Ukraine to Buy Gas From Europe, Not Russian Gas Giant Gazprom

By The Moscow Times

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On Monday, Ukrainian gas operator Naftogaz's Chief Executive Andrei Kobolev announced that Ukraine could buy all the gas needed for the upcoming winter from Europe.

Russia's gas giant Gazprom claimed they have stopped supplying gas to Ukraine due to lack of payments, but Ukraine says they have decided buy gas from Europe, Russian media reported Wednesday.

"Today by 10:00 a.m. Naftogaz Ukraine had used up all its prepaid Russian gas. No more payments have been received. There is no Naftogaz Ukraine request for gas supplies. Thus, the supplies have been stopped until the new payments are received," Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller said Wednesday, the Interfax news agency reported.

While Miller warned that Ukraine had begun to drain its gas reserves and its refusal to buy Russian gas could endanger gas transit to Europe and supplies for Ukrainian customers this winter, Ukraine showed no such concerns.

"The cabinet has decided to order Naftogaz to stop buying Russian gas. Russia got it all wrong: it's not them who stopped gas supplies — we stopped buying it," Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk said, the TASS news agency reported Wednesday.

On Monday, Ukrainian gas operator Naftogaz's Chief Executive Andrei Kobolev announced that Ukraine could buy all the gas needed for the upcoming winter from Europe in the event of Russia closing its supply lines.

Russian officials have also proposed halting coal supplies to Ukraine in response to the Crimean electrical power outage last weekend. Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said that this move would have longterm consequences, leaving Ukraine with a coal deficit, Interfax reported Tuesday.

Relations over the supply route have become increasingly tense since Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula in March 2014, prompting the European Union to impose sanctions on Russia.

Russia has halted gas flows to Ukraine three times in the past decade — in 2006, 2009 and for six months in 2014 because of gas price disputes with Kiev. In response in 2015, Ukraine diversified its gas imports and now covers more than 50 percent of its gas needs with reverse flows from Slovakia, Hungary and Poland.

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