

Russia's Military Presence in the Arctic

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Russia has been re-establishing its military presence in the Arctic. The recent satellite imagery released by US experts clearly show Russia's ongoing construction and development of the Alexandra Island base and the Kotelny Island base.

The Alexandra and Kotelny island positions are military posts, but they don't look as typical army bases. They are limited facilities that were not necessarily built with the goal of housing significant combat forces — at least, not for now. A major buildup of armored vehicles or air defenses aren't expected there. The bases consist of a central structure that is painted in the colors of the Russian flag.

The US experts believe Moscow is only looking to establish a monitoring outpost and stake a symbolic territorial claim.

Nonetheless, the presence of runways on both islands does enable Russia to deploy its air force to the bases at any given time. Also, Russian monitoring stations, border control complexes and search-and-rescue centers enable Russia to monitor movement and successfully project power in the region.

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