

THE ALGERIAN OFFSHORE EXPLORATION

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SONATRACH, a state oil company, began seismic exploration of the Algerian offshore and the western Mediterranean sea by the end of 1960, in three different and main steps.

In the first step, 1968 - 1970, the seismic profiling was concentrated on the bays along the Algerian coast longer than 1200 km. The main objective of this step was to define, as well as possible, the bathimetric data previously recorded and where it is, to some extent almost inexistant in front of the coastal chains.

For the second step, 1973-1974, the exploration idea became broader and then a very large exploration scale seismic programm was conducted. It includes the whole western Mediterranean sea, comprising Algero-provençal and Alboran basins. This survey allowed us to have a global morphology of the western Mediterranean sea, the thickness and the importance as well as the sedimentation and water depth.

Later, on 1976 - 1977, according to the results of the previous surveys, SONATRACH in association with TOTAL - CFP, recorded two important seismic programs in the western and eastern parts of the Algerian continental margin.

The result of the western program ended by a well drilled under 923 m of water and reached the metamorphic basement at 4418 m.

From that well, the lithostratigraphy of the western offshore was well defined and where the oldest deposits were dated of the upper - Miocene (TORTONIAN).

As concern the eastern offshore, no more works after the seismic survey in 1977, except reprocessing trials of a very few lines wich gave satisfying results.

Since that time, all the exploration efforts made in Algeria were concentrated on the continental domain, particularly on the Saharan platform.