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Norway Rescues Russian By Helicopter Near North Pole

By AFP

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Thomas Nilsen / The Barents Observer

Norway rescued a Russian in need of emergency medical assistance on board a scientific vessel stuck in ice near the North Pole in a spectacular helicopter operation, its rescue services said Wednesday.

The evacuation took place on Tuesday evening from the Russian ship Severny Polyus (North Pole), located at the 86th parallel north, above Norway's Svalbard archipelago some 240 nautical miles (around 444 kilometers, 276 miles) from the North Pole.

At the request of Russian authorities, Norway dispatched a Super Puma helicopter from Longyearbyen, the main town on Svalbard some 500 nautical miles away, to evacuate a Russian whose condition was considered too serious to be treated on board.

"It's the extreme limit of what the helicopter can do" in terms of range, a spokesman for

Norway's Bodo rescue center, Rune Danielsen, told AFP.

"The slightest detail counts when going that far: weight, wind conditions, etc," he said.

The operation was carried out in line with Norwegian-Russian bilateral accords on Arctic search and rescues, despite a deterioration of relations between the two countries since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine.

According to manufacturer Airbus Helicopters, the H215 Super Puma has a maximum range of 866 kilometers, without an additional external tank.

The Norwegian helicopter filled its tanks in northern Svalbard, where fuel is stocked for this kind of extreme mission in the Arctic, and the 83-meter Severny Polyus, which is stuck in the ice in connection with a scientific expedition, then resupplied it with more kerosene for the return journey.

The Russian patient arrived in Longyearbyen around 2:00 a.m. and was transferred to a medical plane headed for the Norwegian mainland.

Details of his condition were not known.

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