

Bloomberg News Photographs

By Hugo Miller
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Norilsk, the world's biggest producer of nickel, is building its own shipping fleet to capitalize on the melting of the polar ice cap.

The company ordered five reinforced cargo vessels that can plow through the waters north of Siberia as new sea routes open. Norilsk is spending at least \$467 million to buy reinforced vessels rather than rent both freighters and icebreaker escorts.

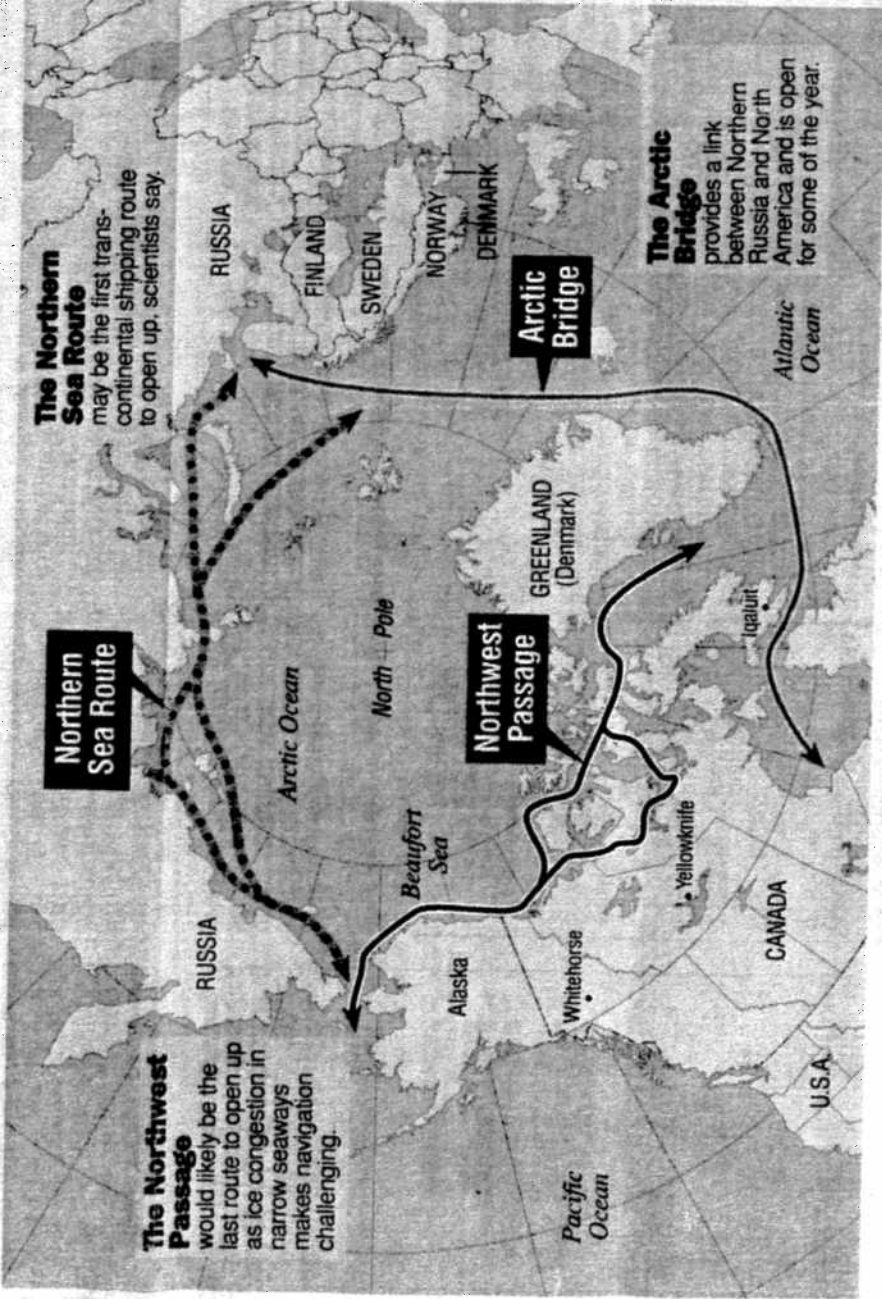
The thawing sea "has enormous economic implications, and commerce is going to push this ecological zone to the limit," said Rear Adm. Timothy McGee, head of the U.S. Navy's Meteorology and Oceanography Command. Global warming, while threatening environmental disasters, is creating economic opportunity for shippers, makers of ocean cargo vessels and tour operators. New routes may expand access to the world's second biggest oil supply, deliver U.S. wheat to Asia 30 percent faster and increase Arctic tourism as much as 50 percent in a decade.

Ice shrinkage may enable ships to sail straight over the top of the world, cutting an 11,000-mile trip to 7,000 miles and saving as much as 11 days and \$800,000 in fuel and labor.

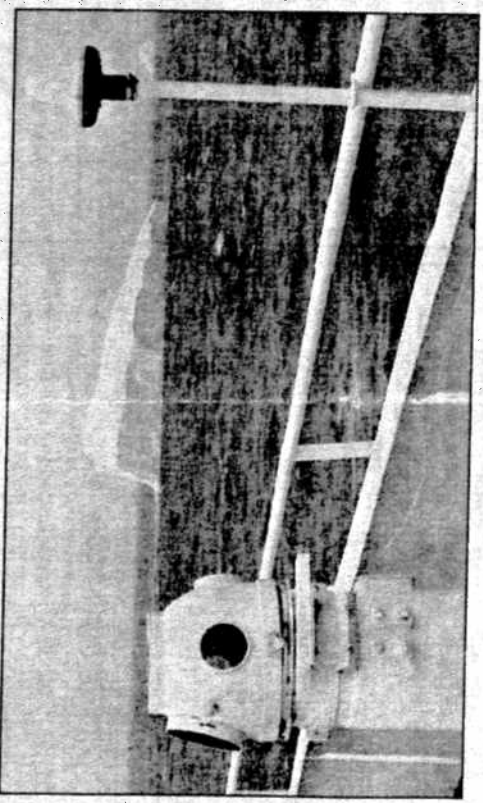
Investment in reinforced vessels jumped fivefold to \$2.5 billion in 2006 from \$500 million in 1999, and may climb 10 percent a year through 2010, London-based shipping broker Clarkson PLC estimates.

Norway's Aker Yards ASA and South Korea's Samsung Heavy Industries Co. are producing ships for Arctic investors including oil refiner ConocoPhillips and metals producer OAO GMK Norilsk Nickel.

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The Washington Times



The expedition cruise ship Lyubov Orlova (top) anchored last year in Pangnirtung Fjord in Nunavut, Canada. New sea routes created by the melting of the polar ice cap are expected to increase Arctic tourism by as much as 50 percent in a decade. An iceberg (right) is seen from the deck of the Lyubov Orlova. Norilsk, the Moscow-based producer of nickel, is spending millions to buy cargo vessels rather than rent icebreaker escorts.