

Canada launches mission to map, claim North Pole

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A Canadian Navy Zodiac races across the Arctic Ocean on patrol at the southern tip of Baffin Island, Canada, on August 09, 2007

A scientific mission to map the seabed surrounding the North Pole got underway Friday amid Canada's push to claim the area and surrounding Arctic waters ahead of Russia and others.

After a decade of surveying the country's eastern and far north seabeds and gathering supporting evidence, Canada filed a UN application in December seeking to vastly expand its Atlantic sea boundary and

signaled intentions to claim the North Pole.

Russian President Vladimir Putin followed suit by ordering his country's military to step up its presence in the Arctic, amid competing claims by countries that also include Norway and Denmark.

Russia and Canada have overlapping claims to both the North Pole as well as large swathes of the Arctic that the US Geological Survey thinks could hold 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil and up to 30 percent of its hidden natural gas reserves.

"Our government is committing the resources necessary to ensure that Canada secures international recognition of the full extent of its [continental shelf](#), including the North Pole," Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said in a statement.

A Canadian ice-breaking vessel set sail from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador on Friday, one day ahead of the CCGS Louis S. St-Laurent, which will "collect high-quality data about the shape and composition of the seabed," the statement said.

The vessel was "equipped with state-of-the-art multi-beam sonar technology in the spring of 2014 to ensure that Canada has the latest technological capacity to carry out this important mission" to collect data for Canada's Arctic continental shelf submission, it added.

In December, "Canada filed preliminary information concerning the outer limits of its continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean... indicating it would file a submission for the Arctic at a later date," it added.

The mission will survey part of the Eurasian Basin on the eastern side of the Lomonosov Ridge and will include areas near the North Pole if conditions permit, according to the statement.

"Our government is securing our sovereignty while expanding our economic and scientific opportunities by defining Canada's last frontier," Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq said in the statement.

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