

Security Council Warns on Water Purity

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Lax water purity standards and wasteful use of water pose a threat to national security, Security Council chief Nikolai Patrushev said in remarks published Thursday.

Russia has one-fifth of the world's freshwater reserves, but Patrushev warned against complacency in a world he said faces tensions over water supplies, including in nearby Central Asia.

"It turns out Russia also has a huge problem — not with water resources, but with their use, which already now is creating a serious threat to the country's national security," Patrushev told Rossiiskaya Gazeta, the official government newspaper.

Patrushev said that in 2009, only 38 percent of Russia's cities and towns had suppliers of water corresponding to rigid purity standards.

"But that's not all — in more than half of the towns and villages, drinking water has never been tested for safety, and no one knows how harmful it is for health," he said.

Russia's use of water, including for growing crops, is two to three times less efficient than

standards in some other countries, Patrushev said.

Citing data provided by Russian scientists, he said the volume of fresh water consumed by mankind would become equal to its reserves between 2035 and 2045.

"But the global water crisis may come even earlier. This is because the bulk of water reserves are concentrated in just a number of countries. They include Brazil, Canada and, naturally, Russia," Patrushev said.

He said that over the past decade a threat of armed conflicts over scarce water reserves had reached a critical point in 46 nations with a combined population of 2.7 billion.

He said the highest risk of conflict over water was in the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa.

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