

Icebreaker Aids Stricken Fishing Vessel

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WELLINGTON, New Zealand — A South Korean polar research ship on Monday reached a leaking Russian fishing vessel that has been stuck in the frigid waters off Antarctica for the past 10 days, New Zealand officials said.

The Sparta, with 32 crew on board, hit underwater ice on Dec. 16 that tore a 30-centimeter hole in its hull and caused it to list at 13 degrees. Several rescue ships had been hampered by heavy ice in the Ross Sea off the northern Antarctica coast before the icebreaker Araon finally pushed through and reached the Sparta on Monday, New Zealand Rescue Coordination Center spokeswoman Rosalie Neilson said.

The arrival was a relief to the crew, which had been desperately pumping out near-frozen sea water while awaiting rescue. At one point, more than half of those on board were forced onto life rafts.

The crew is made up of 15 Russians, 16 Indonesians and one Ukrainian.

A New Zealand air force cargo plane had previously made two parachute drops of pumps and hull patching gear that had helped keep the single-hulled Sparta from sinking.

The survival drama on the edge of the Antarctic ice shelf is taking place about 3,700 kilometers southeast of New Zealand.

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