

## TOP OF THE WORLD: NATO Rehearses For War In The Arctic

The Western campaign for global dominance has reached the top of the world.

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Theme: [Environment](#), [Military](#) and [WMD](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

*To the world's military leaders, the debate over climate change is long over. They are preparing for a new kind of Cold War in the Arctic, anticipating that rising temperatures there will open up a treasure trove of resources and long-dreamed-of sea-lanes. Rick Rozoff scrutinizes the feverish military activity taking place in the High North, under the official label of a joint Norwegian-NATO-Partnership for Peace endeavor, including preparedness drills against terrorist threats, mass demonstrations...and spies coming in from the cold!*



**Cold Response 2012 military exercise in Nordland, Norway. The yearly air land and maritime exercise is organized withing NATO with a UN mandate.**

The largest military exercise in the High North, inside and immediately outside the Arctic Circle, since the end of the Cold War (and perhaps even before) was completed on March 21 in northern Norway.

Except for the crash of a Norwegian military transport plane in Sweden during its course the world would have been unaware of it.

Cold Response 2012 was conducted from March 12-21 primarily in Norway but also in Sweden with the participation of 16,300 troops from fifteen nations as part of full spectrum - air, sea, infantry and special forces - maneuvers against the backdrop of the past three years' new scramble for the Arctic.

The term High North is a translation of the Norwegian designation *nordområdene* which was adopted by NATO in January of 2009 for its two-day Seminar on Security Prospects in the High North in Reykjavík, Iceland attended by the bloc's secretary general, chairman of its Military Committee and two top military commanders, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

Four of the five Arctic claimants - the United States, Canada, Norway and Denmark - are members of NATO. The other, Russia, is not. In 2010 Norway became the first Arctic nation to move its military command center within the Arctic Circle, transferring the Norwegian Operational Command Headquarters from Stavanger to Bodø, a five-story complex built during the Cold War to withstand a nuclear attack. The preceding year Norway purchased 48 Lockheed Martin F-35 fifth generation multirole fighters.

Last month's Cold Response was the largest of five such exercises held since 2006. The first was the largest military exercise ever conducted in Norway, with 10,000 troops from eleven nations. All NATO member states, at the time 26, were invited to participate.

The next, in 2007, included 8,500 military personnel. The third, in 2009, consisted of 7,000 troops from eleven nations and the fourth, in 2010, included 8,500 soldiers from fourteen nations.

This year's Arctic drills were almost twice as large in terms of troop numbers as any preceding one.

Information on the exercise was scarce before, during and after the event; even the full roster of participating nations was not disclosed by the Norwegian military.

According to the website of the Norwegian Armed Forces, military forces from fifteen nations were involved - NATO members Norway, the U.S., Britain, France, Canada and the Netherlands - as well as Partnership for Peace affiliate Sweden, part of whose territory was employed for the exercise.

The other eight nations were not identified but the exercise was described as a joint Norwegian-NATO-Partnership for Peace undertaking. One of only a handful of English-language reports on the subject, from Finland, confirmed that nation's participation. Finland and Sweden are for all intents the 29th and 30th members of the Alliance.

The other Partnership for Peace states involved are likely to have been, among others, former Soviet republics like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.

According to the Norwegian Armed Forces, "The main purpose of this year's winter exercise is to rehearse high intensity operations in winter conditions within NATO with a UN mandate."

The source added: "Participants will rehearse deploying and using military reaction forces in an area of crisis where they have to handle everything from high intensity warfare to terror threats and mass demonstrations. The soldiers have to balance the use of diplomatic and military force."

High-intensity warfare, terror threats and mass demonstrations in the Arctic...

It also described live-fire infantry, naval and air - with the participation of fighter jets and helicopters operating from several Norwegian and Swedish bases and from aircraft carriers - components of the exercise.

The ground forces included U.S. Marines. According to the Marine Corps Times, "After years of fighting in a desert environment, most Marines may not think of the North Pole often, but the area abounds with oil, gas and other minerals, making it one of the most contentious regions of the world."

The same source quoted a national security and Arctic expert at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for a New American Security with the improbable name of Will Rogers:

"The importance of why we need forces capable of operating in the Arctic is very basic

power projection — to make a show to other players in the international community that we are an Arctic nation, and we are going to protect our interests in the Arctic Circle.”

