



BLACK SEA NEWS UPDATE

EU – BLACK SEA OBSERVATORY

18 January 2010

No. 21

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I. ARMENIA

1.

Russian FM arrives in Yerevan for talks with Armenian leadership

14.01.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/regions/scaucasus/armenia/1617868.html>

The Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov arrived in Yerevan on Wednesday for talks with the leadership of Armenia, ITAR-TASS reported. Upon his arrival the Russian minister began talks with Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan on bilateral cooperation.

2.

Court gives green light to peace plan with Turkey

12.01.2010, Eurasia Net

READ MORE: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011210.shtml>

Six Armenia's Constitutional Court on January 12 approved a draft agreement for reconciliation with Turkey, but heated opposition to the agreement shows no sign of dying down. As protestors in downtown Yerevan yelled for "No concessions to the Turks!," the Court, guarded by a police line, ruled that the "[o]bligations" contained in the protocols signed on October 10, 2009 by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Turkish President Abdullah Gul" comply with the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

II. AZERBAIJAN

1.

Azerbaijan to supply gas to Iran until April

14.01.2010, Hurriyet Daily News

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=azerbaijan-to-supply-gas-to-iran-until-april-2010-01-14>

Azerbaijan will supply Iran with over two million cubic meters of gas daily until April 1, Azerbaijan's state oil company's chief said Wednesday. The contract signed by Azerbaijan's State Oil Company and its Iranian counterpart "stipulates supplies until April 1, 2010," Rovnag Abdullayev said, adding that another, long-term contract currently being prepared.

2.

Qatar is interested in energy projects with Azerbaijan

13.01.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/politics/foreign/1617336.html>

Qatar is interested in implementing energy projects with Azerbaijan, Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani said during a meeting with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov. The emir stressed the importance of opening direct flights between the two countries to develop ties. The sides also stressed the importance of establishing an inter-governmental commission for economic cooperation.

3.

Azerbaijani Defense Ministry confirms Armenian family crosses Azerbaijani border

13.01.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/karabakh/1617092.html>

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry confirmed that an Armenian family crossed the border. The Armenian family of five is currently in Azerbaijan. The incident is under investigation, ministry spokesman Teymur Abdullayev told Trend News. The Armenian Defense Ministry announced a breach of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in the area of Yeraskh-Nakhchivan Jan. 11.

4.

"When words freeze..." film could expose Armenian vandalism: Azerbaijani MP

12.01.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/karabakh/1616720.html>

Our current and future task is to bring to public attention the truth about Azerbaijan. "When words freeze..." documentary film could expose the Armenian vandalism, tell the truth about Azerbaijan, the truth about the Armenian barbarism to everyone who did not know about it, Azerbaijani MP Havva Mammadova said addressing the presentation of the film "When words freeze..." ("Sözün bitdiyi zaman"), which Trend News Agency produced as part of project of the State Support for Media Development Fund under the Azerbaijani President.

III. BULGARIA

1.

Bulgaria backpedals on Turkey compensation claim

07.01.2010, EU Observer

READ MORE: <http://euobserver.com/15/29222>

Bulgaria's prime minister has threatened to sack one of his ministers in an attempt to make good in a dispute over Turkey's EU accession. "I have warned Bojidar Dimitrov that the next time something like this happens, we will have to let him go. You don't come out and make such declarations without their having been discussed by the Prime Minister, the cabinet, or the parliament," Prime Minister Boyko Borisov said in remarks cited by Bulgarian TV on Wednesday (6 January).

IV. GEORGIA

1.

Georgian president likely to ask SOCAR for gas benefits

14.01.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/capital/pengineering/1617993.html>

Baku Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili intends to ask the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic's (SOCAR) subsidiary SOCAR Georgia Gas to allow Georgian villagers to pay for their gas in installments. "We need to negotiate with Azerbaijan," the president said in the run-up to his meeting with local residents in the region of Guria. According to the president, the gasification of the province has been delayed as the population faces difficulties paying the required amount for natural gas, which is 300 lari (1.7025 lari is \$1) per family.

2.

