

Chinese Scientists Embark on Big Field Trip to Antarctica

November 12 2007, by Mary Anne Simpson



The Snow Dragon Exploration Vessel. Image credit: Xinhua

The largest ever Chinese expedition to the Antarctic left today from Shanghai's Waigaoqiao Dock. The explorer ship Snow Dragon with 188 scientist aboard and more being air lifted to Antarctic will explore the Arctic shelf and other research.

China, a member of the Commission of the Limits of the Continental Shelf along with 20 other countries has embarked on its annual scientific expedition in the Antarctica. This 24th expedition to the remote regions of Antarctic left on November 12 from Waigaoqiao Dock aboard the Snow Dragon with a 188 scientific member team and 40 crew members. Other scientists will arrive by air. According to Xinhua news services this is the largest expedition in China's history that will lay the foundation for an in depth exploration of the Antarctica.

The exploration will last more than five months and will enable the scientific team to erect a third scientific research station located in the South Pole. In addition the Chinese scientific team expects to erect an observatory with seven telescopes and one acoustic radar at the highest point on the continent. China sent 189 engineering workers from the China Railway Construction Engineering Group to aid in the construction project.

The entire project is expected to be completed by 2010. The research team stated purpose is to explore bio diversity, the ice shelf, climate change, Antarctic algae, krill and environmental monitoring. According to official government sources the project will utilize advanced sewage system construction and waste management that will include garbage burning facilities. Waste that is not biodegradable and solid waste will be shipped back to China.

China along with Russia, Norway, Korea, Australia, Ireland, Mexico, Brazil are actively ensuring their claim to the oil rich region by being signatories to the Treaty of the Law of the Sea under the auspices of the United Nations. The Commission of the Limits of the Continental Shelf is part of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. This Commission will provide procedure and rule making for member states in determining the outer reaches of their continental shelf.

The United States is presently considering The Law of the Sea Treaty. Heretofore, going back to the era of President Ronald there has been strong opposition to becoming signatories to the Treaty. A great deal of controversy exists within the United States, but current sentiments in light of present geo-political conditions are encouraging open discussions.

Citation: Chinese Scientists Embark on Big Field Trip to Antarctica (2007, November 12)
retrieved 10 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2007-11-chinese-scientists-embark-big-field.html>

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