

Murphy Oil and OMV to drill in Namibia -government

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WINDHOEK, March 6 (Reuters) - U.S.-based Murphy Oil Corporation and Austria's OMV search for oil and gas off Namibia's coast, the southwest African country's petroleum commissioner said on Thursday.

Immanuel Mulunga told Reuters the deal involving block 2613 A&B had been approved by Mines and Energy Minister Isak Katali.

It was not clear if it had been finalised or if all the parties had signed it. A spokesman for OMV declined to comment. Murphy officials were not immediately available.

Brazilian exploration company Cowan, which currently holds 85 percent of the blocks, will farm out 45 percent to Murphy and 20 percent to OMV, while retaining 20 percent.

Murphy will be the new operator in the block, according to Namibian government officials. State-owned petroleum company Namcor will maintain its 15 percent interest.

Royal Dutch Shell recently announced it would be drilling in Namibian waters, a growing area of interest south of the rich deposits off Angola, Africa's second-largest oil producer.