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PRESS RELEASE

ITALICA - LAST VOYAGE TO HOBART

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The Russian built, ice-strengthened Antarctic resupply vessel *Italica* may have made her final voyage to Hobart. Operated by DIMAR based in Naples, and on contract to the Italian Government, *Italica* has been calling to the Port of Hobart for the past eight years.

Agents for the vessel, the Beaufort Shipping Agency Company says the vessel is up for sale and likely to be replaced by a new generation resupply ship next summer.

Manager, Stephen Parodi says *Italica* makes an annual voyage between mid December and Christmas with supplies and materials for the new permanent international research facility under construction at Dome C.

"This new facility, Concordia is jointly operated by France and Italy and is expected to open for year round occupation in 2003."

"*Italica* arrived in port yesterday direct from Ravenna in Italy carrying 70 pieces of general cargo. This included three tank containers and 21 containers. All up the cargo totalled 213 tonnes," said Mr Parodi.

"*Italica* sailed this morning for Lyttleton in New Zealand before travelling down to Terra Nova Bay in Antarctica, where it will become the accommodation hub for scientists working out of the Italian Base.

"The French resupply vessel *L'astrolabe* will now load the heavy cargo left in Hobart between now and March for shipment to Dumont d'Urville. Once there it will be transhipped for the long traverse by tractor trains over a distance of 2,200 kilometres high up on the Antarctic plateau to Dome C."

"The new research facility known as Concordia now has the frame in and panels are being put in place. The structure consists of a core group of three winter buildings, flanked by a summer camp that doubles as an emergency camp."

"While there is a continuously increasing awareness of the importance of Antarctic research, the 14 million square kilometres Antarctic continent still only houses two permanent inland research stations, Amundsen-Scott and Vostok. Dome C will make it three, and that's still more than a year away," Mr Parodi said.

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