

# US-NATO Militarization of Russia's Border: US Marines Land In Norway, The First Time Since World War II, Angering Russia

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Region: [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

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*Just one week after [thousands of US troops arrived](#) in Poland to “support NATO’s Anti-Russian buildup” across Eastern Europe, 300 U.S. Marines from Camp Lejeune landed in Norway on Monday for a six-month deployment, marking the first time since World War II that foreign troops have been allowed to be stationed there, in a deployment breaking with decades of tradition by Norway not to host foreign forces, and angering Norway’s Arctic neighbor Russia, [according to Reuters](#).*

After leaving North Carolina aboard a chartered 747 on Sunday evening, the troops [landed at 10am CET on Monday](#) with their luggage and weapons at the Vaernes airport near Trondheim, Norway’s third-largest city, television footage showed. The Marines will be hosted at the Vaernes base of the Norwegian Home Guards near Trondheim, Norway’s third-largest city.

The US soldiers, which will stay in Norway for a year with the current batch of Marines being replaced after their six-month tour is complete. Until now, the US has had large quantities of military materiel pre-positioned in tunnels dug into Norway’s mountains, but no troops.

A spokesman for the Norwegian Home Guards, who will host the Marines at the Vaernes military base, about 1,500 km (900 miles) from the Russian border, said the U.S. troops will learn about winter warfare. “For the first four weeks they will have basic winter training, learn how to cope with skis and to survive in the Arctic environment,” said Rune Haarstad, a Home Guard spokesman. In March, the Marines will take part in the Joint Viking exercises, which will also include British troops, he added.

As the deployment coincides with the U.S. sending several thousand troops to Poland to beef up its Eastern European allies worried about Moscow’s assertiveness, Russia has been understandably concerned. However, both Norway and the US deny the notion that the deployment is meant to “irk” Russia as part of NATO’s wider campaign to oppose what it calls “Russian aggression” in Europe, by sending additional troops and weapons closer to the Russian border. A spokeswoman for Norwegian Ministry of Defence also said the arrival of U.S. Marines had nothing to do with concerns about Russia.

“It has nothing to do with Russia or the current situation” Haarstad doubled down.

Moscow disagrees. While the Russian Embassy in Oslo did not immediately reply to a request for comment by Reuters on Monday, it previously questioned the need for such a

move and when the rotational deployment of US Marines in Norway was confirmed last year, Russia said it was puzzled by it.

“Taking into account multiple statements of Norwegian officials about the absence of threat from Russia to Norway we would like to understand for what purposes is Norway so ... willing to increase its military potential, in particular through stationing of American forces in Vaernes?” it told Reuters at the time.

This “for sure won’t make better (the) security situation in Northern Europe,” a spokesman for the Russian embassy in Oslo, Maxim Gurov, told AFP in an October email.

Norway, which is a founding member of NATO, has pledged not to host foreign forces to allay Moscow’s concerns that it could serve as a platform for a surprise attack. [According to RT](#), for decades the Scandinavian country stashed massive stockpiles of weapons in preparation for a possible conflict, but only allowed in other allies’ troops for training purposes. Oslo dismisses the notion that the deployment goes against the old commitment, saying that American troops would be rotated rather than stationed permanently. NATO routinely applies the same reasoning to all its deployments in Eastern Europe as a way to circumvent the alliance’s agreement with Russia, which bans permanent deployments of “significant” forces near Russia.

Meanwhile, the US Marine Corps touted the practical benefits of a full-time deployment as the reason for the move. “We’ve been going to Norway for 25 years. So I don’t really know what the hype is about,” Maj. Gen. Niel Nelson, commander of Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa, told Military.com ahead of the deployment. “We’re just doing our job, from a more economical standpoint. I don’t put a lot of stock in people pointing back and forth.”

“By putting Marines in Norway and above the Arctic Circle for 30-60 days at a time, that’s a whole different environment,” Nelson added. “You not only learn to survive, you are surviving. It’s a harsh environment; it takes a lot of tough lessons and we reinforce that by the length of time.”

Norway and Russia share a small land border far in the north. The Vaernes base is located 1,500km from any part of Russia, but the Arctic training program involves traveling closer to it. We anticipate that the inevitable retaliatory Russian deployment of troops in proximity to the Norwegian border, will be promptly dubbed by NATO, and western media, as a provocative act.

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