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## What is Russia Doing in the Arctic?

### Documenting Russian Military Actions in the North between 2014- 2020

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Russia's Arctic military buildup has been increasingly monitored by NORAD, NATO, and fellow Arctic states, Finland and Sweden, since the 2014 illegal [annexation of Crimea](#) left the world uncertain of Russia's geopolitical ambitions. Within the existing literature surrounding Russia's military activities in the Arctic, some authors have either downplayed the threat that Russia presents in this context, or have identified two opposing sides of Russian behaviour.<sup>1</sup> Yet, recent developments such as Russia's testing of its [hypersonic missile](#) have garnered further alarm and attention from western media and academics alike. In analyzing Russia's rhetoric and military activities regarding the Arctic between 2014- 2020, it is shown that Russia has acted provocatively towards other Arctic states, has invested heavily in Arctic- specific equipment, and has demonstrated its versatility in the Arctic environment through extensive drills and exercises. While the international community remains uncertain of Russia's intentions and geopolitical ambitions, it is important to document what Russia has actually been doing in the north and to recognize its capabilities in the region.

#### Russia's Arctic rhetoric

Russia's increased investments in the Arctic have resulted in accusations of militarization being levied against President Putin. In response to these accusations, Putin has [repeatedly asserted](#) that the Arctic should remain a region of [peace, stability, and predictability](#). In this same spirit, at the international meeting of the Arctic Council's member states and observers in 2016, the Russian Security Council's secretary stated:

*"I'm certain that the Arctic must be regarded as a space for an open and equitable dialog, based on the principles of universal and indivisible security, where there will be no place for geopolitical games by military blocs, backstage deals or struggle for spheres of influence."*<sup>2</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made similar comments in 2017, "'Russia is doing much and will continue doing much to help develop the Arctic as a territory of peace, stability and cooperation... There's no potential for conflict there."<sup>3</sup> However, this language shifted slightly in 2018, when Defence Minister Shoigu warned that, "Today the Arctic has turned into a place where territorial, resource and military and strategic

interests of a number of states clash. This may spark a growing conflict potential in this region.”<sup>4</sup> This can be interpreted as providing justification for Russia’s intensive defence plans in the Arctic.

This trend towards more sovereignty- oriented and nationalistic language in regard to the Arctic is also evident through various policy documents issued by the Russian Federation regarding the Arctic. While most policies continue to emphasize economic and infrastructure development in the Arctic, recent updates to these documents further frame Russia as a leading Arctic power, and discuss the importance of defending Russia’s ‘national interests.’ Russian policy documents are numerous and have various and overlapping purposes. These include Russia’s National Security Strategy (May 2009- 2020), the 2013 Development Strategy of the Russian Arctic (soon to be updated, potentially as early as August 2020), Principles of the Russian Federation’s State Policy in the field of Naval Activity, and most recently, the Basic Principles of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic to 2035, which updates the previous Basic Principles to 2020 adopted in 2008. The Naval Activity policy specifically cites the US and NATO as threats to Russia’s national security, justifying Russia’s ongoing military investments in the Arctic. On the other hand, while the Arctic Basic Principles document focusses primarily on economic development and protecting both sovereignty and territorial integrity, it only makes non-explicit references to ongoing disputes with Norway.

Basic Principles of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic to 2020 (Adopted 2008)	Basic Principles of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic to 2035 (Adopted 2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To use the Russian Arctic zone as a strategic resource base to provide solutions for the problems of social and economic development of the country.</li> <li>● To maintain the Arctic as a region of peace and cooperation.</li> <li>● To preserve the unique ecological systems in the Arctic.</li> <li>● To use the Northern Sea Route as a national transport route for Russia in the Arctic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To ensure Russia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.</li> <li>● To preserve the Arctic as a region of peace, with stable and mutually beneficial partnerships.</li> <li>● To guarantee high living standards and prosperity for people of the Russian Arctic zone.</li> <li>● To develop the Russian Arctic as a strategic resource base and use to speed up national economic growth.</li> <li>● To develop the Northern Sea Route as a globally competitive national transport corridor.</li> <li>● To protect the Arctic environment, the primordial homeland and the traditional way of life of the indigenous minorities in the Russian Arctic.</li> </ul>

Table 1. Comparison of Russian national interests in the Arctic as outlined in Basic Principles 2020 and Basic Principles 2035

Source: <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/essay/2020/russias-new-arctic-policy-document-signals-continuity-rather-change>

This new emphasis on “sovereignty” and “territorial integrity” can be interpreted as another way of justifying increased militarization of the Arctic region without using potentially inflammatory language.

