

Rosatom Unsure About Building Bulgarian Plant

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Rosatom could pull out of the project to build the Belene nuclear power plant in Bulgaria, according to an internal memo sent by Rosatom deputy head of marketing and development Alexei Kalinin to agency chief Sergei Kiriyyenko.

The memo says Atomstroieksport, the project's general contractor, and Bulgaria's National Energy Company have not yet signed a supplement to the general agreement to build the plant, which was signed in 2006.

The bulk of the work was due to begin once the supplement had been signed. It was supposed to have been signed at the end of January, and the fact that it has not been signed will push the project back at least a year and negatively affect the investment appeal of the project for European partners, the memo says.

Atomstroieksport could take National Energy to court and claim a break fee, Kalinin thinks.

The Russian company would then have to notify equipment suppliers Siemens and Areva that payment is being stopped and move the equipment that has been ordered — the reactor island and turbine — to the

Akkuyu site in Turkey, where Atomstroieexport will build a nuclear plant.

Rosatom spokesman Sergei Novikov declined to comment on the corporation's internal memos.

Kalinin's memo says the Belene project is a competitive one that has "every chance of being built ahead of other possible plants in the macro-

region" and does not involve "cash injections by the Bulgarian budget" to get construction underway.

"But National Energy leadership is avoiding signing Supplement 12 to the contract, despite the agreements reached to sign this document with Atomstroieexport in December 2010 to make it possible to prepare to pour concrete at the site, scheduled for September 2011," Kalinin says.

"The impression is that the leadership of the Bulgarian Energy Ministry [Minister Traiko Traikov] in their public statements intend to create an atmosphere of uncertainty around the very feasibility of building the Belene plant, undermining trust in the project on the part of potential investors," he says.

Kalinin describes the Bulgarian authorities' attitude to the European partners as disdainful. This, he said, was why Germany's RWE, which was prepared provide 49 percent of the project finance, pulled out.

"Changes in the conduct of the Bulgarian authorities shouldn't be expected," he said, adding that he was certain Atomstroieexport had fulfilled all of its project commitments.

But pulling out of the project might be to Atomstroieexport's advantage since the break fee, if it is awarded by the court, would bring Rosatom more than 200 million euros (\$272 million), while "planned profit for the Belene project is only 150 million euros."

France's La Tribune Monday quoted a diplomatic source as saying it was unlikely Atomstroieexport would pull out of the Belene project and the purpose of the memo was either for Rosatom to obtain additional funding or to pressure the Bulgarian authorities.

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