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Gazprom Sees Hidden Agenda in Commission's Inquiry

By The Moscow Times

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Gazprom deputy CEO Alexander Medvedev said Tuesday that Russia would protect its interests in Europe.

Gazprom thinks the European Commission's complaints against the company could be connected with its desire to receive discounts for gas, but the state monopoly is prepared to protect its interests, deputy CEO Alexander Medvedev said Tuesday at the Sakhalin Oil & Gas 2012 conference.

"So far, we are seeing attacks on the oil-coupling mechanism in long-term contracts used by Gazprom and other suppliers, Statoil and Sonatrach," Medvedev said, Interfax reported. "Grounds are arising to suspect that the European Union's authorities, aided by games behind the scenes, are trying to force discounts for themselves. If Brussels wants to regulate gas prices administratively, it ought to say so openly and explain at the same time how this complies with its calls to observe free-market principles."

"We're getting the impression that the European Commission is trying to make the European Union the least attractive for investment in natural gas trading, which is prompting us to look more actively for new markets," he said.

Russia will protect its own interests in Europe, Medvedev said.

"Of course we've always worked according to the rules established by the laws of the countries, but we are full of resolve to protect our interests." he said. "We're hoping the European Commission will work on the basis of facts and understanding of the reality of the gas market."

The commission said at the beginning of September that it was launching an antitrust probe against Gazprom. It said that the company may have divided gas markets by hindering the free flow of gas across member states, that it may have prevented the diversification of supply of gas and that it may have imposed unfair prices on its customers by linking the price of gas to oil prices.

Turkey will begin talks with Russia in the new year on transferring a further 4 billion cubic meters of gas contracts to the private sector after the initial transfer of 6 bcm of gas imports, Turkey's energy minister said Tuesday, Reuters reported.

Energy Minister Taner Yildiz's comments came after the head of the EPDK energy watchdog said Turkey aimed to award licenses to four companies to begin gas imports in October through the Western Line, which stretches from Russia to Bulgaria.

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