Ultimately, Russia’s policies surrounding the Arctic have remained fairly consistent in emphasizing peace and stability. However, as the US and NATO remain vigilant while Russia builds up its military presence in the Arctic, Russia has made a clear effort to further emphasize the need for peace and security in the region.

## Accusations of undermining Arctic peace

While Russian rhetoric has generally emphasized the need for continued peace and cooperation in the Arctic, President Putin has levied numerous accusations against other NATO and Arctic states, alleging that they have acted provocatively in the region, or have otherwise attempted to undermine Arctic peace. These accusations themselves may, by some states, be interpreted as provocative. Here are a few examples:

- In 2018, after learning about Norway's plans to bring nearly 400 US Marines to train in Norway's Arctic, the Russian Embassy in Norway released a statement on its Facebook page, "This makes Norway less predictable and could cause growing tensions, triggering an arms race and destabilizing the situation in northern Europe."<sup>5</sup>
- In 2018, Russia's Defense Minister, Sergei Shoigu, has also stated that NATO should expect a significant [Russian response](#) should Sweden or Finland join NATO, as this undermines peace in the region.
- In early 2019, Russia accused Norway of creating a military build- up and helping NATO to build a presence in the Arctic. Maria Zakharova, a spokesperson for Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "... Oslo continues to escalate tension and increase the risks of military action. This will not be left without a response."<sup>6</sup>
- In 2020, when a US Air Force unit visited Norwegian island Jan Mayen to complete a test landing at its airfield, Russia expressed alarm, stating that this action was 'de- stabilizing.' The Russian Foreign Ministry also said, "We hope Oslo will be responsible and... refrain from actions that undermine regional stability and damage bilateral relations."<sup>7</sup>
- In April of 2020, after the US announced \$12.1 million in aid to Greenland, the Russian envoy to Denmark, Vladimir Barbin accused the US of [undermining Arctic peace](#).

This tendency by Putin and Russian officials to label other states' actions as 'undermining' peace or stability in the Arctic can be interpreted in a number of different ways. First, these accusations may be genuine, made out of concern for ongoing peace and stability in the region. However, this rhetoric should not be taken to mean that Russia is entirely against provocative actions in the north itself, as will be demonstrated in the following section. This language also mimics that of western liberal democracies when they are calling out the actions of other states. Therefore, this use of language can be considered Russia's way of signalling to the international community their adherence to the [rules- based international order](#). An alternative interpretation is that Russia may be purposely calling out the actions of other states in order to establish a grey zone, whereby a conflict initiated by Russia in the future might plausibly be considered the unfortunate result of another states' ongoing provocations, or 'undermining' of peace in the region.

## Ongoing tensions with Norway

The relationship between neighbouring states Norway and Russia has been particularly tense in the past decade, fuelled by further militarization of the region, disputes over activities on Svalbard, Norway's membership in

NATO, shipping activities, and Russia's use of grey zone tactics. Between 2019- 2020, conflict over the Norwegian Island of Svalbard has increased, as Russia [disagrees with Norway's regulations](#) on shipping and economic activities surrounding the island (Norway has sovereignty over the island, while Russia maintains commercial rights). These ongoing tensions have often resulted in the states levying accusations against one another. For example, the Norwegian Intelligence Service has alleged that Russia continues to spread misinformation in order to [fuel conflict](#) between the North and South of Norway, an allegation that Russia actively denies. At the same time, Russia's media coverage has become increasingly [anti- Norwegian](#), which cannot easily be denied. Ultimately, Russia's rhetoric surrounding Norway has become increasingly hostile.

Regardless of whether or not Russia's accusations against Norway, the US, and other states are well- founded, it remains true that Russia has repeatedly acted either in similar ways, or perhaps even more provocatively in the Arctic than these states have. Naturally, it can be difficult to determine which action and by which state may have provoked a response from another state. However, it is important to identify any patterns in Russia's actions and any ways in which these actions contradict its rhetoric focussed on peace and predictability.

## Provocative actions in the Arctic

Russia may be interpreted as acting provocatively in the Arctic for a few reasons. Aside from the re-opening of Soviet- era military bases and further militarizing the region, Russia has also engaged in mock attacks on Alaska and Norway, has participated in radio and GPS jamming during NATO war games, and has increased its patrol flights very close to other states' airspaces, on occasion even violating airspaces. Furthermore, increased Arctic drills and exercises have often occurred without prior warning to other states. Each of these actions can be interpreted as provocative, particularly by other Arctic states, because they undermine predictability in the region and cause these states to be on high alert at all times. Under these conditions, it is more likely that a misunderstanding, or a misinterpretation of actions may occur.

