

Gazprom Neft Still Interested in Kurdistan

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Gazprom Neft is still interested in Kurdistan's oil, a company source said, rebutting reports that it had frozen projects in the Iraqi province.

In August, Gazprom Neft, the oil arm of natural gas producer Gazprom, acquired interests in two blocks in Iraqi Kurdistan after similar moves by international rivals angered the central government in Baghdad.

The International Oil Daily cited Iraqi Oil Minister Abdul-Kareem Luaibi as saying that Baghdad had received a letter from Gazprom in which the company said it had frozen the contract with Kurdistan.

"Gazprom Neft is still working on these projects. The company is keeping its interest in Kurdistan," a Gazprom Neft source said.

A company spokeswoman declined to comment.

Gazprom Neft already has a project in Iraq, near the Iranian border, where it expects to produce about 15,000 barrels per day starting in 2013.

Baghdad was angered by the plans of some international majors, including ExxonMobil, to tap oil and gas in the semiautonomous region. The central government says the deals are illegal.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin said during a visit to Iraq that he hoped the Iraqi government would support Russian energy companies working in the country, Interfax reported.

"Our trade is not large so far, but we have major promising projects. Our companies are expanding their operations in Iraq," Putin said during talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. "I hope their work will expand steadily, and I do count on your support."

(Reuters, MT)

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