

Report: Russia Considers Opening Arctic Ministry

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia, like other Arctic nations, is eager to claim the wealth of untapped mineral resources of the icy region.

The Russian government is considering setting up a new ministry to oversee the development of the country's Arctic territory, the Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday, citing sources in regional government and the presidential administration.

Spokespeople for the president and prime minister denied the story Thursday. President Vladimir Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said he was "unaware of the existence of such plans," news agency Interfax reported.

Natalya Timakova, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's press secretary, told Kommersant that "no changes to the government's structure were planned."

Kommersant reported that Dmitry Kobylkin, governor of the Yamal–Nenets autonomous

region and whose mandate ends in 2015, was being considered to head the new ministry. The newspaper cited a source in the presidential administration as saying that Russia had been pondering the creation of an "Arctic Development Ministry" for a long time.

Russia has actively staked claim to swathes of the energy-resources-rich Arctic in recent years, appealing to the United Nations to recognize sections of the Arctic as part of its continental shelf, and in 2007 demonstratively planting a Russian flag on the seabed at the North Pole.

In April, Putin led consultations with the country's Security Council on the implementation of Arctic policies, addressing the prospective creation of a single government body responsible for Arctic issues.

"We need to improve the quality of governance and decision-making [about the Arctic]," Putin said, according to the Kremlin's official website.

"For this we need a unified center of accountability for the implementation of Arctic policy. I emphasize that we need not a burdensome bureaucratic body, but a flexible, fast-working structure that will help better coordinate the activities of Russia's ministries, departments, regions and businesses."

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