

TRANSPORT AIR

Land Frozen to Provide Airstrip

It was the former commander of Turinsk Airlines, Oleg Krivonos, who first began "pushing" the idea. He maintained that an earth airstrip wasn't needed. It would mean a lot of earthwork, and it would be expensive. We need an ice runway! What's the problem?

Near the Evenkiya settlement of Chirinda, the "Yeniseyneftegazgeologiya" Geological Production Association's Tuvinskiy team is prospecting for oil and gas. A decision was made to set up a drilling rig. But to do that around 1,500 tonnes of cargo had to be brought in. But how, if there are no normal access roads? The only other way is by air. And that's how the problem of constructing an airstrip arose.

The request of the Krasnoyarsk aviators was answered by the "Lenaeroprojekt" Institute and local scientists, who sent their specialists to the Chirinda Lake region. They arrived at the end of November, and on 24 March an IL-76 with 30 tonnes of cargo on board made the first landing on the ice airstrip.

Specialists used a new method of artificial hail-formation for the first time. Using special machines they pumped water from the bottom of the lake and "shot" it into the cold air. It's a good thing there were no fowl in the lake. This was kept up until there was no water left --- just a solid 1.5 million m³ block of ice.