

U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY & ALASKA TODAY

RUSSIA RE-EMERGES AS MAJOR THREAT, WITH AN EYE ON THE ARCTIC

“Russia presents the greatest threat to our national security.”

*- U.S. Marine Corps Commandant/Joint Chiefs of Staffs Nominee
Gen. Joseph Dunford, July 9, 2015*

“I’d put Russia right now, from a military perspective, as our number 1 threat.”

*- U.S. Army Forces Commanding General/Army Chief of Staff Nominee
Gen. Mark Milley, July 21, 2015*

- Russia has established a Joint Strategic Command North to maintain a permanent Arctic presence
 - Command will eventually include an air defense division, 2 Arctic mechanized brigades, a naval infantry brigade, a coastal defense missile system, and missile regiments in Arctic islands
 - Although 40-70% of them may not be currently functional, the Command reportedly has ~40 surface vessels and ~40 submarine vessels
- With an existing fleet of 6 nuclear-powered icebreakers and at least 12 others that are diesel-powered, Russia expects to have three additional nuclear-powered icebreakers join the fleet in 2017, 2019, and 2020
- In 2013, Russia permanently stationed military forces in the Arctic and reopened a base near Novosibirsk Island that is now home to 10 military ships and 4 icebreakers

- In 2014, Russian heavy bombers flew more out-of-area patrols than in any year since the Cold War
 - Alaska NORAD Region Deputy Commander: “We are seeing more complexity in flight activity.”
 - July 2015: 2 Russian bombers intercepted by U.S. off Alaska coast
 - Sept. 2014: 6 Russian aircraft intercepted near Alaska airspace
- In 2014, Russia announced a new military strategy that includes a focus on the Arctic
 - Across its Arctic coast, Russia is now building 13 airfields, 10 air defense radar stations, 16 deepwater ports, and 10 search and rescue stations
- 2015: Russia outlines new naval doctrine with primary emphasis on the Arctic and Atlantic
- 2015: For the first time ever, Russian paratroopers reportedly landed on a drifting block of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean and set up base “in direct proximity” to the North Pole
- 2015: Russia announces intention to establish “self-sufficient” military force in the Arctic by 2018 that incorporates radio reconnaissance companies, “the way it was in the past”
- 2015: Under Pres. Putin’s orders, Russia conducts full-alert combat readiness Arctic exercise with 38,000 troops, 110 aircraft, 41 ships, and 15 submarines

U.S. STRUGGLES TO KEEP PACE

- U.S. Northern Command/NORAD Commander: “We have the inability right now to reliably navigate, communicate, and then sustain ourselves as we’re up there.”
- U.S. Northern Command/NORAD Commander: If current trends with Russian military advances continue, “over time NORAD will face increased risk in our ability to defend North America against Russian air, maritime, and cruise missile threats”
- According to Coast Guard Commandant Paul Zukunft, “We’re not even in the same league as Russia right now. We’re not playing in this game at all.”
- The 1990s saw major drawdowns, including withdrawals from Forward Operating Bases established at Galena and King Salmon, deactivation of the Army’s primary Arctic warfare division, and closure of the Navy’s anti-submarine warfare base on Adak Island

- Following post-9/11/01 buildup, U.S. Army now has plans to reduce Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson troop levels by 2,600, nearly 50% of Army’s active duty personnel on base, as well as cut an additional 75 at Fort Wainwright
- U.S. has just two heavy diesel icebreakers -- only one of which is operational -- and one medium icebreaker; the operational heavy icebreaker is only expected to remain in service for ~5 more years
- According to U.S. Northern Command/NORAD Commander, “We have high confidence in the ability of this [Fort Greely’s Ground Based Interceptor missile] system to defeat an ICBM strike against the United States from an enemy with **limited** ICBM capabilities.” (emphasis added)