

Relatives of Missing Amurskaya Sailors Seeking Donations

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Relatives of the eight sailors missing since the Amurskaya cargo ship sunk off Russia's eastern seaboard in late October are seeking donations to help fund their own rescue operation after federal emergency officials called off their search.

Using social-networking site Vkontakte, the families of the missing sailors created a online group called "Amurskaya — Tragedy and Hope," which allows Vkontakte users to donate money to their cause.

The [group](#), which has so far raised 70,000 rubles (\$2,300), says its aim is to organize a new search for the sailors, who last made contact with land on Oct. 28, as police have not found irrefutable evidence that the crew members are dead.

The funds were originally intended to pay for the hire of a search-and-rescue helicopter at a cost of 100,000 rubles an hour, but the group announced Sunday evening that

the Nikolayevsk-on-Amur Sea Port, which owned the stricken cargo ship, had offered to pay for the use of a helicopter.

The Amurskaya freighter was carrying a cargo of 700 tons of gold ore when it went missing — a cargo investigators said the vessel was not equipped to carry.

The Emergency Situations Ministry called off its search on Nov. 26 due to bad weather and diminishing chances that the ship's crew could have survived for several weeks in the Sea of Okhotsk's icy waters.

The body of one of the sailors was found on Nov. 9, along with a damaged life raft.

On Nov. 6, police in the far eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur arrested the owner of the Amurskaya freighter on suspicion of negligence leading to multiple deaths. The charges carry a maximum sentence of seven years' jail time.

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