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Crimea Wants Tunnel to Russia, Not Kerch Bridge

By The Moscow Times

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The Kerch Strait

A planned bridge from mainland Russia to the newly annexed Crimean Peninsula would be dangerous and should be replaced with plans to construct a tunnel, the region's envoy to the Kremlin said Wednesday.

"It's dangerous because at least one month a year, for some time, the bridge would not be functioning because of stormy winds and sleet in the wintertime," Georgy Muradov said.

Crimea, annexed from Ukraine in March, has no land connection to Russia. But the government has begun a project to build a six-kilometer railroad and car bridge across the Kerch Strait.

Muradov said unspecified Canadian and Chinese companies have instead pitched the proposal to build a tunnel under the Kerch Strait.

He estimated the costs of a tunnel at 60 billion to 80 billion rubles ($1.4 billion to $1.8 billion), much less than the bridge, estimated at up to 228 billion rubles ($5.2 billion).

Russia's Transportation Minister Maxim Sokolov said in September that the bridge's construction was already under way and set to finish in 2018.

But Muradov said construction is still in the early stages and can be stopped in favor of a tunnel. He said Crimean officials are currently in talks with the Transportation Ministry about the issue.

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