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Gasoline Prices in Annexed Sevastopol Jump 30% in One Week

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Cars line up at a gas station in Sevastopol, Crimea. **REUTERS / Stringer**

Gasoline prices in the port city of Sevastopol surged by a dizzying 30% last week, according to new government data, though Russian media reported that actual prices at the pumps are rising far higher than official statistics show, as annexed Crimea bears the brunt of a deepening fuel crisis triggered by Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries and supply lines.

On June 29, the average price of gasoline in Sevastopol hit 118.79 rubles per liter ($5.80 per gallon), according to Rosstat data, which tracks the annexed city alongside Russian regions and lists it as the highest nationwide.

"There are no federal or state-owned gas stations in Sevastopol. Privately owned companies are forced to raise fuel prices due to the increased logistical costs," Mikhail Razvozhayev, the city's Kremlin-installed governor, said this week.

Across the wider Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, the official average hit 86.49 rubles per liter ($4.18 per gallon) on the same date.

The newspaper Kommersant reported on Wednesday that actual prices at gas stations in Sevastopol have already soared to 199 rubles per liter ($9.63 per gallon) this week, far outpacing data from Rosstat, which publishes pricing reports on a weekly basis.

Related article: Russia's Fuel Shortages Are Manageable. But the Kremlin's Options Are Shrinking.

Crimea has been squeezed for weeks by Ukrainian drone strikes targeting military trucks and fuel tankers that supply the region from the north, which have led to local gasoline shortages.

While the peninsula is linked directly to mainland Russia via the Kerch Bridge in the east, Ukrainian attacks in recent years have prompted Moscow to restrict its use for hazardous cargo like fuel. Instead, supply lines have relied on northern land corridors.

Kremlin-installed authorities began introducing fuel rationing across Crimea in May, and last week, they declared a regional state of emergency following Ukrainian strikes on the energy grid. Razvozhayev said the restrictions will remain in place for at least another month.

The fuel crisis has now rippled far beyond Crimea into mainland Russia.

This week, one of eastern Siberia's largest privately owned gas station chains suspended all retail gasoline sales across the Irkutsk and Zabaikalsky regions, as well as the Republic of Buryatia.

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According to Rosstat, the Siberian republic of Tyva logged the highest fuel prices in Russia proper at 101.25 rubles per liter ($4.94 per gallon), while high prices were also recorded in the North Caucasus republics of Dagestan at 94.38 rubles per liter ($4.60 per gallon) and Chechnya at 93.41 rubles per liter ($4.56 per gallon).

Nationwide, the average price of gasoline in Russia has climbed 11.6% since the start of the year, reaching 72.38 rubles per liter ($3.50 per gallon) as of June 29.

To shore up the domestic market during peak summer consumption, Russia has started importing 60,000 metric tons of gasoline from India, Reuters reported Wednesday.

According to an industry source, Moscow plans to import a total of 400,000 tons of gasoline from foreign countries each month.

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