

Russian Tanker Reaches Alaskan Port

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The Coast Guard breaker Healy guiding the tanker Renda closer to a Nome fuel transfer mooring point Saturday. **Charly Hengen**

A Russian tanker escorted by the U.S. Coast Guard has reached the frozen Alaskan port of Nome with emergency fuel supplies after a 10-day slog through sea ice as much as 60 centimeters thick.

The 113-meter tanker Renda was holding steady about 13 kilometers off shore over the weekend.

The problem is that Nome's harbor is iced-in, preventing the Renda from getting to the city dock. It will have to moor offshore to transfer its 5-million-liter payload through a 1.5-kilometer-long hose to fuel headers that feed a nearby tank farm.

Officials want to place the Renda "where there's enough water around it that the Healy can then break the Renda free once the delivery is done," Coast Guard spokesman David Mosley said.

"Out of the safety of the vessels, they're taking the time they need to evaluate where to put

the Renda so the operation to shore can be done safely, but then so we can break them free and get them on their way afterward," he said.

The mission to Nome is the first-ever mid-winter marine delivery to western Alaska and comes as oil and gas development and climate change increase commercial traffic along trade routes in the Arctic.

The Renda, owned by Vladivostok-based Rimsco, got an exemption last month from U.S. maritime law for the journey, after the city of 3,600 residents missed its final scheduled barge delivery before winter when one of the worst storms in decades swept the northwestern coastal town.

There has been a lot of anxious waiting since the ship left Russia in mid-December. It picked up diesel fuel in South Korea before traveling to Dutch Harbor, Alaska, where it took on unleaded gasoline.

(AP, Reuters)

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