The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Threatens to Rip Up Natural Gas Deal With Armenia Over Its EU Ambitions

May 27, 2026



The Hrazdan Thermal Power Plant in Armenia. **Mikhail S. Harutyunyan (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russia has threatened to suspend or terminate a natural gas supply agreement with Armenia if authorities in Yerevan continue to pursue closer ties with the European Union.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned in a Telegram post on Wednesday that Russia is prepared to unilaterally cancel a 2013 bilateral agreement that guarantees Armenia duty-free deliveries of natural gas, petroleum products and rough diamonds.

Her warning comes after Armenia's infrastructure ministry denied having received an official letter from Russian Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilev threatening to rip up the agreement.

Zakharova insisted the Russian Embassy in Yerevan delivered the letter earlier on Wednesday. She mockingly suggested that Armenia's infrastructure minister check with officials at his own foreign ministry to get filled in.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan later on Wednesday rejected the ultimatum.

“It’s illogical to frighten Armenia with high prices,” Pashinyan told the Kremlin-funded news outlet Sputnik. He said EU membership would bring Armenia “so much more money that things won’t actually seem expensive.”

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Pashinyan also highlighted Armenia’s growing independence from Russia’s defense industry, adding: “Today, we have our own military-industrial complex, and we sell weapons to developed countries.”

The diplomatic spat comes just ahead of parliamentary elections in Armenia next month, where Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party faces a challenge from an array of pro-Russian opposition groups.

Friction between the traditional allies has grown since neighboring Azerbaijan regained control of the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023. Armenia accused Russia and its peacekeeping forces of failing to deter Baku’s military offensive.

While Armenia still hosts a Russian military base, Yerevan has pushed to join the EU and rapidly expanded its domestic defense industry, booking $460 million in military orders over the last three years, according to Pashinyan.

President Vladimir Putin has warned Armenia that closer European integration carries the same risks faced by Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2022. Putin is expected to address Armenia’s EU bid during the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union summit in Kazakhstan this week.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/05/27/russia-threatens-to-rip-up-natural-gas-deal-with-armenia-over-its-eu-ambitions-a92864