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Russia Targets Mineral Water in Latest Trade Restriction Against Armenia

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Jermuk Group / Facebook

Russia's consumer safety watchdog has blocked the sale of an additional 64.5 million bottles of Armenian mineral water, ramping up what appears to be an economic pressure campaign against Yerevan over its pursuit of closer relations with the European Union.

Rospotrebnadzor said Friday that it suspended all new sales of Jermuk, a popular Armenian mineral water brand. The move, effective May 28, brings the total volume of Jermuk water pulled from Russian store shelves and online marketplaces by the agency to more than 100 million units since the beginning of 2026, after the sale of 338,000 bottles was initially banned in April.

"Excessive levels of bicarbonate ions, chlorides and sulfates were detected in the water. This could lead to misconceptions about its medicinal properties and negatively impact health," Rospotrebnadzor said in a statement.

Despite the official explanation of quality and compliance concerns, the suspension of sales is

likely political in nature, as Russia recently restricted the sale or imports of Armenian produce, flowers and alcoholic products over various health and safety violations.

At the same time, Russia this week threatened to rip up a 2013 bilateral agreement guaranteeing Armenia duty-free natural gas and oil if it continues to pursue closer relations with the European Union, including membership in the bloc.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan shrugged off the energy threats, arguing that EU membership would eventually bring in far more money than Armenia would lose from higher energy costs imposed by Russia.

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On Friday, Russia's Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov said Armenian products are "too niche" for the mounting restrictions to have a significant impact on consumers.

"We cover most of [domestic] demand with our own production. And in these areas, our markets still have a well-diversified supplier base," he told the pro-Kremlin newspaper Izvestia.

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.

Reuters, citing Western intelligence and government officials, reported on Friday that the Kremlin has discussed the possibility of sending Russia-based Armenians to vote for Pashinyan's opponents. It was not immediately clear whether those alleged plans were being implemented.

Sources told Reuters that Russia's preferred candidate in the upcoming race is Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan, who is on trial for allegedly calling for a coup.

Friction between traditional allies Russia and Armenia has grown since 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 and, in 2024, froze its participation in a Moscow-led regional security bloc.

President Vladimir Putin has warned Armenia that closer European integration carries the same risks faced by Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2022.

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