

Protesters Target Russian Oil Tanker

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AMSTERDAM (AP) — Greenpeace International is sending out a ship to protest a tanker bringing the first oil produced at a new Russian offshore platform in the Arctic Circle to Rotterdam.

The environmental group said Monday it has sent the "Rainbow Warrior III" to meet the Mikhail Ulyanov, a tanker chartered by Russia's state-controlled oil company, Gazprom OAO.

Greenpeace spokesman Ben Ayliffe would not comment on what kind of protest is planned.

"The tanker is currently heading south into the North Sea as it makes for Rotterdam, so we expect the two ships to meet at some stage in the coming days," he said.

In September, 28 Greenpeace activists and two freelance journalists were arrested and charged with piracy after a protest near Gazprom's Prirazlomnaya offshore Arctic platform. They were released before the Winter Olympics in Sochi earlier this year. Their ship, "Arctic Sunrise," is still being held by Russian authorities.

Greenpeace has fiercely opposed the production of oil in the Arctic Circle, warning of the danger of oil spills in such unforgiving territory and of the worsening global warming caused by using fossil fuels.

In a statement Sunday, Greenpeace added a geopolitical reason, saying buying the oil "increases our dependence on Russian energy firms and only serves to strengthen President Putin's hand in the geopolitical game he's playing."

Greenpeace criticized the French oil company Total SA for purchasing the oil, saying it was being hypocritical because its chief executive, Christophe de Margerie, had ruled out drilling in the Arctic in 2012 due to fears of spills.

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