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Russian Navy is Planning Summer Expeditions to Contested Arctic Region

By Matthew Bodner

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An icebreaker making its way through frozen waters in the Arctic Ocean.

The Russian Navy is planning a number of expeditions in the Arctic this summer as the country looks to strengthen its position in the increasingly contested region, which is home to the world's largest untapped oil reserves.

The expeditions will see ships being sent to Franz Josef Land, Severnaya Zemlya, the Novosibirsk Islands archipelago and Wrangel Island, Northern Fleet Admiral Andrei Korablev said Wednesday during talks on Russia's interests in the Arctic.

Russia is also planning to install military infrastructure on almost all of the islands and archipelagos of the Arctic Ocean to create a unified system of monitoring air, surface and subsurface conditions, Korablev said, RIA Novosti reported.

Last month President Vladimir Putin called for the establishment of a unified command

structure for Russian surface and submarine vessels operating in the Arctic, and the creation of a new public authority to govern the region.

Russia began shipping the first oil extracted from the Arctic shelf that month.

The Russian military began beefing up its presence in the Arctic last year with reopening of a military base in the Novosibirsk Islands archipelago, which was abandoned 20 years ago. The base has been reinforced with 10 warships and four nuclear-powered icebreakers.

Korablev also said that Russia will continue scientific research and navigation in the Arctic, which he says serve the country's military and commercial maritime interests.

Control over the region is being contested by Russia, the U.S., Denmark, Norway, Canada and, more recently, China, which has expressed interest in the Northern Sea Route.

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