Georgia plans military training in schools

13.01.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/russia/detail/56906/>

Georgia said on Jan. 13 it would introduce military training in schools, a throwback to Soviet-era defence classes following its crushing military defeat by Russia in August 2008. The Defence Ministry announcement followed reported comments by President Mikheil Saakashvili on Jan. 12 in which he said military education in schools had been abolished in Georgia too hastily after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

V. GEORGIA-RUSSIA

1.

Georgia-Russia flights start - but no thaw yet

09.11.2009, IWPR

READ MORE: http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=358807&apc_state=henpcrs

The first direct flights between Moscow and Tbilisi since the Russian-Georgian war of 2008 have been approved by Georgian and Russian officials, though analysts say a substantial improvement in bilateral ties was still a long way off. Airzena-Georgian Airways gained permission from the Kremlin to operate charter flights between the two capitals, but only for January 8, 9 and 10, so the news does not mean a return to the scheduled connections of the past. Russia cut flights on August 9, 2008 after Georgia sought to regain control of South Ossetia by force and Russia intervened to protect its allies in the region. Moscow subsequently recognised South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states, ushering in a deep freeze in already cold relations.

VI. MOLDOVA

1.

Moldovan leader presses for language name change

13.01.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/culture/moldovan-leader-presses-language-name-change/article-188816?Ref=RSS#1>

Moldova's acting president, at the risk of touching off a damaging row, is pressing for the national language to be renamed Romanian rather than Moldovan. The ex-Soviet republic, independent since 1991, speaks a language virtually identical to that in Romania and much of its territory belonged to its larger neighbour before World War Two.

2.

Moldova starts association membership talks with EU

12.01.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/russia/detail/56845/>

Moldova has started talks with the European Union on a planned accord to give the country associated membership in the EU. The first round of talks showed a serious degree of coincidence between the positions of Moldova and that of the EU, Gunnar Wiegand, director of the unit for Russia, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia of the European Commission's Directorate General for External Relations, told a news conference on Tuesday.

3.

Moldova says Russia hikes gas price by one-fifth

05.01.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE:

http://www.rferl.org/content/Moldova_Says_Russia_Hikes_Gas_Price_By_OneFifth/1921583.html

Moldovan Economy Minister Valeriu Lazar says Russia's Gazprom raised the natural gas price for Moldova by more than 20 percent on January 1, RFE/RL's Moldovan Service reports. The new price, which is valid for the first quarter of the year, is reportedly \$233 per 1,000 cubic meters -- \$40 above the previous price.

VII. ROMANIA

1.

Romanian magistrate choice criticized over secret police links

12.01.2010, EU Business News

READ MORE: <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/romania-justice.281>

The union of Romanian judges on Tuesday criticized the election at the head of the Supreme Magistrates' Council of a judge accused of links with the former communist secret police. "The image of Romanian justice is now represented by a person whose past is marked by collaboration with the Securitate," the Union said in a press release.

2.

Romania 'under stress' but will abide by agreements

07.01.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/romania-stress-abide-agreements/article-188613>

The economic crisis has put Romanian political leadership under pressure, but this should not distract the government from complying with its international obligations, Romanian ambassador to Berlin Lazăr Comănescu told EurActiv Germany in a wide-ranging interview. Commenting on the loss of a confidence vote which sanctioned the end of the grand coalition government of Emil Boc (EurActiv 14/10/09), Comănescu, a career diplomat and a former foreign minister, said that such setbacks are normal for a democratic country like Romania.

VIII. RUSSIA

1.

Russia set to restore radar shield on western borders in 2010

15.01.2010, RIA NOVOSTI

READ MORE: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100115/157551180.html>

Russia will restore the complete radar coverage of its western borders when a new radar facility in the southern town of Armavir becomes fully operational by mid-2010, the Space Forces commander

said. The Armavir radar will be the second facility, after the Lekhtusi complex in the Leningrad Region, to close a gap in radar coverage on Russia's western borders after the closure of radar sites in Skrunda (Latvia) in late 1998 and recently in Mukachevo and Sevastopol, in western Ukraine.

2.

