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Russia rebuffs US threat over Iran oil deal

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A Russian deputy foreign minister has rebuffed US warnings against Russia's planned oil deal with Iran, saying Moscow will not be intimidated by such threats.

An increase in Russo-Iranian trade ties is a "natural process that doesn't involve any elements of political or economic challenge to anyone," said Sergei Ryabkov on Wednesday.

Under the deal, which is yet to be finalized, Russia will buy 500,000 barrels of Iranian oil per day in return for selling goods to Iran.

On Tuesday, US Secretary of State John Kerry said that Washington could impose sanctions if Russia and Iran move forward with the oil deal.

But Ryabkov stressed Russia's determination to develop its ties with Iran and rejected the US threat to impose sanctions.

"We don't think that any unilateral US sanctions, no matter whom they target, are legitimate, and we reject such a stance," he said.

Iran and Russia signed two deals for boosting bilateral trade in February 2013. Tehran and Moscow have been using the rial and the ruble in their trade exchanges over the past two years, dropping the US dollar.

Earlier this month, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the Islamic Republic is determined to raise the volume of its “economic transactions” with Russia under long-term deals.

The possible energy barter deal between Iran and Russia has provoked an angry reaction from some US senators, who have threatened to reinstate the anti-Iran sanctions eased under an interim nuclear deal signed between Tehran and the six world powers -- the United States, France, Britain, Russia, China and Germany -- last November.