

Gwede Mantashe claims CIA is funding anti-gas NGOs



By [Lindsey Schutters](#)

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Gwede Mantashe was immediately given the stage when he arrived at the 3rd annual Southern Africa Oil and Gas Conference which kicked off at the Cape Town International Convention Centre on Wednesday. The minister then took the opportunity to invite fossil fuel investors to South Africa, claiming that "we are open for business".



Source: Lindsey Schutters

Mantashe, who was not scheduled to speak, entered during a robust discussion about decolonising the gas value chain in Africa. The minister is a noted proponent for natural gas and, when invited on stage, spoke boldly about the prospects for the local LNG market.

"South Africa alone holds an estimated 27 billion barrels of oil and 50 trillion cubic feet of gas," said the minister. The gas estimate is based on Total's preliminary exploration of the Orange Basin which extends from Namibia down to the Cape.



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Ron Bousso 12 Jul 2023



"South Africa stands to benefit from R288bn of investment in the Total Energies project in the Western Cape. Converting that gas into wealth is an exercise that we must undertake," continued Mantashe.

Energy transition

The minister's keynote address reiterated his views that LNG must be a central part of the energy transition, alongside nuclear. He cited the media's role in turning public sentiment against exploring these opportunities.

“In South Africa, the term is ‘seismic explosion’ and that is a deliberate term selected to block it. Seismic exploration is not exploration, it is pre-exploration to check whether there is a deposit or not. If there is a deposit then we grant a permit for exploration,” explained the minister.

He went on to lament the court cases that have been brought to halt seismic exploration, referring to the low GDP growth experienced in the first two quarters of 2023 and the possible positive effects tapping into the energy deposits will bring.

“We have a responsibility to ensure that we exploit these deposits and convert it into wealth for the country,” he said.

Mantashe’s complaints are well documented, claiming that the court action to halt exploration has already driven Shell and ENI to discover oil in other African countries that don’t offer resistance. This line of reasoning lead to accusations of foreign entities meddling in South African affairs.

Foreign entities

“The NGOs that take us to court have unlimited resources and are funded by foreign entities. When an NGO is funded by a Ford Foundation or a number of those entities with legacies, you don’t rule out that some are funded by the CIA and therefore it is deliberate to block development,” claimed Mantashe.

“The use of fossil fuels for the energy transition is being threatened by some in the energy transition debate. We were given \$8.5bn with the intention to get us to move quick out of coal into renewables... it doesn’t make sense for us to move away from what we have and what is reliable.”

Mantashe is advocating for further testing of the reliability of renewables and that the country not undervalue fossil fuels. He urged researchers to “go and check” what is happening in Sweden and Germany that forced those governments to re-evaluate their commitments to renewables.

“ SA is open for business to the global community in the exploration & development of oil & gas. We also urge you o engage responsively in the battle of ideas, so as to ensure that the role of this sector is not undermined for nefarious reasons. [#OilandGasConference pic.twitter.com/qXVubUyG24](#)— Gwede Mantashe (@GwedeMantashe1) [September 13, 2023](#) ”

[Sweden is committing to more nuclear in its energy mix](#) and a [German wind farm is being cleared to expand an open pit coal mine](#).

Mantashe closed his address by inviting investors to come and explore the fossil fuel opportunities in South Africa, claiming that the country is “open for business” and will “take those battles to the end”.

ABOUT LINDSEY SCHUTTERS

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