### Increase in military activity

First, it is important to consider Russia's increase in military activity in the Arctic. For example, between 2013- 2014, NATO reported a 50% increase in Russian military activity along its borders with NATO states, while Norway intercepted 74 Russian planes off of its coast in one year, signalling a 27% increase from 2013.<sup>8</sup> Also during 2014, Russian strategic bombers made more than [50 flights](#) over the world ocean, while fighter jets demonstrated long- range aviation capabilities. Russia placed over 800 troops near the Finnish border, near the Russian town of Alakurtti and announced the construction of a new military base there. Then, between 2014- 2015, training activities increased by 15%, with [almost 2,000 tactical drills occurring](#) in the first 9 months of the year alone. In April of 2017, President Putin announced that Russia's defence orders for 2016 were 97% fulfilled. According to him, 5,600 modern weapons systems and over 3,000 items of military hardware were either repaired or replaced with upgrades in [2016](#). By 2017, Russia's Northern Fleet was conducting more than 200 missile firing drills and just under 5000 combat training events annually, increasing by one third since 2016. This increase in exercises occurred even as Russia's military spending [fell significantly](#) in 2017.

## Flight patrols

Flight patrol activity is perhaps one of the most important ways in which Russia can communicate displeasure with NATO activities, or the actions of particular states. Russian fighter jets and long- range bombers have been intercepted in international airspace near Alaska, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and over the Beaufort Sea, sometimes getting as close as 25km from states' airspaces. While this has since been very clearly condemned, Russia's Antonov AN-72 transport plane [crossed into Finnish airspace](#) without permission multiple times during the late summer of 2014. In the same year, two Russian military aircraft [violated Swedish airspace](#), which was described as a serious incursion by the Swedish Foreign Minister. These are incredibly provocative acts, whereby Russia clearly targeted Finland and Sweden to test the response by NATO because of these states' lack of NATO membership. Russia continued to increase surveillance along the Finnish border well into December of 2014, causing the Finnish Air Force to declare that Russia was nearly as [active](#) as they had been during the Cold War.

## Grey zone tactics

Since 2018, Finland and Norway have alleged that Russia engaged in [GPS signal jamming](#) during NATO war games. While Russia has denied these allegations, in 2019 it was announced that Russia's [radio- electronic shield](#) became capable of covering the entire Northern Sea Route, allowing Russia to engage in radio and GPS signal jamming. This allows Russia to jam foreign ships and aircraft communications, even when they are thousands of kilometres away. This type of grey zone tactic can also be described as provocative, as it allows Russia to incapacitate even those foreign ships and aircraft which do not pose a threat. Other grey- zone tactics involve misinformation campaigns (as discussed in reference to Norway), and interfering in [foreign elections](#). While these acts are not specific to the Arctic, they demonstrate Russia's willingness to engage in such tactics, and further complicate our understanding of Russia's geopolitical goals and intentions.

## Mock attacks and denial exercises

Finally, Russian forces have engaged in mock exercises which may be interpreted as intimidation tactics, or as a demonstration of displeasure with a states' actions. For example, on February 14, 2018, eleven fighter jets engaged in a [mock attack](#) on a Norwegian Arctic radar installation just after Norway's Intelligence Service released its [Focus 2019](#) report earlier in the day. The report had identified Russia as Norway's top strategic threat. [Similar mock attacks](#) which had occurred in March and May of 2017 were also disclosed in 2018. These attacks had targeted NATO vessels conducting an exercise in the Norwegian Ocean, and the Vardo radar station. Another example occurred during the summer of 2019, when two Russian nuclear- capable bombers flew over 6,000 km to the Chukotka region (which faces Alaska, about 20 minutes away) as part of a [tactical exercise](#) meant to demonstrate Russia's ability to park nuclear weapons on US territory. This occurred within the context of the US withdrawal from a nuclear missile pact with Russia, after the US stated that Russia violated the treaty. Besides these acts, Russia has often used large- scale bastion defence, ant- sub, and air denial exercises as a way of communicating displeasure with NATO activities, and demonstrating their ability to [block NATO access](#) to the Baltic, North, and Norwegian seas.

