US hints at expanding Russian diesel deal

More Russian fuel could soon enter global markets despite the backlash in Ukraine, Energy Secretary Chris Wright has said

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More Russian diesel fuel could enter global markets as part of a trade agreement between Moscow and Washington struck earlier this month, Energy Secretary Chris Wright has said. He claimed the shipments could be a *"carrot"* for Moscow to scale back fighting in Ukraine.



US Energy Secretary Chris Wright speaks during a news conference in Houston, Tuesday, October 20, 2026. © Getty Images

US President Donald Trump announced the landmark diesel deal with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, on October 9, saying Russia would release more than 300,000 metric tons of diesel immediately, 500,000 tons in November, another million afterward and potentially 3 million more, depending on refinery capacity.

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Trump called lowering fuel prices for American consumers his *"greatest priority"* ahead of the November 3 midterm elections, where the Republicans are at risk of losing their congressional majority.

Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky condemned the surprise deal as a *"weak decision,"* prompting an angry response from Trump, who suggested that Ukraine replace Zelensky with someone willing to negotiate peace with Russia. Trump has also repeatedly pressed Zelensky to halt strikes on Russian oil refineries, something Kiev has refused to do.



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Speaking to CNBC on Tuesday, Wright described the diesel deal as an *"incentive"* for Moscow to stop hostilities with Ukraine, adding that more Russian tankers could *"quite possibly"* depart under a six-month sanctions waiver.



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"It's trying to put a carrot in front of Russia," he said, arguing that reduced hostilities would allow Moscow to export more diesel and marginally ease global fuel shortages.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Novak said on Tuesday that three tankers carrying diesel are already en route to the US, with a fourth expected to depart Wednesday. On Sunday, he offered to supply as much as buyers wanted within Russia's available export volumes, saying: *"We can supply all of it."* He previously said Russian diesel exports could reach 3.5 million tons monthly by year-end.

During a meeting with Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff last week in St. Petersburg, Putin noted that global diesel prices fell 5%-6% after the deal was announced. Earlier this week, Reuters reported that Russia's daily diesel output rose from 160,000 tons in early October to

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180,000 tons after the introduction of new export quotas.

The agreement has nevertheless met bipartisan resistance in Washington, with a group of senators calling it a *"gift to our adversary"* and a betrayal of Ukraine. Novak pushed back on Tuesday, singling out Democrats and wondering why US lawmakers were acting *"not in the interests of the residents of the United States."*

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