

Russia Is Using Gas Supply to Play Political Games, Romanian Minister Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 16, 2014



A sign, which reads: "Warsaw", is pictured at the Gaz-System gas distribution station in Gustorzyn, central Poland.

Romania's energy minister said Tuesday Russia was playing games with gas supplies to cause concerns in EU states, after analysts warned that Moscow could use the flows to retaliate against sanctions imposed over its role in Ukraine.

Razvan Nicolescu said Russia's state-owned Gazprom had warned of an imminent 10 percent cut in gas to the country on Monday, only to say supplies would keep to their normal levels until at least Thursday a day later.

"I expect such situations to happen again. It is a game attempting to cause concern in some EU states. It has happened in Poland, Slovakia, Austria," Nicolescu told an energy seminar.

"I think those who play such games are going to lose a lot in the medium and long term by ...

damage to their reputation."

Nicolescu said Gazprom had given no reason for the initial planned cut. The company said it was fully satisfying the needs of its "European partners," in a statement after its board meeting on Tuesday.

With winter approaching, Russia's neighbors and other gas customers have been on particularly high alert for any sign Moscow could use its role as Europe's biggest gas supplier to strike back at economic penalties imposed by the EU and Washington over Ukraine.

The United States, NATO and Ukraine's government have accused Russia of sending troops into eastern Ukraine to bolster pro-Moscow separatist rebels. Russia has dismissed the allegation.

Poland, Slovakia and Austria have reported slight declines in shipments in recent days from Russia.

Poland's Deputy Prime Minister Janusz Piechocinski said on Saturday that temporary disruptions in supply in recent days "were in fact an attempt from the eastern supplier to test Poland's reaction."

Gazprom said it was not able to supply Poland with the volumes of natural gas it was requesting. But energy analysts in Warsaw have said Russia may be using deliveries to Poland to send Europe a tentative warning it will retaliate if Brussels goes through with new sanctions.

Romania imports only about a fifth of its gas needs from Gazprom through intermediaries, and produces the rest in local fields managed by state-owned producer Romgaz and oil and gas group Petrom, controlled by Austria's OMV.

Nicolescu said European Union state Romania would not be hurt should Russia cut off supplies even in the event of a harsh winter, as it has stored significant gas amounts underground.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/09/16/russia-is-using-gas-supply-to-play-political-games-romanian-minister-says-a39445>