These are only some of the actions taken by Russia in the Arctic which can be considered provocative (many other acts have occurred in other regions).

## Military versatility: Arctic- specific equipment and exercises

Between 2014- 2020, Russia has demonstrated complex military exercises, and has invested heavily in Arctic-specific equipment, showing an ability to operate and adapt to changing conditions within an Arctic environment. Russia's Arctic versatility is an important factor in evaluating Russia's overall capabilities.

### Arctic- specific equipment

The reasoning behind Russia's heavy investments in Arctic- specific equipment is three- fold. First, it bolsters homeland defence in a [region of increasing economic and political interest](#). Second, it positions Russia as a champion of the Arctic environment while projecting this power to the international community. Finally, this equipment is often dual- use, meaning that it can be used for both civilian and military purposes.<sup>9</sup>

Russia has made a significant investment in its 40- vessel icebreaker fleet by beginning to replace those soon- to- be out of commission in the early 2020s with new generations. The [Ilya Muromets diesel- powered icebreaker](#) began sea trials in 2018, and so far in 2020, the world's largest and most powerful nuclear icebreaker, the Arktika, and its sister vessel, the Sibir, have undergone [sea trials](#), soon to be followed by the Ural. In early 2020, Prime Minister Medvedev secured 127 billion rubles in funding for the first of [three lider- class icebreakers](#) to be launched between 2027- 2035. Being [dual- use](#), icebreakers can escort both commercial ships along the Northern Sea Route, and Northern Fleet vessels for military purposes in varying ice and sea conditions.

Beyond icebreakers, the Russian Helicopters Holding Company, the Russian Defence Ministry's Robotics Research and Testing Center, and the Russian Navy have been involved in the development of other Arctic-specific equipment. Between 2014- 2020, at least fourteen distinct Arctic- specific equipment projects were commissioned,<sup>10</sup> including Arctic versions of existing hardware and all- terrain armoured vehicles. Such equipment is designed with adverse weather conditions characteristic of the Arctic region in mind, such as low visibility, ice and snow- covered terrain, and extreme low temperatures.

Larger projects include the development of Arctic versions of the [Pantsir- S missile system](#), the [TOR air defence missile system](#), [Mi-8AMTSh](#) and [Mi-38](#) helicopters, and new inertial [navigation systems](#) for Mig-31 fighters, allowing for their full autonomy (ability to operate without communication with ground- based forces). Equally important are small- scale experiments, such as those done with [low- temperature fuel](#) and [7- layer tactical gear](#), both of which are usable in temperatures as low as minus 60 degrees Celsius. These developments allow ground forces to conduct drills and participate in survival training near the North Pole for extended periods of time, even in the extreme cold.

The utility of all- terrain and amphibious vehicles for Arctic use has also been emphasized, particularly by regional leaders, since 2017. Some have suggested the re- vamping of Soviet- era ground vehicles including the [Lun-class Ekranoplan](#), while in 2018, Yamal- Nenets autonomous okrug commissioned the [L-172 amphibious aircraft](#), which can operate in areas with little infrastructure to deliver cargo, carry passengers, and provide surveillance.

There has also been a focus on developing reliable surveillance and search and rescue capabilities for the extreme cold, such as through marine surveillance robots, Arctic underwater search and rescue robots, and the new [Orlan](#) and [ZALA](#) drone squadrons. One project which remains largely aspirational thus far involves a new [nuclear submarine](#) designed to transport cargo in all ice conditions to remote northern islands.

## Arctic drills and exercises

Using Arctic- specific equipment, Russia's Northern Fleet routinely engages in large and small- scale exercises in the region. The number and scale of such exercises have been quite striking since 2014, (some reportedly involving over [150,000 troops](#)), especially considering that many other exercises occur without record. Examining these activities may help the international community to better understand and predict the types of scenarios Russia sees as potentially occurring in the region in the future.

