

Lost Polar Bear Airlifted North From Russian Village

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A young male polar bear who washed up on an ice floe in Russia's Far East has been helicoptered closer to its natural habitat, the Kamchatka region administration announced.

Residents of Kamchatka region villages [spotted](#) the bear — who was nicknamed Umka after a cartoon polar bear character from a popular Soviet-era animation [film](#) — late last week. Authorities vowed to airlift the bear 700 kilometers north to Chukotka autonomous district after sedating it with a tranquilizer.

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“Umka behaved during the three-hour flight, he was conscious but didn’t rock the cage,” the

regional administration [said](#) in an online statement Monday.

Images shared by the administration showed the polar bear being let out of a cage and running toward fish laid out for it in the distance.

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“Umka left the cage almost immediately and, without even turning away to say goodbye, ran away,” the administration was quoted as [saying](#) by Interfax.

Despite concerns that it might be injured, wildlife consultant Alexander Selnitsyn said the animal is in excellent condition, The Siberian Times [reported](#).

“We found only a small scratch that the predator got while walking in the industrial zone of one of the villages,” he was quoted as saying.

Kamchatka region Governor Sergei Khabarov said the bear had posed no threat to residents of Korf and Tilichiki villages.

The melting of sea ice triggered by climate change makes dangerous encounters between polar bears and humans more frequent. A recent invasion more than 4,000 kilometers to the west in the remote Arctic settlement of Novaya Zemlya [struck panic](#) among locals in February.

Polar bears are classified as an endangered species in Russia.

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