

Commandeered Greenpeace Ship Headed to Murmansk

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Greenpeace's "Arctic Sunrise" at a Libya port in 2007. **Capitan Giona**

A standoff between environmentalists and Russian authorities in the Arctic got a few degrees hotter Thursday, as Kalashnikov-toting men reportedly seized a Greenpeace ship sailing under the Dutch flag and steered it toward Murmansk.

The armed men, believed to be Russian border guards, boarded the "Arctic Sunrise" icebreaker in international waters, Greenpeace said in a statement, adding that all 25 crew members had been forced into the mess hall at gunpoint and locked there.

The ship is now being taken back to the port at Murmansk, Interfax reported Friday adding that the journey was going to take at least 3 days according to a press statement from the FSB border guard.

The initial confrontation began Wednesday after Greenpeace activists scaled a Russian oil rig

in the Barents Sea operated by Gazprom subsidiary Gazprom Neft Shelf to protest its plans for drilling in Arctic waters.

Russian border guards fired warning shots at the environmentalists' ship and detained two activists, Finnish and Swiss nationals.

Before Greenpeace reported that the "Arctic Sunrise" crew had been locked in the mess hall, the people aboard the ship had been posting to its Twitter account. The last message there, a few hours before the Greenpeace statement, claimed that most of the crew was kneeling at gunpoint on the main deck as armed men searched the ship and tried to break down the barricaded door of the press room.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Thursday that it had handed the Dutch ambassador a diplomatic note expressing concern over the protest, which it tentatively called "extremist."

"The violators' actions were of an aggressive and provocative nature and had the appearance of extremist activity capable of causing human deaths and other grave consequences," the ministry said in a statement on its website, noting that the ambassador had been summoned and presented with the note Wednesday.

Dutch media cited a spokesman for the country's Foreign Ministry as saying, even before the ship's alleged seizure, that the treatment of the ship was "worrisome."

"The last time a Greenpeace ship was seized was in 1985," the environmental group said on its Twitter feed, referring to the notorious sinking of its "Rainbow Warrior" in a covert operation by French secret services off the coast of New Zealand that year.

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