

Beat: Politics

RUSSIA MADE A NEW BID FOR A HUGE SWATH OF ARTIC TERRITORY INCLUDING NORTH POLE

RUSSIA WAS FIRST TO SUBMIT CLAIM IN 2002

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USPA NEWS - RUSSIA submitted a formal claim to the UN for a 1.2 million square kilometre swathe of the Arctic Ocean, including the North Pole & clashing with DENMARK's rival claim filed last December. The Mendeleev & Lomonosov Ridges beneath the Arctic Ocean are argued extensions of Russian continental shelf...

The Arctic consists of land, territorial waters and international waters. All land and territorial waters in the Arctic belong to one of the five countries : CANADA, NORWAY, RUSSIA, DENMARK (via Greenland), and the UNITED STATES. International law regulates this area as with other portions of the Earth. Under international law, international waters including the North Pole and the region of the Arctic Ocean surrounding it, are not owned by any country.

CANADA, RUSSIA, the U.S., DENMARK and NORWAY have all been trying to assert jurisdiction over parts of the Arctic, which is believed to hold up to a quarter of the planet's undiscovered oil and gas. Rivalry for Arctic resources has intensified as shrinking polar ice is opening new opportunities for exploration. RUSSIA was the first to submit his claim in 2002, but the UN sent it back for lack of evidence.

RUSSIA's Arctic claim to North Pole could be an election issue and may influence the coming campaign in CANADA. In a statement released Tuesday, RUSSIA's foreign Ministry said their country is claiming 1.2 million square kilometres of Arctic sea shelf. The area extends more than 650 kilometres from the shore. Arctic sovereignty has been one of the major platforms of the Canadian Conservative government, and in an election year it can become a hot-button issue.

RUSSIA's claim is part of a process that several countries, including CANADA, agreed to more than three decades ago. CANADA had planned to submit its own Arctic claim in December of 2013. At the last minute, the Harper government ordered officials to rewrite CANADA's Arctic claim to include the North Pole and more survey work taking place this summer before Ottawa submits the document.

DENMARK, in December, laid claim to the area around the Pole, submitting data to the UN showing that the Lomonosov shelf, a key part of the Russian claim, was an extension of the Greenland. It is expected that the UN will start now to evaluate the scientific bases behind each claim.

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