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Moscow Resumes Gas Shipments to East Ukraine, as Kiev Suspends Supplies

By The Moscow Times

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MOSCOW / KIEV — Russia started supplying gas to rebel-held eastern Ukraine on Thursday after Kiev suspended supplies because of damage to the networks from heavy fighting, which is continuing despite a cease-fire.

Responding to an order from Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to supply gas to east Ukraine as humanitarian aid, gas company Gazprom said it had started supplies via the Prokhorovka and Platovo pumping stations on the border with east Ukraine.

Gazprom's Chief Executive Officer Alexei Miller said gas deliveries were reaching 12 million cubic meters of gas per day (cm/d).

Sergei Kupriyanov, a Gazprom spokesman, said the 12 million cm/d was in addition to the 30 million cm/d Ukraine was already receiving, taking total deliveries to 42 million cm/d.

He declined to comment further, saying the additional supplies were being shipped under an existing contract with Ukrainian state company Naftogaz.

Naftogaz said it had suspended supplies on Feb. 18 "due to the extensive damage of the gas transport networks."

"The resumption of gas supplies is not yet possible because of the ongoing hostilities in the region," it said in a statement.

Relations between Russia and Ukraine have plunged since Moscow annexed the Crimean Peninsula and Kiev accused the Kremlin of supporting rebels fighting government troops in east Ukraine. Russia denies arming the rebels.

Russian supplies of gas to Ukraine have further complicated relations after Moscow cut supplies last year over unpaid bills. Supplies resumed in December but Gazprom says Ukraine still owes $2.44 billion — a figure Kiev disputes.

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