

Russia's Arctic security strategy: post Ukraine reassessment

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Arctic ‘spirit of cooperation’

“preserving the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation is of the utmost importance. It is our conviction that the Arctic area should serve as a platform for uniting forces for genuine partnership in the economy, security, science, education and the preservation of the North’s cultural heritage. The speculations regarding the conflict in the Arctic lack real grounds” – Vladimir Putin (2010)



Increasing security rhetoric

In February 2013, President Putin noted that militarization of the Arctic was among the remaining dangers faced by Russia

In April 2014: “the changing international context and socio-economic situation was fraught with new risks and challenges to Russia’s national interests, including in the Arctic” – Vladimir Putin

A broad spectrum of potential challenges and threats to our national security is now being formed in the Arctic. Therefore, one of the defense ministry's priorities is to develop military infrastructure in this zone” – Sergei Shoigu, Defence Minister of the Russian Federation (2015)

Military Doctrine 2014

Dmitry Rogozin is appointed the Head of the Arctic Commission

Maritime Doctrine 2015



Maritime Doctrine (2015)

Limitless access to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans

Key importance of the capabilities of the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet for the defence of Russia

'lowering the threats in the Arctic region' is the main policy goal in the Arctic, which will be achieved through, among other things, through strengthening of the Northern Fleet



Russia's Arctic Strategy (2013)

Armed forces

The provision of favourable operating conditions in Russia's Arctic Zone by, among other things, maintaining the necessary level of combat readiness of armed forces troops in accordance with existing and predictable military dangers and threats

(a) prevent non-military pressure and aggression against Russia and its allies, (b) ensure the sovereign rights of Russia's Arctic Zone and opportunities for the smooth implementation of all of its activities, (c) provide strategic deterrence, and (d) in the event of armed conflict, repel aggression and cessation of hostilities on terms that meet the interests of Russia.

Russia's Arctic Strategy (2013)

Coast Guard and Border Guard

- (a) improvements to, and development of, the border control system and border infrastructure of Russia's Arctic Zone;
- (b) the creation of an integrated control system for marine surface surveillance;
- (c) the formation of an actively functioning coastguard system under the Russian FSB in the Arctic Zone;
- (d) the reinvigoration of the system of emergency preparedness, including establishment of emergency centres;
- (e) the implementation of an integrated security system for the protection of areas, population and critical facilities of Russia's Arctic Zone from the threats of natural and man-made disasters.



Military developments in the Russian Arctic

Modernization of the Northern Fleet (new SSBNs)

Restoration of a number of airfields and radar stations

Arctic brigades: the 80th Independent Motorized Infantry Brigade (3600 troops) was established in Alakurtti (located 60 km from the Finnish border).

Changed command structure: Joint Military Command “North” (2014)

