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Russia Has Vessel to Build Nord Stream 2, Putin Says

By Reuters

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Stefan Sauer / dpa / TASS

President Vladimir Putin said Russia has a "pipe-laying vessel" to complete the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to Germany, Kommersant daily reported citing unnamed sources on Thursday, following sanctions imposed by Washington.

Putin spoke about the vessel to a gathering of Russian top businessmen late on Wednesday, Kommersant reported. He said, according to the newspaper, the completion of the project would be "stretched" by several months because of the sanctions.

U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sanctions last week on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline designed by Moscow to bypass Ukraine and increase gas supplies via the Baltic Sea to Germany, Russia's biggest energy customer.

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Swiss-Dutch company Allseas, which was laying the pipeline using two vessels — Pioneering Spirit and Solitaire — suspended work to avoid U.S. sanctions.

In 2016, Russian energy giant Gazprom bought a special pipe-laying vessel called Academic Cherskiy to be used as a last resort if European companies stopped working on Nord Stream 2.

A Gazprom source said Cherskiy's average pipe-laying speed is slower than the Pioneering Spirit but did not provide a specific estimate. According to Refinitiv Eikon data, Cherskiy is currently based in the Russian Pacific port of Nakhodka.

Before Washington announced sanctions on the companies building Nord Stream 2, Russian officials had said it would be up and running before or around the middle of 2020.

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