Russia's Arctic exercises often have multiple purposes, ranging from simply being routine drills to ensure combat- readiness, to practicing a rehearsed or mock scenario (terrorist attacks, hostage situations, search and rescue missions, bastion defence), and even sending warnings or signals of displeasure to other states (Ex: conducting a [mock attack](#) on Norwegian radar stations). Interestingly, in analyzing Russia's stated purposes for hosting Arctic exercises between 2014- 2020, the most commonly- stated purpose was to practice various skills/manoeuvres in adverse Arctic weather conditions.<sup>11</sup>

Arctic exercises also often include Russian troops from outside of the 5th Military District, allowing those from the [East, West, South, and Central](#) districts to gain training in, and familiarity with the Far North environment and Arctic- specific equipment. This demonstrates Putin's ability to move troops from other districts into the Arctic for permanent deployments as needed, as was done when the Arctic Strategic Command was first created, and equipment and servicemen from other districts were [absorbed](#). When considering Russia's ability to move troops in and out of different districts and regions, it must also be noted that President Putin has been accused of using the conflict in Syria as an opportunity to practice live- firing and other training exercises on a real battleground. Putin himself has said, "I would like to note that the combat experience received during the operation in Syria and the necessity to strengthen our Arctic territories and western and southwestern borders require adjustments to the approaches to army revamping."<sup>12</sup> This statement confirms Putin's interpretation of the operation in Syria as an opportunity to gain combat experience, which may be useful in other regions such as the Arctic in the future.

Russia also provides numerous examples of exercises which demonstrate adaptability in the Arctic. One such example is the spectacular [high- altitude Arctic jump](#) performed by paratroopers in early 2020 which was then followed by three days of mock battles on Franz Josef Land, drawing awe from commentators across North America. [Bastion defence](#) exercises, [increased air patrols](#) near Norway, Finland, and Alaska, and [complex aerial manoeuvres](#) characteristic of the Cold War have also garnered attention.<sup>13</sup> On a much smaller scale, between 2014- 2015, there was a spike in exercises involving paratroopers practicing airdrops alongside cargo, which would be used to establish camps, practice survival training, and conduct mock search and rescue operations

on islands of the far north.<sup>14</sup> The largest drop involved [350 paratroopers](#), demonstrating the ease with which both cargo and large numbers of troops can be transported, even in Arctic conditions.

Since 2015, soldiers of the newly established Arctic Motorized Rifle Brigade have also routinely participated in [unique, small- scale live- firing drills](#), often involving dogsleds, skis, snowshoes, and [reindeer](#) in extreme cold weather conditions. These drills are not only about taking advantage of Arctic- specific equipment, but are also a way of positioning Russia as a “champion” of the Arctic environment in the eyes of the international community, and by extension, a leading Arctic power.

These are, of course, only a few examples of exercises which serve to increase adaptability in Arctic conditions. While the grand scale of Russia’s activities may simply be reflective of its military culture, or its interest in projecting power, the sophistication of these exercises demonstrates Russia’s versatility in the Arctic, setting it apart from its North American counter- parts. Additionally, while many of these investments can be justified as providing protection for economic assets in the region, or as assisting with infrastructure development, this equipment *can* also be used for military purposes. This must be taken into account when evaluating Russia’s capabilities in the Arctic.

## Weapons and capability

It is widely accepted that despite being behind in some areas of military technology, Russia is ahead of NATO when it comes to [missile technology](#). Some examples of Russia’s recent developments include:

- Ground- launched cruise missile 9M729 (NATO name: SSC Screwdriver) which the US and NATO allies say violates the regulations regarding range and launch of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.
- Hypersonic missile Kinzhal (range of 1500- 2000km, making it a medium range missile).
- The Avangard (intercontinental ballistic missile system) capable of carrying a nuclear warhead (range of up to 6000km)
- The first Borei-A class ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) titled the “Knyaz Vladimir” joined Russia’s Northern Fleet. This submarine can travel for up to 60 days, boasts considerable noise- reduction, and has 4 torpedo tubes, 8 anti- torpedo complexes, and 16 launchers.<sup>15</sup>



Source: Missile Defense Project, "Missiles of Russia," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 14, 2018, last modified June 15, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/russia/>.

While Norway has considered Russia to be a direct threat to its homeland for some time now as Russia further militarized its Arctic, the introduction of a new hypersonic missile means that Russia may pose a direct threat to the homelands of the US and other NATO states as well. This is because the hypersonic missile can be difficult to detect and there is no real defence against it thus far. Canada and the US remain particularly vulnerable due to NORAD's outdated surveillance systems. In early 2020, NORAD Commander at the time General Terrence O'Shaughnessy said that Russia's new [land-based cruise missile launchers](#) provide Russia with the ability to directly attack North America. He, along with other defence experts continue to emphasize the importance of [investing in upgrades](#) to NORAD's North Warning System, and investing in other forms of surveillance.

