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Kremlin Confirms It's in Talks to Import Gasoline

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A gas station in Moscow. **Dmitry Belitsky / Moskva News Agency**

The Kremlin confirmed Tuesday that the Russian government is in negotiations with other countries to purchase gasoline as it tries to stabilize its domestic market following a series of Ukrainian drone attacks on oil refineries and energy infrastructure that have led to fuel rationing.

"Discussions are actively being held," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a daily briefing. Peskov declined to name the specific countries involved in the talks.

"If agreements can be reached at acceptable price points, then [imports] will move forward," he added.

Last week, Reuters cited industry sources as saying that Russia was discussing importing 50,000 metric tons of AI-92 grade gasoline from Kazakhstan. At the time, Kazakhstan's energy minister said that Moscow had not formally approached Astana for those supplies.

President Vladimir Putin acknowledged this weekend that Russia is facing a fuel shortage following recent Ukrainian strikes. He estimated Russia's total gasoline reserves at 1.7 million metric tons, marking a 4% decline compared to the same period last year.

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Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, meanwhile, said gasoline imports represent one of the "key measures" needed to stabilize the domestic fuel market.

Novak's remarks came after lawmakers in the lower-house State Duma passed tax code changes last week to create government subsidies designed to fund gasoline imports from abroad.

Russia, the world's second-largest exporter of crude oil and third-largest exporter of refined petroleum products, has seen its gasoline production drop by 25% after Ukrainian drone attacks reportedly forced the shutdown of several large refineries.

In response to the supply drop, authorities have introduced fuel rationing measures across the country and in annexed Crimea. The disruptions arrive at a critical time, with both the summer vacation travel season and the agricultural farming season in full swing.

The average price of gasoline in Russia has climbed 9.8% since the start of the year, with a record single-week surge of 3% pushing the national average to 71.20 rubles per liter ($3.47 per gallon) as of June 22.

In a directive issued last week, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin ordered Russia's state statistics agency to suspend its weekly public reports on fuel prices. However, Rosstat said Tuesday that it would continue to publish retail price data.

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