The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Accuses Ukraine of ‘Energy Terrorism’ Over Alleged Pipeline Strike

By AFP

January 13, 2025



A compressor station of the TurkStream gas pipeline in the Krasnodar region. **Dmitry Feoktistov / TASS**

The Kremlin accused Ukraine on Monday of conducting "energy terrorism" and posing a danger to Europe's energy security, after an attempted drone attack on part of a major gas pipeline that carries Russian supplies to Turkey.

The allegation — which Kyiv has not commented on — comes amid an escalating energy row between the two countries, almost three years after Russia launched its full-scale invasion.

Kyiv halted the transit of Russian gas to third countries via Ukraine on Jan. 1 — ending decades of energy cooperation that had brought billions of dollars to both countries — in a bid to cut off revenue for Moscow's army.

The United States last week rolled out fresh sanctions on Russia's oil sector in another blow to Moscow's vital hydrocarbon industry.

The Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that Ukraine had fired nine attack drones on Saturday at a gas compressor station in the village of Gai-Kodzor, near Russia's southern Black Sea coast.

The site is across from the Crimean peninsula — which was unilaterally annexed by Russia in 2014 and has been heavily targeted by Kyiv throughout the three-year war.

Moscow said the facility was part of the TurkStream pipeline and accused Ukraine of trying to "cut off gas supplies to European countries."

The Defense Ministry said all the drones were shot down but some "minor damage" was recorded from falling debris. Gas deliveries were unaffected.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the attack a "continuation of the line of energy terrorism that Kyiv has been pursuing, under the curation of its overseas friends, for a long time," Russian state news agencies reported.

He called it "very dangerous for European consumers" and said Russia's foreign minister and the head of Gazprom had discussed it in a call with their Turkish counterparts on Sunday.

Moscow's forces have bombarded Ukraine's energy sector with repeated aerial strikes since February 2022, causing major damage and power outages across the country.

'Sovereignty'

TurkStream runs for 930 kilometers (580 miles) under the Black Sea from the Russian resort city of Anapa to Kiyikoy in northwestern Turkey, before connecting to overground pipelines that run up through the Balkans to western Europe.

After the alleged attack, European Union member Hungary, which receives Russian gas via the route, called on its "security and operability" to be "respected by all."

"The security of energy supply is a sovereignty issue, so any action that threatens the security of our energy supply must be seen as an attack on sovereignty," Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on Facebook.

Austria and Slovakia had contracts for Russian gas via the now-canceled Ukrainian transit route, with both countries saying they had secured alternative supplies.

The Kremlin on Monday also accused the United States of "destabilizing" the world energy market through fresh sanctions on Russian oil producers.

The United States and Britain on Friday announced sanctions against Russia's energy sector, including oil giant Gazprom Neft and 180 ships it says are part of Moscow's "shadow fleet."

The move came just days before U.S. President Joe Biden leaves office.

"Such decisions cannot but lead to a certain destabilization of the global energy market," Kremlin spokesman Peskov told reporters.

The 27-member EU has been reducing its dependence on Russian gas since Moscow launched its full-scale military offensive on Ukraine in February 2022.

Despite imports via pipeline having fallen, several European countries have increased their purchases of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is transported by sea.

Russia also used to ship gas to Germany via the Nord Stream 1 pipelines that run under the Baltic Sea.

The pipelines were the target of a sabotage attack in 2022, which also hit one of the two Nord Stream 2 pipelines — a second undersea gas link between Russia and Germany that was never put into operation.

Ukraine's halt of gas transit has triggered a diplomatic row with Slovakia, which is facing higher costs to secure alternative gas supplies.

On the battlefield, Russia said on Monday its forces had seized the village of Pishchane, a mining village southwest of the Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk, which Moscow is pressing to capture.

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