

Russia Seeks to Acquire Arctic Island

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Russia is making a new territorial acquisition that might not be as lush as Crimea, but would be unlikely to incur criticism from the West.

The Russian navy has completed a cartographic survey of a recently discovered island in the Arctic, which would allow the country to add 1,165 square kilometers of territorial waters around the sliver of land to its possessions, Baltic Fleet spokesman Captain Vladimir Matveyev said Tuesday in comments carried by RIA Novosti.

The island, dubbed Yaya, in the Laptev Sea, was spotted last year by the crews of two Mi-26 transport helicopters on a mission over the area, Russian media has reported.

The island's name, according to one geographer's account, was produced by doubling the single-letter Russian word "ya," which means "I."

"When they started trying to figure out who was the first to discover the island, everybody began saying: 'Ya, ya, ya!' So it was decided to name the island Yaya," geographer Sergei Ryzhy was cited as saying by Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

Before they decided on Yaya, the geographers had also suggested another name for the island,

"Bounti," because explorers thought its shape resembled a Bounty chocolate bar, Ryzhy was quoted as saying.

The Baltic Fleet's ship the Admiral Vladimirsky, which conducted the geographical survey of the island, also researched the waters "for uses in the interests of the Russian Defense Ministry," RIA Novosti cited the fleet's spokesman as saying.

The new acquisition would be the latest in a series of Russia's recent additions of territorial waters.

A UN commission last year recognized Russia's rights to a section of the Sea of Okhotsk in the Far East. Government officials described the 52,000-square-kilometer area as an "Ali Baba cave" of natural resources, RIA Novosti reported at that time.

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