

Russia Building First Military Icebreaker in 45 Years Amid Arctic Militarization

By [The Moscow Times](#)

April 23, 2015



The Ilya Muromets 97K icebreaker, seen here in June 1990.

St. Petersburg's Admiralty Shipyards has begun work on the first Russian military icebreaker in decades, to be equipped with a special propulsion system that allows it to move both forward and backward, the shipyard said Thursday.

The icebreaker, to be called "Ilya Muromets" after the knight errant of Russian lore, will be part of the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet and will deploy troops and escort transport convoys to supply bases and airports within the Arctic region, the shipyard said in an online press release.

The vessel will be Russia's first new military icebreaker in over 40 years, according to news agency RIA Novosti.

Work on the ship is beginning as Russia ramps up its military presence in the Arctic amid

a drive to industrialize the resource-rich region despite the protests of environmental activists, who say the fragile ecosystem could be irreparably damaged.

The ship, whose hull displaces 6,000 tons of water, will also be able to nimbly move around ice-flows thank to its diesel-electric "Azipod" rudder system. The Azipod propeller, which is mounted on a steerable pod that can be rotated 360 degrees, allows ships to move in any direction — backward, forward or sideways.

Admiralty Shipyards said it aimed to finish construction of the boat by the end of 2017.

Russia has a number of other icebreakers powered by atomic reactors, but these are not operated by the military.

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