Russia declares war on alcoholism

14.01.2010, RIA NOVOSTI

READ MORE: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100114/157541676.html>

Russia's government has launched a crusade against alcohol abuse, describing it as a "national disaster" and aiming to halve consumption by 2020 and root out illegal production and sales. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has approved a national plan that envisions criminal punishment for illegal production and sale of alcohol, restrictions on advertising, and efforts to promote a healthy lifestyle, the government said on its website on Wednesday.

3.

US says Russia arms deal close, talks resuming

13.01.2010, Reuters

READ MORE: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE60C51W20100113>

The top U.S. negotiator was headed to Moscow for talks on a replacement for the Cold War-era START I treaty, said Ellen Tauscher, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. Formal negotiations will resume in Geneva on January 25, Tauscher told reporters. "I think we are really close," she said, although she would not predict when the treaty might be signed. "We are in a place where we are working very, very hard."

IX. SOUTH OSSETIA

1.

Blast hits Georgian–South Ossetian border

08.01.2010, RT Top Stories

READ MORE: http://rt.com/Top_News/2010-01-08/georgia-south-ossetia-blast.html

There has been a powerful blast on the Georgian side of the border with South Ossetia, according to reports coming in from Russia's Interfax news agency. "Today at 5:55 p.m., there was a strong explosion near the Georgian village of Mereti," South Ossetian Deputy Defense Minister Ibraghim Gasseev was quoted by the agency as saying.

2.

EU Monitors want Georgian-South Ossetian talks over detainee

08.01.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/EU_Monitors_Want_GeorgianSouth_Ossetian_Talks_Over_Detainee/1924089.html

The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) deployed along the border between the breakaway republic of South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia has called for a meeting to discuss the case of a man detained by Georgian officials, RFE/RL's Georgian Service reports.

3.

South Ossetia to require Georgian IDs translated into Russian

08.01.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/South_Ossetia_To_Require_Georgian_IDs_Translated_Into_Russian/1923831.html

Officials in Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia say that residents in the Akhalkgori district will soon only be allowed to cross the boundary into Georgia proper if their documents are translated into Russian, RFE/RL's Echo of the Caucasus reports. Georgian media reported on January 6 that

starting on January 10 Georgian passports and other identification documents in Georgian will not be valid to cross the boundary from the Akhhalgori district in South Ossetia to Georgia proper.

X. UKRAINE

1.

Ukraine presidential hopeful plays EU accession card

15.01.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/east-mediterranean/ukraine-presidential-hopeful-plays-eu-accession-card/article-188915>

Yulia Tymoshenko, Ukraine's prime minister, has promised that her country will become an EU member if she is elected president in February, the press in Kiev reports. "I will do everything so that for the time when I will be holding the post of president, Ukraine becomes a member of the European Union," Tymoshenko said.

2.

Ukraine voters weigh in on Orange Revolution

13.01.2010, Wall Street Journal

READ MORE: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703414504575001263421387350.html?mod=fox_australian

When Ukraine holds presidential elections Sunday, the biggest loser is expected to be President Viktor Yushchenko, whose disfigured face became a rallying point for the Orange Revolution five years ago.

3.

Ukraine's Naftogaz facing default?

12.01.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/01/12/Ukraines-Naftogaz-facing-default/UPI-67081263316200/

Ukrainian state utility Naftogaz could find itself on the brink of default by the end of 2010, said an envoy to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko. Bohdan Sokolovskiy, Yushchenko's energy security envoy, said the embattled energy company might not make it through 2010 without serious financial troubles, Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti reports.

XI. BLACK SEA

1.

Exxon grabs Black Sea oil deal

13.01.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/01/13/Exxon-grabs-Black-Sea-oil-deal/UPI-76351263405423/

Exxon Mobil Corp. signed an agreement with Turkish companies to explore hydrocarbons in vast regions of the Black Sea. Exxon Mobil, Petrobras and the Turkish National Oil Co., or TPAO, signed a deal to explore an area covering roughly 7.4 million acres in the Turkish waters of the Black Sea.

XII. CAUCASUS

1.

