

Brazil to start work on new Antarctic base next year

October 11 2013



Giant tabular icebergs surrounded by ice floe drift in the Arctic on January 11, 2008.

Brazil said Thursday it will start work early next year on a new Antarctic base to replace the one gutted by a 2012 fire.

The new station would be modern, newer and built with more resistant material, Navy Admiral Julio Soares de Moura told reporters as he unveiled the \$54 million project.

Two military personnel died when a blaze ripped through the Comandante Ferraz base in Admiralty Bay, King George Island, near the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula in February last year. Around 70 percent of the base was lost in the fire.

A navy sergeant was charged with involuntary homicide and damage in connection with the accident.

The new base, which will shelter 64 people in summer and 34 in winter, will have 18 laboratories as well as seven isolated units for weather, ozone and atmospheric research, said architect Fabio Henrique Faria.

Next year an auction will be held to choose the company that will build the 200 modules that will make up the base, scheduled to be inaugurated in March 2015.

Scientists working under the Brazilian Antarctic Program use the base to study global warming, as well as coastal and marine ecosystems.

About 30 countries operate Antarctic stations.

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Citation: Brazil to start work on new Antarctic base next year (2013, October 11) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-10-brazil-antarctic-base-year.html>

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