

# U.S. to Send Icebreaker to Salvage Russian and Chinese Ships Trapped in Antarctic

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The U.S. has agreed to send an icebreaker to salvage the Akademik Shokalsky, a Russian ship that has been stuck in Antarctic waters since Christmas Eve, and a Chinese vessel that got trapped during an earlier rescue operation.

The U.S. ship, the Polar Star, has been en route to Antarctica since Dec. 3 on a mission to clear a channel to a research station on Ross Island, but it will now be deployed to free the two stricken vessels, U.S. and Australian officials said.

It has been temporarily docked in Sydney and will need about seven days to reach Commonwealth Bay, where the Akademik Shokalsky is stranded, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, or AMSA, said Sunday.

The U.S. Coast Guard received rescue requests from the AMSA and the Russian and Chinese

governments.

In a successful rescue operation that lasted several hours on Thursday, all 52 passengers — comprising scientists, tourists and journalists — were airlifted from the Akademik Shokalsky onto an Australian ship.

But the next day, the Chinese icebreaker that assisted in the operation, the Xue Long, sent a distress signal saying that it had also become trapped.

The Polar Star can break through ice 1.8 meters thick while traveling at three knots, but is capable of smashing through ice more than 6 meters thick.

The ice surrounding the Akademik Shokalsky is 2 to 3 meters thick, the Federal Meteorological Service said.

U.S. Coast Guard spokeswoman Allyson Conroy said the commander of the Polar Star can cope with the challenges presented by the region, ABC News reported.

The commander "has a lot of experience with ice-breaking, this is not his first gig, he's been doing this for a while," she said.

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