Despite conflict Russia sends France giant magnet for nuclear fusion project

November 1 2022

The nine-meter-wide coil weighs 200 tons and has been tightly wrapped to withstand a two-week trip to Marseille, southern France.

Russia on Tuesday dispatched one of six giant magnets needed for the ITER nuclear fusion program in France, one of the last international scientific projects Moscow participates in despite the Ukraine conflict.

The ship carrying the Russian-made magnet—or "poloidal field coil"—departed Saint Petersburg on Tuesday under gray skies.

On board, the massive nine-meter-wide coil, which weighs 200 metric tons had been tightly wrapped to withstand a two-week trip to Marseille, southern France.

The ring-shaped magnet built under Russian atomic agency Rosatom's supervision will make up the top part of the world's largest "tokamak".

The tokamak is a magnetic fusion device built in France following the same principle that powers our sun and stars.

The Russian piece was meant to leave in May but sanctions forbidding Russian ships docking in Europe delayed the departure.

Still, the "current situation did not change the fact that we will fullfil our obligations", Rosatom representative for international projects Viacheslav Perchukov said.

Geopolitical tensions "practically did not affect the realization of this project", Perchukov said.

"Without (the Russian coil), the tokamak will not work," senior ITER center scientist Leonid Khimchenko told AFP.

Citation: Despite conflict Russia sends France giant magnet for nuclear fusion project (2022, November 1) retrieved 8 June 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2022-11-conflict-russia-france-giant-magnet.html

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