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Japan Buys Russian Oil for the First Time Since Hormuz Closure

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Storage tanks are seen at an oil refinery as Mount Fuji looms in the background in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture on April 8, 2026. **Yuichi Yamakazi / AFP**

Japan is set to receive its first shipment of Russian crude oil since the conflict in the Middle East disrupted global energy supplies, Japanese media reported Saturday, citing the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

While Japan largely suspended purchases of Russian oil following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, it has continued to secure intermittent supplies, most recently last summer.

However, as the global economy reels from the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Tokyo is among the governments now scrambling to secure alternative energy sources.

The Japanese refiner Taiyo Oil plans to receive the cargo through the Sakhalin-2 project in Russia's Far East, the Mainichi newspaper reported.

Russia's Gazprom is the controlling shareholder of the project, while Japanese trading houses

Mitsui and Mitsubishi also retain minority stakes.

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According to Mainichi, the cargo is scheduled to arrive at a terminal in Ehime Prefecture in western Japan.

A U.S. exemption for oil sales from the Sakhalin-2 project, which mostly produces liquefied natural gas, expires in June.

To offset the loss of Middle Eastern supplies, Japan has also moved to increase imports from the United States and other exporters that bypass the blockaded Strait of Hormuz.

Japan, which imported 94% of its crude from the Middle East in 2025, had said in March that it would "consider" whether to buy Russian crude after the United States issued its sanctions waiver.

Several other Asian countries, including the Philippines, Indonesia and South Korea, have also made purchases of Russian oil and petroleum products amid the global supply shock.

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