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Moscow Summons Norwegian Diplomat Over Seizure of Research Ship and State Property

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The Russian vessel Professor Molchanov. **BluesyPete (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that it summoned Norway's Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow to protest the ongoing seizure of Russian state property and a research vessel at the request of Ukraine.

In a statement, the ministry condemned Norwegian court rulings that have kept the research ship Professor Molchanov impounded at the port of Barentsburg on the Svalbard archipelago and seized five Russian state properties in Norway.

"The Russian Foreign Ministry and relevant Russian agencies will seek to lift the seizure of Russian property," the statement read, noting that the court ruling was handed down on Sept. 22.

It warned that prolonged winter mooring of the Professor Molchanov risks causing

“operational failure and serious environmental consequences.”

Norwegian authorities seized the ship on Sept. 2 to enforce a court-ordered $4.2 billion arbitration award by Ukrainian state energy company Naftogaz. In 2023, a Hague-based arbitration court ordered Russia to compensate Naftogaz for assets expropriated during the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Last Wednesday, a Norwegian court dismissed an appeal by state-owned Arktikugol, which manages Russian operations on Svalbard, ruling that the company lacks legal standing to challenge the seizure and ordering it to pay $300,000 in legal fees to Naftogaz.

The Foreign Ministry said the Professor Molchanov served as the primary means of transportation for personnel and vital supplies to the Russian coal-mining settlement of Barentsburg on Svalbard after Western sanctions cut off direct air travel with Russia.

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