

Ship Missing, Others Towed to Safety by Icebreakers

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A ship rescue operation proceeded smoothly Monday in Russia's northern waters, while another was ended because the missing vessel that sent a distress call either sank or never was in danger, officials said.

The fishing trawler *Partnyor*, with about a dozen Russian crew aboard, was last heard from Friday near Sakhalin Island in the Far East. A search turned up no trace of the ship.

Federal Fisheries Agency chief Andrei Krainy said Monday that the Cambodian-flagged *Partnyor* may have sunk.

But another possibility was that the vessel, which had been caught poaching last year, may have sent the distress signal to disguise its escape from the Asia-Pacific region and already fled the region, he said.

Meanwhile, to the north in the Sea of Okhotsk, Russian icebreakers were working to free two Russian fish-processing ships that have been trapped in thick ice since last month.

The icebreakers Admiral Makarov and Krasin were on track to free the Bereg Nadezhdy, a freighter used to refrigerate fish, by early Tuesday, Krainy said, RIA–Novosti [reported](#).

After that, both icebreakers will return for the other trapped vessel, the floating Sodruzhestvo fish processing plant, which would be the more difficult to free because it was wider than the icebreaker, he said. The ship and the cargo are worth a combined 1 billion rubles (\$32 million), he added.

The two vessels have sufficient fuel, food and water to last several months, and the crew aboard are in no danger, Krainy said.

Five ships became trapped in the ice between Dec. 29 and Jan. 3, but one trawler managed to free itself, and another trawler along with the research vessel Professor Kizevetter were freed by icebreakers and towed to open waters last week.

(AP, MT)

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