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Airlifted Polar Bear Treks Back to Populated Oil Field in Russia

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A polar bear started appearing in the vicinity of residential blocks at the Toboisky oil field in the Nenets autonomous district.

A polar bear that was airlifted away from an oil field in Russia's far north over concerns for the safety of employees earlier this week has made its way back to the base, leaving authorities wondering what to do next.

The female bear, which is about 18 months old and weighs 200 kilograms, started appearing in the vicinity of residential blocks at the Toboisky oil field in the Nenets autonomous district about a week ago, the Interfax news agency reported, citing the local branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry.

After efforts to scare the bear away from the populated area using flares did not work, authorities anesthetized the animal before flying it Tuesday to a nearby nature reserve on the island of Dolgy, local news site Pravda Severa reported.

By Thursday, however, the animal had returned to the oil field, having covered more than 40

kilometers across ice and water to do so, Interfax reported.

"Perhaps someone at the oil field was feeding [the bear], and it decided that it would live there," a spokesman for the Emergency Situations Ministry was quoted as saying.

Nenets authorities said Thursday in an online statement that the bear had not shown any signs of aggression, but workers had been warned not to feed it or do anything that could provoke it.

Environmentalists and polar bear experts are now working on ways to remove the animal so that it doesn't return, the authorities said, adding that this time the bear could be taken to the islands of Vaygach or Novaya Zemlya in the Arctic Circle.

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