Beat: Travel

Antarctic rescue mission delayed by deteriorating weather

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USPA News - Thick ice and deteriorating weather conditions are delaying an attempt to rescue a Russian cruise ship stuck in sea ice in Antarctica, increasing the likelihood that dozens of stranded passengers will have to be evacuated by helicopter, officials said on Monday. The MV Akademik Shokalskiy became beset by ice on early Christmas morning when the vessel was approximately 1,500 nautical miles (2,778 kilometers) south of the Australian island state of Tasmania.

The former research ship was on an Antarctic cruise, carrying 74 people, to retrace the footsteps of Australian Antarctic explorer Douglas Mawson more than 100 years ago. The vessel Aurora Australis, which is attempting to reach the vessel, was about 11 nautical miles (20 kilometers) from the stranded ship on Monday morning, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) confirmed. But it said the vessel was forced to travel slowly due to deteriorating ice and weather conditions in the area. "The area is currently experiencing snow showers, resulting in poor visibility. The Aurora Australis is traveling slowly due to the conditions to ensure the safety of all on board," the agency said in an update. "It is unknown at this time if or when the Aurora Australis will arrive near the Akademik Shokalskiy due to weather and ice conditions." Rescue workers are in regular contact with the stranded vessel and all on board are reported to remain safe and well with supplies for up to several weeks. But authorities will consider using a helicopter that is on board the Chinese research vessel Xue Long - which has been prevented from reaching the stranded ship due to thick sea ice - if Aurora Australis suffers the same fate.

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