然有效设定全球油价的美国市场上的交易杠杆”（2009年12月路透社报道）。

能源安全计划带来机遇

总体而言，中国石油的储油区交易只是中国确保加勒比地区石油供应整体计划的一个组成部分。该计划的影响并不限于能源行业：该计划将逐步为整个地区带来广泛的机遇，包括但不限于该地区的金融服务、基础设施、运输、保险和旅游等各行业。该交易仅为前奏，后续发展值得期待。■



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Located 1,100 miles (1,800 kilometres) southeast of Miami, Florida, St Eustatius is one of five islands that constitute the Netherlands Antilles. The tiny island, of just 8.1 square miles (21 square kilometres), is home to slightly more than 3,000 residents and a giant oil storage and transshipment facility known as Statia Terminals.

Owned and operated by NuStar Energy, which is based in San Antonio, Texas, the Statia Terminals are one of the largest oil storage and shipping operations in the Caribbean, having the capacity for 11.3 million barrels.

Located conveniently close to the continental United States, South America and the Panama Canal, the Statia Terminals serve as a hub for tankers transporting oil from South America and the Middle East to the United States.

The Saudis quit, China steps in

In 1995, the Saudi oil company Aramco entered into a lease for oil storage space totalling five million barrels.

However, in January 2010, after having operated the storage facility for 14 years, the Saudis decided to quit. PetroChina (the publicly listed arm of the Chinese state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation) stepped in, taking over the lease from Aramco.

The storage space used to be important to Aramco: having five million barrels stored in the Caribbean gave it the capacity to respond to any emergency need for oil supply in the United States within days, rather than the six weeks it would take for a supertanker to sail to the US Gulf from the Saudi coast.

The importance of the storage facility diminished, however, when Saudi crude oil shipments to the United States dropped to a 22-year low in 2009, due both to reduced demand for fuel during the economic recession, and an increase in the volume of imports from Canada and Brazil to satisfy the US's domestic fuel needs. For the nine-month period ending on 30 September 2009, imports of crude oil into the United States from Saudi Arabia dropped by a third, to an average of just over one million barrels per day.

At the same time, the volume of imports into the People's Republic of

China from Saudi Arabia rose by more than 12% to over 800,000 barrels per day.

Perhaps not surprisingly, when the Japanese government offered Aramco free storage space in Okinawa, Aramco decided that it was time to quit on the Statia Terminals and to move to Japan to be closer to China and other large buyers.

Plan to secure supplies

China's lease of the five-million-barrel storage facility is apparently part of a comprehensive plan to secure its oil supplies from the Caribbean and Latin America.

The lease ties in well with other related Chinese projects in the region, including several acquisitions and oil deals in Latin America, particularly Venezuela, and the possible future acquisition of refineries, including some in the United States. Some analysts have observed that PetroChina's storage deal could also be a response to the mooted expansion of the Panama Canal which, once finished, would allow larger fuel and oil cargoes to pass.

PetroChina's oil storage deal in St. Eustatius confirms China's increasing interest in the Caribbean and its continuing efforts to strengthen ties with the region.

In 2007 the Chinese government announced that it would invest a total of US\$553 million in the Caribbean over the three-year period from 2007 through 2010. From 1990 to 2008, trade between China and the Caribbean Community (known as Caricom) grew 100 times from US\$20 million in 1990 to a total of US\$2 billion in 2008. China's top trade partners among Caricom countries include Antigua and Barbuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, the Bahamas and Dominica.

Trade delegation

In December 2009, Wu Bangguo, the chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, led a delegation of 150 Chinese government officials and business executives to visit the Bahamas. According to media reports, the delegation signed a series of significant economic deals, including an agreement for the mutual protection of Chinese and Bahamian

investors, a multimillion-dollar loan to help build a new highway to the international airport in Nassau, and additional Chinese financial support for a major cricket stadium which was under construction.

At the same time, the St Eustatius deal signifies China's increasing influence on the energy market in North and South America.

According to a trading official at PetroChina, the leased storage space will be initially used for fuel oil, but may also be used to store crude oil in the future.

So far Venezuela is China's biggest supplier of fuel oil. PetroChina, however, is reported to be in discussions with US oil refiner Valero to acquire its refinery in the island of Aruba. If PetroChina succeeds in acquiring the refinery, the Statia Terminals storage may well be used to store crude oil.

The result will be increasing Chinese impact on the North and South American crude oil markets, because once PetroChina acquires the capacity to produce fuel oil in the region, its appetite for crude oil will grow.

It is, therefore, not unreasonable to view PetroChina's acquisition of the storage space in St Eustatius as, in the words of a report by Reuters in December 2009, "a staging point for a growing slate of South American oil deals or as trading leverage in the US market, which still effectively sets the global price of oil".

Energy security plan

Overall, PetroChina's storage deal is just one part of the comprehensive plan for China to secure its oil supply in the Caribbean.

The impact of this plan is not limited to the energy sector: it will eventually translate into wider opportunities for the whole region, bringing benefits to the financial services sector, the infrastructure sector, the transportation sector, the insurance sector and the tourism sector – to name but a few. With the deal being viewed as a mere prelude, it will be interesting to see what comes next. ■

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