

Nuclear Safety in Ukraine Cause of Concern for NATO

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Ukraine's Ambassador to NATO Ihor Dolho warned against the possible "destabilization" of infrastructure in the country.

NATO experts have visited Ukraine to advise authorities there on improving the safety of nuclear power plants, gas pipelines and other critical infrastructure amid growing violence and fears of conflict with Russia, officials said on Wednesday.

Ukraine's Ambassador to NATO, Ihor Dolhov, said the NATO civilian experts had visited Ukraine last month to assess critical infrastructure such as nuclear plants, pumping stations for gas pipelines and hydro-electric plants.

"In any country, in any situation, there are plans and additional measures to protect infrastructure objects, including in Ukraine. So the purpose was to evaluate the performance of measures which are being implemented in Ukraine to protect such objects," Dolhov told Reuters.

Another objective was to make sure the installations would be safe in the event of an emergency, he said.

A NATO official confirmed that a small team of civilian experts from the alliance visited Kiev last month "to advise the Ukrainian authorities on their national civil contingency plans and safety measures in the context of possible threats to critical energy infrastructure."

The NATO team, sent in response to a request from the Ukrainian government, later delivered a confidential report with recommendations to Ukrainian authorities, who were evaluating it, the official said.

Ukraine is a major transit route for Russian gas to the EU.

Ukraine, scene of the world's worst nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1986, has 15 nuclear power reactors in operation, accounting for nearly 44 percent of its electricity production in 2013, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Destabilization

Asked if the study was carried out because of Kiev's fears of Russian intervention in Ukraine, Dolhov said one reason was "possible destabilization" in an area where strategic infrastructure was located.

Ukraine told the U.N. atomic watchdog in March it was reinforcing the protection of its nuclear power plants because of "a grave threat to the security" of the country posed by the Russian military.

Ukraine is not a member of NATO and the alliance has said it will not get involved militarily in Ukraine. But Ukraine and NATO have increased cooperation and Ukraine has asked NATO members for non-lethal equipment such as uniforms.

Dolhov said in a telephone interview he expected the first shipments of this non-lethal aid to be delivered in coming days.

Dolhov also said Ukrainian authorities had information that President Vladimir Putin planned to attend a parade in the Crimean port of Sevastopol on May 9 marking the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, something Dolhov said would be a provocation and a cynical move.

He said the shooting down by pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine of two Ukrainian helicopters, using what the country's Defense Ministry said were shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, was evidence of Russian involvement.

"For me, it is clear. Otherwise it is difficult to explain how so-called protesters could get such kind of weapons. It's not from the shop," he said.

"I am sure that agents of special services of Russia are present on the territory of Ukraine," he added.

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