

《CCTV9英语新闻：US icebreakers concerned insufficient》

CCTV9英语新闻：US icebreakers concerned insufficient

As the Chinese and Russian ships trapped in Antarctic ice are trying to break free, the US is concerned that its capability of developing and protecting its commercial and strategic interests in the Arctic. Because the country's icebreaker fleet consists of just two vessels.

As the stranded Australian researchers were plucked to safety from the Antarctic ice, the captain of one of the United States' two ocean-going icebreakers imagined himself aboard the Russian vessel as it became stuck in the ice.

It's a situation that could soon become a greater threat for the United States' Seattle-based icebreaker fleet.

Melting polar ice means that more ships are navigating the Northwest Passage from the Far East to Europe. Meanwhile nations such as Russia are increasing their oil and gas exploration, leading to conflict with environmentalists. It's a situation that concerns Arctic observers.

The growing importance of the region was demonstrated last year by the U.S. publication of a National Strategy for the Arctic Region.

But the current U.S. icebreaker fleet consists of just one heavy icebreaker, the Polar Star, and one medium icebreaker, the Healy, primarily a scientific research support vessel.

The Polar Star's sister ship, the Polar Sea, currently sits idle in Seattle while politicians decide whether to reactivate it or spend a billion dollars building a replacement. For some there is another solution.

As nations scramble to develop and protect their commercial and strategic interests in the Arctic, almost all agree that the United States has fallen behind other countries, particularly as far as its icebreaker fleet is concerned. The question remains, what will be done about that situation.