

Rescue underway for Russian ship trapped by Antarctic ice

December 26 2013



Antarctic ice bergs are seen in this file photo, released on November 1, 2011

Three icebreaking ships were Thursday hurrying to reach a Russian vessel carrying 74 people on a scientific expedition which is trapped by ice off Antarctica, with Australian authorities coordinating the rescue mission.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) said the MV

Akademik Shokalskiy sent a distress message on Wednesday to say it was stuck about 100 nautical miles east of the French base Dumont D'Urville.

"The ship was starting to head out (to the open ocean) when the blizzard hit," expedition spokesman Alvin Stone told AFP.

"It's just stuck in ice. There's no danger at all."

The ship is in the Australian search and rescue region, prompting authorities to issue a broadcast to icebreaking vessels in the area and three with icebreaking capability have responded.

The three, which include the Australian Antarctic Division's Aurora Australis, are en route to the area with a Chinese-flagged vessel expected to reach the trapped ship first late Friday.

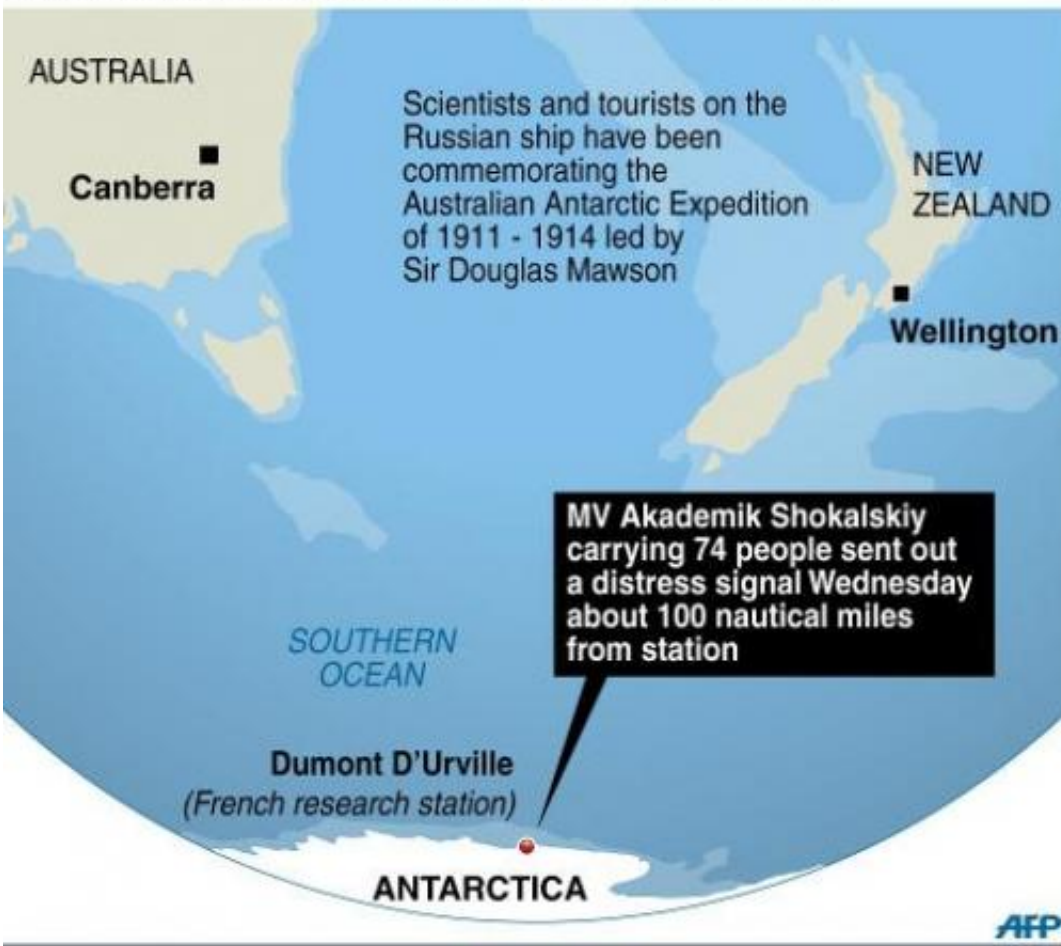
AMSA said the mission to reach the ship could be difficult.

"It's quite windy and there could be some sort of blizzard conditions," Andrea Hayward-Maher told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"Weather conditions, if they become difficult, could hinder the options that we have.

Antarctic rescue

Australian rescuers head to Russian ship trapped in ice



Map showing the area in the Antarctic where Australian ice-breaking ships have been sent to rescue a Russian ship trapped in ice

"But hopefully those icebreaking vessels will be able to get there as soon as they possibly can to render assistance."

The group on board the Russian ship are scientists and tourists recreating the historic voyage of explorer Sir Douglas Mawson to Antarctica a century ago.

They have been replicating the [scientific experiments](#) his team conducted during the 1911-1914 Australian Antarctic Expedition— the pre-eminent scientific [expedition](#) of its time to South Polar regions.

It is not known whether the ship, which is stranded just three kilometres (two miles) from [open ocean](#), will continue with its scientific experiments once it is freed or head back to New Zealand where it had been due to arrive on January 6.



This NASA Aqua satellite image shows a view of the Western Ross Sea and Ice Shelf, Antarctica, pictured on October 16, 2012

Stone said the mood on board appeared to be normal as they waited for an icebreaker to reach them.

"They have been celebrating Christmas," he said.

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