Britain deployed HMS *Illustrious*, its last-remaining aircraft carrier, which had to return home early for repairs after being rammed by a tugboat, thereby eliciting a few paragraphs in the *Daily Mail*.

A Norwegian C-130 Super Hercules military transport plane crashed in Sweden, killing five soldiers. A memorial service was presided over by King Harald V, the titular commander-in-chief of the Norwegian armed forces.

The assault ship HMS *Bulwark* accompanied HMS *Illustrious*, which carried eight helicopters, and the first landed British commandos as well as American and Dutch troops, equipment and vehicles on the northern Norwegian coast.

In the words of the commanding officer of the *Bulwark*:

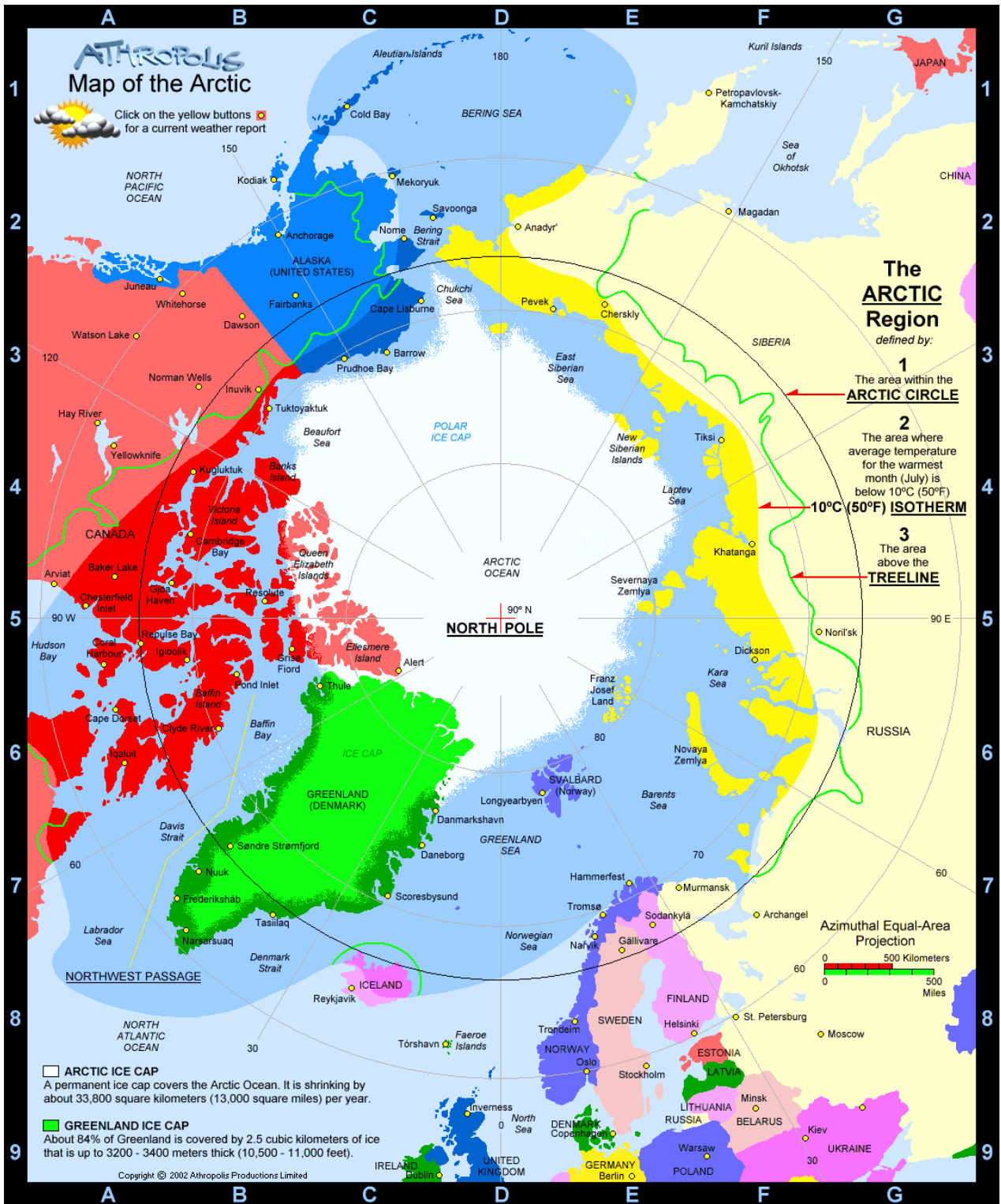
“It is not simply park the ship and offload it. In war – and therefore in training – we have to take account of the environment, enemy forces in the air, sea, and on land, coordinate people into boats and naval helicopters, all to arrive on target, in the right order, at the right time, to achieve the battle-winning effect. Few navies deliver this successfully and most aspirants look to the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, and Fleet Air Arm, with our war-proven capability, for guidance – on the sea in the air and on the land.”

