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Kremlin Blames Russia-Europe Gas Supply Problems on Western Sanctions

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Nord Stream 1 Baltic Sea gas pipeline in Lubmin, Germany. **Stefan Sauer / dpa / picture-alliance / TACC**

Problems with Russian gas supplies to Europe are caused by sanctions that create "technical difficulties," the Kremlin said Thursday as the Nord Stream 1 pipeline reopened after maintenance but with a reduced flow.

Europe was on edge during the 10-day Nord Stream 1 repair works, fearing that Moscow would not reopen the taps in retaliation for sanctions imposed on Russia for its Ukraine offensive.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Western sanctions "do not allow the repair of equipment" critical for Nord Stream 1 to work at full capacity, including the "turbines at compressor stations."

"Any technical difficulties linked to this are caused by those restrictions that European countries introduced themselves," Peskov added.

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Peskov added that Russia's state-owned energy giant Gazprom was ready to “fulfill its responsibilities in full.”

Gazprom has cut flows to Germany via Nord Stream 1 by some 60% in recent weeks, blaming the absence of a Siemens gas turbine that was undergoing repairs in Canada.

Germany on Wednesday accused Russia of using the absence of the turbine as an "excuse" to limit gas deliveries.

Peskov dismissed the accusations as completely unfounded, stressing that the Kremlin was not using gas deliveries as political blackmail.

AFP contributed reporting.

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