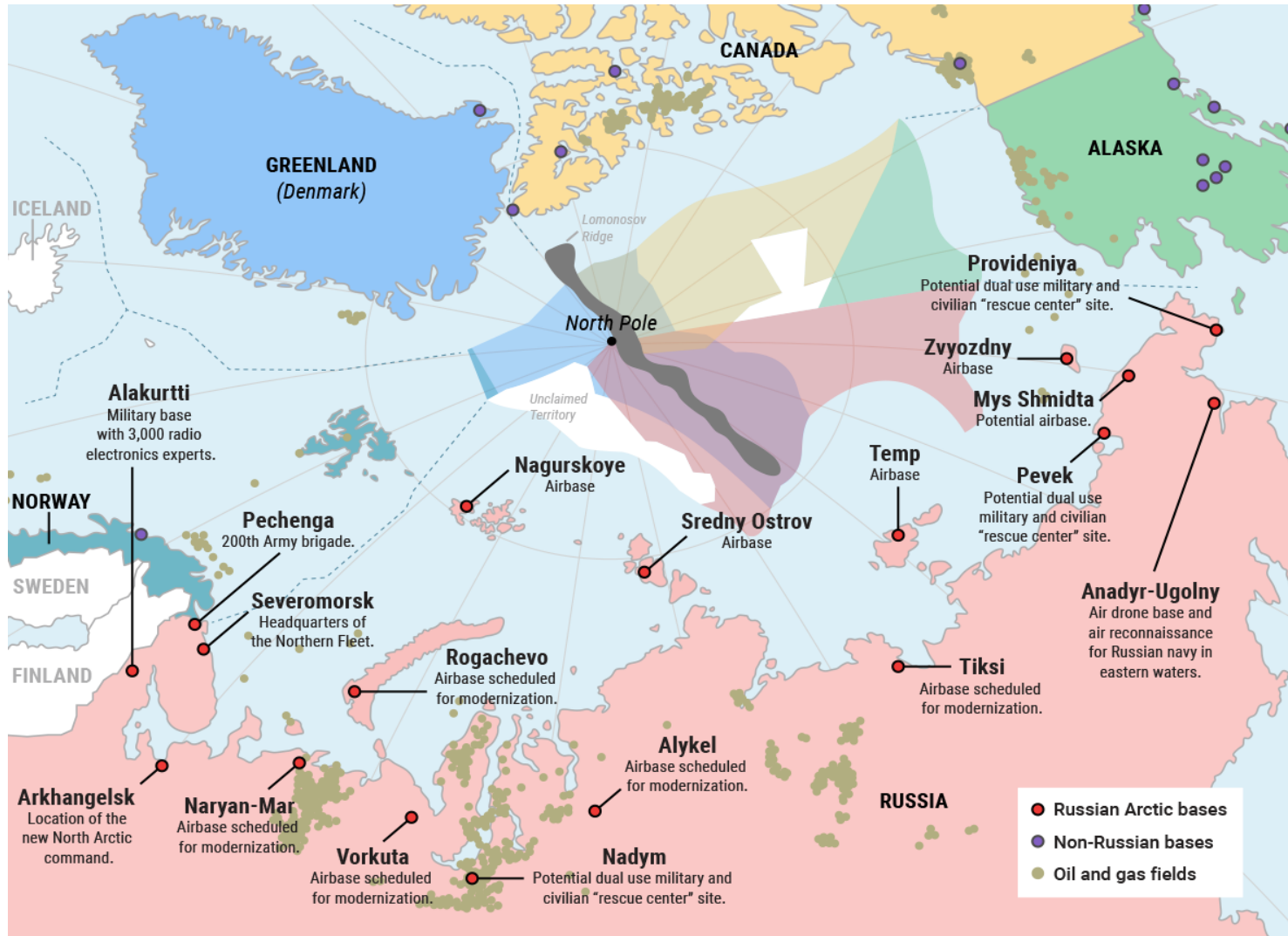
Military exercises

FSB Border Guard and Coast Guard

Search and rescue centers under the ministry of emergencies



Russia's military build-up in the region



Rhetoric vs reality

Little change in Russia's Arctic Security policy, if any at all, since "Russia's return" to the Arctic region

The current increase of military and paramilitary capacity was announced in the Arctic Strategies as of 2008 and 2013

Plans within the Russia's rearmaments and modernization programmes date back to 2008

Many of the current plans risks not being implemented due to current financial situation

Shift in priorities: investment will be directed to the Black Sea Fleet



Changed perception of Russia's military capabilities in the Arctic

‘a return to a more normal level of activity for a major power with legitimate interests in the region’ - Gahr Støre, J., Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Statement at NATO seminar ‘Current Strategic Challenges in the High North’ (2009)

‘Russia’s conduct represents the gravest challenge to European security. As a consequence, the security situation in the Nordic countries’ adjacent areas has become significantly worsened during the past year’ - statement by Nordic defence ministers, Aftonposten (2015)

