

Georgia's Breakaway Region Seeks Alternative Gas Supply - TV¹

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Excerpt from report by Georgian Mze TV on 4 October

[Presenter] South Ossetia's de-facto leader, Eduard Kokoiti, on a visit to Moscow, wants to have a natural gas pipeline built between South Ossetia and Russia. He wants to kill two birds with one stone - have cheap natural gas and have it delivered directly from Russia, rather than from Georgia as is the case at present.

The Russian Duma [lower house of parliament] is considering selling natural gas to Russia's friends at sub-market prices. Kokoiti, naturally, considers himself a friend of Russia.

According to the de-facto government, an agreement has been reached with [Russian state company] Gazprom to build a pipeline connecting Tskhinvali [South Ossetia] with Alagir [Russia's North Ossetia]. Gazprom leaders, however, have not confirmed this. Meanwhile, Kokoiti has made several statements in Moscow, once again criticizing Georgia. [Passage omitted]

Today Eduard Kokoiti was also busy with economic matters. He visited Gazprom and told company representatives that he wished to have natural gas delivered through a separate pipeline from Alagir, not from Gori [central Georgian town near South Ossetia]. He said he was against receiving natural gas from Georgia.

If Russia decides to satisfy Kokoiti's demand, the pipeline will have to be laid through the Roki tunnel [connecting South Ossetia with North Ossetia]. Should there be a leak in it, there may be an explosion on the only road connecting Tskhinvali with Russia.

[Gogi Koiava, captioned as expert] Using a busy tunnel for this purpose is against all existing technical norms for the construction of pipelines. Besides, South Ossetia consumes such small amounts of natural gas that building a new pipeline does not seem commercially feasible.

[Correspondent] Kokoiti's visit to Moscow continues. He is scheduled to meet [Moscow mayor] Yuriy Luzhkov tomorrow. [Separatist Abkhaz president Sergey] Bagapsh has already received trolleybuses from Luzhkov. It is now Kokoiti's turn.