



Damascus energy independence

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When politicians say that the United States was "energy independent" under former President Donald Trump, some people may get the false impression that the U.S. was 100% self-sufficient. The country still relied on foreign sources of energy, including oil.

Instead, those who tout this so-called "energy independence" may be referring to the fact that, on net, the country either produced more energy than it consumed, exported more energy than it imported, or, more specifically, had a greater number of exports than imports of petroleum, which includes crude oil and refined products from crude oil, such as gasoline and various fuels.

However, by any of those definitions, the U.S. was still "energy independent" in 2021 under President Joe Biden; contrary to claims made by Republicans who have suggested otherwise.

"We were energy independent one year ago," Trump said in a March 2 interview on Fox Business, in which he criticized Biden for not mentioning what is happening with oil in his State of the Union address, for example.

He added, "We were exporting energy for the first time ever in the history of our country," falsely implying that that had never happened before and had ceased since he left office. (He made a related claim about energy in his keynote address at the Conservative Political Action Conference in February.)

Trump is one of several Republican politicians to claim or suggest that Biden ended the "energy independence"; America needs to stop relying on Russia for oil, as well as to combat rising gasoline prices, which reached an average weekly price of \$4.10 for a gallon of regular gas on March 7.

Notably, the price of gasoline actually has been rising fairly consistently since the end of April 2020, when it was selling for \$1.77 a gallon, the lowest weekly price under Trump. By the time he left office in January 2021, the price was already up to \$2.38 a gallon.

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Biden signed an executive order on March 8 blocking new U.S. purchases of Russian oil, liquefied natural gas and coal. It allows for a "45-day wind-down period" for orders already under contract, according to a senior administration official.

As for Trump's suggestion that the U.S. was "exporting energy for the first time ever in the history of our country" when he was president, that's false. The country has been supplying international markets with various forms of energy for decades. The former president presumably meant to refer to net energy exports during his administration.



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U.S. exports of primary energy did exceed its energy imports from foreign sources under Trump in 2019 and 2020 — the first times that had happened since 1952, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

But through the first 11 months of 2021, the U.S. also was on its way to being a net exporter of energy last year — and, thus, by that definition, "energy independent."

All forms of energy combined, the country exported 23.0 quadrillion British thermal units of energy in that time span, which was more than the 19.6 quadrillion BTUs of energy it imported, according to the EIA’s latest monthly figures.

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