Medvedev offers no new solutions to Dagestan's ongoing destabilization

14.01.2010, Eurasia Daily Monitor

READ MORE:

[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=35914&tx_ttnews\[backPid="](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35914&tx_ttnews[backPid=)

27&cHash=7320c44afd

On January 12, a major gas pipeline was blown up with an explosive device in southern Dagestan. The pipeline stretching from Mozdok in North Ossetia to Kazimagomed in Dagestan connects Russian gas pipelines to the Azeri gas pipeline network. Eleven settlements, including the city of Derbent in the southern part of the republic with the overall population of 170,000 people, were left without gas supplies.

2.

US report stokes unease in Caucasus

07.01.2010, Hurriyet Daily News

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=us-report-stokes-unease-in-caucasus-2010-01-07>

A report prepared by a senior U.S. senator's office has raised tension in the Caucasus yet again with Georgian officials lauding it and separatist Georgian regions and their main backers in Russia reacting with alarm. The report urged the Obama administration to consider a resumption of arms sales to the Georgian government. The U.S. government has not provided weapons to Georgia since that country's disastrous 2008 conflict with Russia. The report, called "Striking the Balance: U.S. Policy and Stability in Georgia," was prepared by the staff of Sen. Richard Lugar, the top-ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

XIII. ENERGY

1.

Russia and Turkey sort energy relations

14.01.2010, Hurriyet Daily News

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=russia-and-turkey-sort-energy-relations-2010-01-14>

Russia said on Wednesday it has won Turkish support for all its major oil, gas and nuclear projects while carefully avoiding its usual harsh criticism of the rival trans-Turkish EU-backed Nabucco gas pipeline. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told a news conference after talks with Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan Ankara had pledged to fully clear Russian gas pipeline project South Stream before November 2010, when building is due to begin.

2.

Georgia calls off high-profile energy summit at the last minute

13.01.2010, APA

READ MORE: <http://www.en.apa.az/news.php?id=113871>

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili has postponed the high-profile energy summit scheduled to take place in Batumi on January 14 due to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko's expected absence. The Press and Information Department of Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs told APA that the decision was taken at the last minute after it was known that Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko would not attend the summit due to elections in Ukraine.

3.

Gas Coordination Group discusses security of gas supply in the light of the current winter situation in Europe

13.01.2010, Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, Press Corner

READ MORE:

http://ec.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/press_corner/all_news/news/2010_01_13_1_en.htm

In its first meeting in 2010, the Gas Coordination Group, under the chairmanship of the Commission, has focused on 11 January on the assessment of the situation on security of gas supply in the EU-27 and countries of the Energy Community and discussed priorities for the work of the Group in 2010.

Considering the severe winter conditions prevailing in some Member States, the Gas Coordination Group assessed the situation in the EU-27 and Energy Community contracting parties regarding gas demand and supply, storage levels and gas imports from third countries. In the light of the exceptional situation in some countries due to specific weather and Import conditions the Commission noted that storage levels in the EU are above last year's levels and welcomed the ability of the European gas industry to ensure continuous gas supplies to all consumers.

4.

Russia-Belarus oil row may escalate to cuts

13.01.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

[READ MORE:](#)

http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia_Belarus_Oil_Row_May_Escalate_To_Cuts_Again/1928299.html

Russia has warned it could again reduce oil flows to Belarus due to an unresolved pricing dispute, which has already sparked fears of supplies cuts to Europe and pushed oil prices up. Russia had briefly halted supplies to the two refineries in Belarus, Naftan and Mozyr, after the two sides failed to clinch a deal by New Year. Flows restarted on January 3. Russian oil flows to Mozyr could be suspended again within 24 hours because oil firms are unwilling to confirm volumes due to the dragging pricing dispute, Russia's pipeline monopoly said.

5.

Moscow, Ankara agree on nuclear power plant cooperation

13.01.2010, Global Security

[READ MORE:](#) <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/turkey/turkey-100113-rianovosti01.htm>

Russia and Turkey on Wednesday signed a joint statement regarding plans to build a nuclear power plant on Turkish soil. The document was signed by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin, who is in charge of the energy and fuel sector, and his Turkish counterpart. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, currently on a visit to Moscow, said his country was completing preparations for the signing of a formal agreement on the construction of a nuclear power plant on its territory. He said nuclear cooperation with Russia would proceed through "direct interstate agreements." He added that "practical results" were expected "in the foreseeable future."

