

Trading places with Ukraine

An interesting sidebar to George W. Bush's Nato-related trip to Eastern Europe was the signing of a deal on nuclear fuel between U.S.-based (but Japanese-owned) Westinghouse and Ukraine's national nuclear-power company, Energoatom. Westinghouse will start supplying about a third of Ukraine's nuclear-fuel needs as of 2011. Diversification away from 100% reliance on Tvel of Russia was the main reason cited, as were sharp price hikes by the Russian side in recent years. In 2006, the CR did the opposite of Ukraine and dumped Westinghouse in favor of Tvel (effective in 2010) as the supplier of fuel to Temelín. Tvel will soon be the CR's 100% nuclear-fuel supplier. Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg said this week that the CR must stand up to Russia, but it clearly doesn't apply in the case of energy security. MP Michal Hašek was quoted by Russian TV this week as saying that the CR's relationships in the nuclear sphere will be oriented toward Russia.

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