## Conclusion

Since 2014, Russia has increased its military presence in the Arctic, has demonstrated military versatility in Arctic conditions, has invested heavily in Arctic-specific equipment and weapons, and has acted provocatively in the region. Yet, Russia *has* remained cooperative on non-divisive issues through forums such as the Arctic Council, casting doubt on the interpretation of Russia's actions as constituting a true threat. However, as Russia has developed and tested more advanced weapons in the Arctic, understandings of its Arctic ambitions have become less clear. Of course, in order for a threat to be credible, there must be intent as well as capability. While Russia's intent remains unclear at best, paying close attention to its capabilities is of the utmost importance. It is clear that Russia has advanced capabilities in the Arctic environment and also has the ability to

project power into North America. Therefore, Russia's actions in the Arctic must be taken seriously by NORAD, NATO, and other Arctic states, at least until a better understanding of Russia's Arctic ambitions is achieved.

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- <sup>1</sup> See: Troy Bouffard, Andrea Charron, and Jim Fergusson, "A Tale of "Two" Russias?" *Breaking the Ice Curtain?* (2019), pp. 61.; Valery Konyshov and Alexander Sergunin. "Is Russia a Revisionist Military Power in the Arctic?" *Defense & Security Analysis* 30, no. 4 (2014): 323–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2014.948276>; Kari Roberts, "Why Russia Will Play by the Rules in the Arctic." *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 21, no. 2 (2015): 112–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2014.939204>.
- <sup>2</sup> "Putin Says Arctic Must Stay Free from Geopolitical Gambling." TASS. Accessed August 1, 2020. <https://tass.com/politics/896672>.
- <sup>3</sup> "Arctic Has No Potential for Any Conflict, Says Lavrov." TASS. Accessed August 1, 2020. <https://tass.com/politics/945543>.
- <sup>4</sup> "Defense Chief Warns Clash of National Interests in Arctic May Trigger Conflicts." TASS. Accessed August 4, 2020. <https://tass.com/defense/1019401>.
- <sup>5</sup> Camilla Knudsen and Terje Solsvik, "Russia Vows Consequences after Norway Invites More U.S. Marines." *Arctic Today*, June 14, 2018. <https://www.arctictoday.com/russia-vows-consequences-norway-invites-u-s-marines/>.
- <sup>6</sup> Andrea Osborn, "Russia Pledges Response to Norwegian Military Activity." Reuters, February 7, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-norway/russia-pledges-response-to-norwegian-military-activity-idUSKCN1PW27U>
- <sup>7</sup> Maria Kiselyova and Gwladys Fouche, "Russia Alarmed by U.S. Air Force Visit to Norwegian Island." Reuters. February 13, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-norway-usa/russia-alarmed-by-u-s-air-force-visit-to-norwegian-island-idUSKBN20721H>.
- <sup>8</sup> Heather A. Conley and Caroline Rohloff, *The New Ice Curtain: Russia's Strategic Reach to the Arctic* (Washington DC: CSIS, Center For Strategic & International Studies, 2015). Pp. 13.
- <sup>9</sup> Matthew Melino and Heather A. Conley, "The Ice Curtain: Russia's Arctic Military Presence," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 26, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/features/ice-curtain-russias-arctic-military-presence>.
- <sup>10</sup> Based on data collected.\*
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.\*
- <sup>12</sup> "Putin Confirms Last Year's State Defense Orders 97% Fulfilled." TASS. Accessed August 1, 2020. <https://tass.com/defense/946096>.
- <sup>13</sup> Melino and Conley, "The Ice Curtain: Russia's Arctic Military Presence," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 26, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/features/ice-curtain-russias-arctic-military-presence>.
- <sup>14</sup> Atle Staalesen, "More than 300 Russian Paratroopers Have Been on North Pole," *The Independent Barents Observer*, January 05, 2017, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/01/more-300-russian-paratroopers-have-been-north-pole>.
- <sup>14</sup> Starchak, Maxim, "The Borei-A SSBN: How Effective Is Russia's New Nuclear Submarine?" *Jamestown*, June 16, 2020. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-borei-a-ssbn-how-effective-is-russias-new-nuclear-submarine/>.

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\* **Disclaimer:** This brief relies in part on data collected by surveying news articles focused on Russia’s military activity in the Arctic between January 2014- July 2020. There were 198 articles analyzed in total (28 articles collected from 2014, 36 from 2015, 20 from 2016, 25 from 2017, 31 from 2018, 30 from 2019, and 28 from the first half of 2020). The content was then coded by activity type, including military exercises and tactical drills, new equipment/upgrades, disputes, flight interceptions, and ‘other’ to determine any trends.