

Ukraine Will Start 'Stealing' Gas When Winter Comes, Kremlin Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Ukraine will begin "stealing" gas, Kremlin says.

Ukraine will begin "stealing" gas from pipelines carrying Russian gas to Europe when the weather turns cold and Ukraine's reserves run low, the Kremlin's chief of staff said Wednesday.

"In our experience, when autumn and winter come and there isn't enough gas in Ukraine, they will begin to, and I apologize for the banality of the word, steal it," RIA Novosti quoted Sergei Ivanov as saying to an audience of Russian language students in China.

Despite lengthy negotiations, Russia cut gas supplies to Ukraine last month after Ukraine failed to pay its debts for past deliveries, which Gazprom said on Tuesday amount to \$5.3 billion. Gazprom had previously supplied nearly two-thirds of Ukraine's total natural gas imports.

In response to Ivanov's comments, Ukraine's Energy Minister Yuri Prodan said Wednesday that his country has no intention of stealing Russian natural gas destined for Europe.

"We are not taking such gas today and have no plans to take it," news agencies reported Energy Minister Yuri Prodan as saying. About half of all Russian gas supplies to Europe run through Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin last week accused Kiev of syphoning off Russian gas intended for European markets and paying European partners for the resulting shortfall in supplies.

"In essence, [Ukraine] is getting our gas and they are paying some Western partners in Europe, who are not receiving these volumes," ITAR-Tass quoted Putin as saying last week.

"We see everything...the only reason we are not taking any kind of action at the current moment is so as not to aggravate the situation," he added. Aside from the gas dispute, Russia and the West are at loggerheads over the political situation in eastern Ukraine, where clashes between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian army have claimed the lives of hundreds in recent months.

Reflecting on the troubles with Ukraine, Ivanov tapped into the suddenly popular theme of an economic "pivot" to Asia, saying Wednesday, "we [Russia] need to diversify our fuel deliveries."

That diversification is already well underway. In May, Gazprom signed a 30 year gas supply deal with China worth over \$400 billion that will see Gazprom pump 39 billion cubic meters of gas annually to China. But Europe will remain Gazprom's biggest market — in 2013 it soaked up 161.5 billion cubic meters of gas, supplying over half of Gazprom's revenues.

Material from Reuters was included in this report.

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