Some conclusions

Russia's growing deployment of military forces in the region

a response to new security challenges in the Arctic

modernizing the forces of nuclear deterrence and protection for them

It is the result of the long-term policy of modernization and restructuring of the Russian armed forces and still very limited

Russia increased military capabilities **IN** the Arctic and not so much **FOR** the Arctic

There is no militarization in the Arctic



SIPRI's work on the Arctic

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March 2012

MILITARY CAPABILITIES IN THE ARCTIC

HEIMON E. WEIZEMAN

I. Introduction

In recent years the increase of far-reaching climate change in the Arctic has led to fears of future conflict in the region. Such fears have been expressed in official documents, including defence policy documents, of the five Arctic littoral states—Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States. Three of them—Canada, Denmark and Russia—have recently adopted foreign and defence policies that have put a special emphasis on the Arctic. They have strengthened their military presence in the Arctic or increased military capabilities for Arctic use and have presented plans for additional military strengthening. Meanwhile, Norway has moved a substantial part of its operational forces to the north of the country. Of the five littoral states, only the USA has placed less focus on Arctic security.

This paper provides an overview of the military capabilities of Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the USA for operations in the Arctic and the ongoing or planned improvements in those capabilities, especially in the Arctic areas beyond their national territories.

II. Canada

The government of Stephen Harper, Canadian prime minister since 2006, has made protecting and strengthening Canada's 'Arctic sovereignty' a priority. Canada's current defence policy is contained in the Canada First defence strategy of 2008, which includes plans for investments until 2026.¹ It puts a renewed emphasis on defending Canada's sovereignty, including in the Arctic region as it becomes more accessible. Canada's Arctic policy is specified in the government's Northern Strategy, which was released in July 2009.² This increased emphasis in policy has been matched by procurement of new equipment, expansion of special Arctic forces and increased training in the Arctic environment.

Air capabilities

The Royal Canadian Air Force operates 18 CF-188 (F-18) and submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft that have the range to patrol the Arctic region from

SUMMARY

- Climate change is making the Arctic region—and its potential natural resources—more accessible. Overlapping claims by the five Arctic littoral states—Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States—have led to fears of future conflict in the region.
- In recent years all five countries have included increased protection of Arctic territories and claims in their defence policies. All five have also started to increase their military presence and capabilities in the Arctic region by acquiring Arctic-specific equipment, improving military infrastructure or increasing military forces.
- While these changes are sometimes portrayed as significant military build-ups and potential threats to security, the five states are making only limited increases in their capabilities to project military power beyond their recognized national territories. However, the increase in military forces does give some rationale for concern, which military confidence-building measures might help to mitigate.

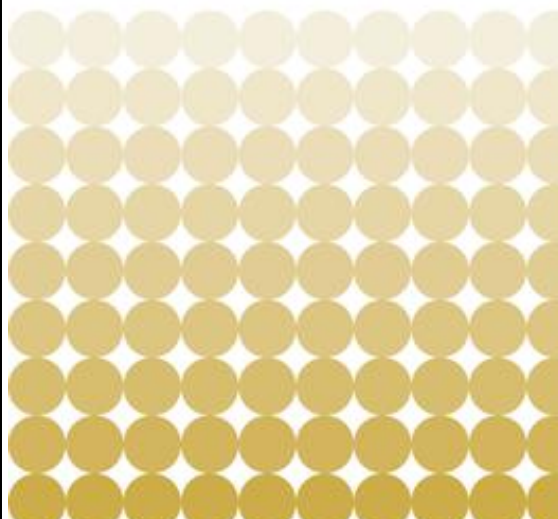
1. Canadian Department of National Defence (DND), Canada First Defence Strategy (2008) (Ottawa, 16 July 2008).
2. Canadian Government, Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future (Minister of Public Works and Government Services (PWG), July 2009).

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RUSSIA'S EVOLVING ARCTIC STRATEGY

Drivers, Challenges
and New Opportunities

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