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Nord Stream 2 Chief Says Pipeline Will be Finished This Summer

By AFP

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Nord Stream 2 has been beset by construction delays after former U.S. President Donald Trump launched a last-ditch sanctions effort to thwart its completion. **EPA**

The controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany will be completed this summer, the head of the company behind the project said in an interview with German media on Sunday.

"We expect construction to be completed by the end of August," Matthias Warnig, CEO of the Swiss-based Nord Stream 2 AG, told the Handelsblatt financial daily.

Despite the threat of U.S. sanctions, "we will have a pipeline that meets all licensing requirements and international industry standards," he said, adding that he hoped it would be operational "before the end of this year."

The Nord Stream 2 pipeline, set to double natural gas supplies from Russia to Germany, has

long divided European capitals and fueled tensions with Washington.

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The project is set to bypass Ukraine's pipeline infrastructure, depriving the country of around a billion euros annually in transit fees and, Kiev fears, removing a key check on potential Russian aggression.

Poland and the Baltic states have also strongly opposed Nord Stream 2, fearful that Russian President Vladimir Putin will gain greater power over smaller countries that broke free from Moscow's control with the end of the Cold War.

But U.S. President Joe Biden in May waived key sanctions on Nord Stream 2 after concluding that it was too late to stop the project and it was better to seek cooperation with Germany.

U.S. officials have previously voiced hope that Germany will agree to outline automatic retaliatory steps that would be triggered if Russia steps up pressure on Ukraine.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel will meet Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in Berlin on Monday and will travel to Washington to meet Biden later in the week.

According to Warnig, there is still a "high" risk that parts of the U.S. Congress will continue to insist on sanctions on Nord Stream 2, including on potential buyers of gas from the pipeline.

"I no longer rule anything out. If you were to sanction the buyers, however, you would be entering a new dimension of economic warfare," he said.

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