6.

Russia, Poland resume gas talks

12.01.2010, RIA NOVOSTI

[READ MORE:](#) <http://en.rian.ru/business/20100112/157524526.html>

Russian gas monopoly Gazprom and Polish Oil and Gas Company (PGNiG) resumed natural gas talks on Tuesday amid conflicting reports. According to the Neft Rossii (Russian Oil) business news and analysis web portal, the talks centered on increasing gas supplies from 8 to 11 billion cubic meters per year and extending the current agreement by 15 years, through 2037. However, Polskie Radio reported that in 2010 Gazprom will deliver 7.5 billion cubic meters less than last year.

7.

Russia urges energy transit states to use EU alerts

12.01.2010, Reuters

[READ MORE:](#) <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKLDE60B17320100112>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday urged energy transit countries on its border to sign up for an "early warning" mechanism designed to protect European oil and gas consumers from potential supply cuts. Lavrov said Russia had immediately agreed to the European Union's request to create the warning system, which was used for the first time last month. It wanted the system to expand to include its ex-Soviet neighbours, across whose territory pipelines take Russian oil and gas westwards.

8.

Is the Nabucco pipeline worth the projected \$11.4bn?

12.01.2010, Turkish Weekly

READ MORE: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/95555/is-the-nabucco-pipeline-worth-the-cost.html>

Inside Beltwayistan, a number of Bushevik oil patch zombies still roam the recession-blasted landscape mindlessly chanting their Caspian mantra, "Happiness is multiple pipelines" - with the caveat that they flow westwards and bypass both Russia and Iran. They've now added a new word to their vocabulary, "Nabucco," and worse, have bitten a number of Obama administration officials and visiting European politicians, who have joined their shuffling ranks.

XIV. EU

1.

EU management of pre-accession funds to Turkey under fire

14.01.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/eu-management-pre-accession-funds-turkey-fire/article-188876?Ref=RSS#>

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) yesterday (13 January) released a report highlighting the structural deficiencies of the European Commission's handling of the EU's instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) to Turkey, whilst praising the efforts of the candidate country. In presenting the findings of the study, Maarten Engwirda, a member of the European Court of Auditors, stressed that "the auditee of the ECA is the European Commission, not the Republic of Turkey.

2.

Top EU official draws line between Enlargement, Neighborhood Policies

12.01.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE:

http://www.rferl.org/content/Top_EU_Official_Draws_Line_Between_Enlargement_Neighborhood_Policies/1927794.html

The first Eastern European to be trusted with a significant foreign-policy role in the European Union went through his confirmation hearing today and stuck closely to the established political consensus within the bloc on future expansion, arguing that all current candidates should be admitted Stefan Fule is a former Czech diplomat and Europe minister who will work under the EU's new high representative for foreign policy, Catherine Ashton.

XV. SECURITY

1.

Kazakhstan promotes security through the OSCE

12.01.2010, Eurasia Daily Monitor

READ MORE:

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35903&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=9ca7cbc049

Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has begun with a clear indication that the country intends to prioritize security. Astana will present its initiatives for the year ahead to the OSCE on January 14, amid growing signs of pressure from within the CIS and western member states to shape or influence this agenda. However, there are already indications that Kazakh strategic thinking on its OSCE security plans might be reduced to window dressing and finding ways of avoiding upsetting the major powers (EDM, January 5).

XVI. TRADE

1.

Kazaks take step towards trade bloc with Russia

13.01.2010, IWPR

READ MORE: <http://www.iwpr.net/EN-rca-f-359058>

A customs union agreed by Russia, Kazakstan and Belarus came into force on January 1, with the three states adopting common customs tariffs as the first of several steps towards creating a common economic area by the end of 2012. Customs controls on the Russia's long frontier with Kazakstan will continue until next year, in contrast to the checkpoints on its western border with Belarus, which are scheduled for closure as early as this July.

Black Sea News Update (BSNU) is a fortnightly brief of political and economic developments covering the Black Sea region. It is produced by the **ICBSS**, a think-tank aiming to foster regional cooperation in the Black Sea area.

The contents of the BSNU are exclusive responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ICBSS.

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