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Ex-Soviet States Boost Exports to Sanctions-Hit Russia

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Sergey Vedyashkin / Moscow News Agency

Several post-Soviet republics have dramatically increased exports to Russia after its invasion of Ukraine sparked a global trade and sanctions backlash against Moscow, the RBC news website reported Wednesday.

Citing foreign and UN Comtrade data, the outlet reported Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan exported $9.4 billion worth of goods to Russia in March-June 2022 — a 15% increase from March-June 2021.

The four countries, which have generally friendly ties with Russia, comprise the Moscow-led trade bloc called the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), meaning they share unified tariffs.

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Russia's closest ally Belarus accounted for the highest share of exports to its sanctions-hit

neighbor despite being targeted by harsh Western sanctions itself. After surpassing Germany as the second-largest exporter to Russia in spring, Belarus further increased its shipments to more than $2 billion in June.

Moscow's efforts to circumvent sanctions and a foreign corporate exodus through its so-called "parallel imports" scheme plays a crucial role in increased imports from fellow EEU members, experts told RBC.

Other factors cited by the outlet include Russia's geographic proximity and the national currencies' relative weakness against the Russian ruble, making exports cheaper.

The non-EEU former Soviet republics of Georgia and Uzbekistan also grew their exports to Russia, RBC reported. In July, exports from Uzbekistan reached a total of $258 million, a 170% increase from the same month last year. Georgia recorded a 40% increase to $82.6 million between July 2021 and 2022.

Ukraine, which has been locked in a six-month war against invading Russian forces, reported zero exports to and $76 million worth of imports from Russia in June.

The data for other ex-Soviet republics Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were not available, according to RBC.

Russia has classified its own import and export data after being hit with Western sanctions and a global business exodus over its invasion of Ukraine.

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