Regarding “war-proven capability(ies),” Defense Media Network quoted U.S. Marine Corps Brigadier General James M. Lariviere, commanding general of 4th Marine Division, present for the occasion:

“It was an opportunity to interact with our allies. Many of them are veterans of Iraq, Afghanistan, and anti-piracy task forces off the coast of Somalia. They all have a lot of experience working with the U.S. and our allies in various capacities...”

The U.S. uses the Bjugn Cave Facility in Norway’s Fosen peninsula for Marine Corps Prepositioning Program Norway, the Marine Corps’ only land-based prepositioning program. According to a U.S. European Command article of last year:

“Well guarded within 671,000 sq. feet of six climate-controlled caves, \$420 million worth of Marine Corps equipment and supplies lie ready for real world use. The caves, located in Norway, serve as a key strategic storage site for the Marine Corps....The Norwegian caves are strategically located to provide support to the United States Marine Corps’ operations around the globe...[T]he equipment from the climate controlled caves of Norway has seen action in places as diverse as the deserts of Iraq and mountains of Afghanistan in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.”



The Helsingin Sanomat, which reported 215 Finnish soldiers participating in the exercise, characterized Cold Response 2012 as “a major military training exercise being held in the far north of Norway [in which] armed forces from 14 nations are protecting civilians in the same way as last year in Libya, and are fighting against the local opposition just as in Afghanistan.”

The newspaper also quoted a Finnish military media and communications officer stating, “It would be silly to rehearse a situation if it were not realistic.”

A Swedish website, which identified Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Latvia and Switzerland as having also supplied units for Cold Response, published a synopsis of the scenario for the

Swedish part of the exercise provided by the Swedish Armed Forces, which included:

A “strange group of people” have settled in northern Sweden and established a state called “Gardaland” from which they have invaded “an area in Norway,” after which NATO intervenes under a United Nations mandate.

The Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands reported a potpourri of unrelated and even conflicting scenarios that leaves the door open for any pretext for military intervention:

“The Netherlands Defence organisation sent 800 military personnel to take part in the exercise, including a large maritime detachment and units from the army and air force. The Dutch units left the Norwegian training area on 21 March, after a simulated attack lasting 48 hours. The emphasis was on beating off air attacks, combating submarines and covertly landing amphibious units. The scenario also included taking terrorists into custody.”

The Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1 was deployed to the Norwegian Arctic island city of Tromsø for the exercise. NATO established a Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger, which at the time hosted the nation’s military command headquarters, in 2003. According to NATO’s Norfolk, Virginia-based Supreme Allied Command Transformation, the center is “the jewel in the Crown of Allied Command Transformation”.

On the opening day of this year’s Cold Response, Igor Korotchenko of Russia’s National Security Journal put the event in geopolitical perspective:

“The current military drill takes place amid NATO’s increased activities in the Arctic. Apparently, NATO is set on obtaining a share of Arctic resources and is carrying out the naval exercises to demonstrate that its geopolitical and diplomatic efforts lean on military might.”

Vladimir Yevseyev of the International Security Center of the Institute of Global Economy and International Relations, as cited by *Voice of Russia*, added:

“[T]he exercises are being held on the territories of Norway and Sweden, in close proximity to Russian borders. They might thus be seen as a provocation. Russia has all grounds for concern given that ships equipped with the...Aegis Combat System can be deployed in the Arctic.”

The last sentence is an allusion to the U.S.-NATO sea- and land-based interceptor missile system, which thus far is limited to Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea but could well expand into the Norwegian, Barents, Baltic and Black Seas in future.

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