

Medvedev Calls for Investment And Security Measures in Arctic

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President Medvedev paying a visit Friday to a cable factory in Khabarovsk. **Mikhail Klimentyev**

President Dmitry Medvedev said Friday that Russia must invest more in the Arctic amid tough competition from other nations for the region's mineral riches.

Medvedev said in televised remarks to workers in the far eastern city of Khabarovsk that Russia will take the necessary security steps and other moves to protect its interests in the polar region.

"We simply must continue our research of the Arctic Ocean and the Arctic in general, because if we fail to do that other countries will take control," Medvedev said. "It's our shores, and it's our sea."

"We will defend our interests in the region, naturally including security issues," he added.

Russia, the United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway have all been trying to assert jurisdiction over parts of the Arctic, believed to hold up to a quarter of the Earth's

undiscovered oil and gas.

With shrinking polar ice opening up new opportunities for exploration, Russia, Canada and Denmark have said they would file claims with the United Nations that an undersea 2,000-kilometer mountain range that crosses the polar region called the Lomonosov Ridge is an extension of their respective territories.

In 2007, Russia staked a symbolic claim to Arctic seabed by dropping a canister containing the Russian flag on the ocean floor from a small submarine at the North Pole. Russia first submitted its claim in 2001 to the United Nations, but it was sent back for lack of evidence. Russia said it will resubmit the claim after collecting more scientific data.

An Arctic strategy paper signed by Medvedev in 2008 said the polar region must become Russia's "top strategic resource base" by 2020.

Medvedev said Friday that Russia will maintain a "reasonable and sufficient" military presence the Kuril Pacific island chain, which has been a consistent irritant between Moscow and Tokyo. Tensions rose sharply when Medvedev toured the islands a year ago, the first visit by a Russian president.

Medvedev said in Khabarovsk that "the Kurils are our land." He added that the presence of Russian troops there is needed to protect the border and should not be seen as "militarism."

The islands, off the northeastern tip of Japan's Hokkaido Island, were seized by Soviet troops in the closing days of World War II. They are surrounded by rich fishing grounds and are believed to have offshore oil and natural gas reserves, plus gold and silver deposits.

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