



## Russian Airborne Troops Conduct High Altitude Arctic Parachute Drop

**OE Watch Commentary:** The first accompanying passage from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* discusses an airborne operation in Arctic conditions that entailed soldiers of an Airborne Troops elite subunit conducting a high-altitude jump from 10,000 meters (32,808 feet) and landing at the designated area “with precision accuracy.” Personnel of the 45th Guards Spetsnaz Brigade apparently took this high-altitude Arctic jump in stride. As the passage notes, the Arablet-2 steerable parachute proved its worth as did the cold-weather gear manufactured by the Kalashnikov factories. The paratroopers’ mission was to protect an isolated Russian air-defense site. As the second passage discusses, after landing in the snow, the paratroopers began the main stage of the tactical and special exercise including reconnaissance and search operations.



As the first passage notes, the goal of the exercise was to “defend the Russian infrastructure in the region from outside aggression and to rehearse an evacuation,” also pointing out that “Denmark, Canada, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, the US, and even China are competing for the Arctic.”

*For the first time in world history, Russian paratroopers made a landing as part of a group on new parachute systems from a height of 10,000 meters in arctic conditions.*

Source: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, <http://eng.mil.ru/en/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=75731@cmsPhotoGallery>, CCA 4.0

The “Arctic Trefoil” refers to the shape of the large self-contained living and working facility completed in 2017. Two of Russia’s legendary paratroopers, Deputy Defense Minister Lieutenant General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov and Deputy Defense Minister, Colonel-General Andrei Serdyukov, Commander of the Airborne Forces observed the jump. Readers may remember General Yevkurov for his 12 June 1999, 500-kilometer march to seize the Pristina International Airport ahead of NATO forces to ensure a Russian presence in Kosovo after the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“Today, we have conducted a group air insertion of personnel on the new special purpose parachute system in the Arctic from an altitude of 10,000 meters with the use of oxygen equipment and the subsequent accomplishment of the combat training missions for the first time in world history. No one has ever done that prior to us.... This is General of the Army Sergey Shoygu’s direct order and we have successfully accomplished it.”***

***-Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov***



## Continued: Russian Airborne Troops Conduct High Altitude Arctic Parachute Drop

**Source:** Unattributed, “Арктический трилистник” защитили Арбалетом (They defended an Arctic Trefoil with a Crossbow),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 April 2020. [http://www.ng.ru/armies/2020-04-27/8\\_7854\\_arctic.html](http://www.ng.ru/armies/2020-04-27/8_7854_arctic.html)

### *They defended an Arctic Trefoil with a Crossbow*

The “Arbalet-2” [crossbow-2] parachute system and “Kalashnikov” Concern’s new equipment permitted the conduct of an airborne operation in Arctic conditions. From an altitude of 10 kilometers, the soldiers of an Airborne Troops elite subunit from Moscow’s Kubinka landed at the designated area with precision accuracy and conducted exercises to block a foreign state’s special forces team alongside an “Arctic Trefoil” military base on the Franz Josef Land Archipelago. This is one of six strategic facilities, which the Ministry of Defense has deployed along the Northern Maritime Route that is strategically important for Russia. It not only ensures the security of merchant shipping in arctic waters but also serves as an outpost, which forces back the employment line of American “Tomahawk” cruise missiles. These missiles will be able to reach the positions of our most state-of-the-art “Sarmat” strategic nuclear missiles, which will be deployed near Orenburg.

“Today, we have conducted a group air insertion of personnel on the new special purpose parachute system in the Arctic from an altitude of 10,000 meters with the use of oxygen equipment and the subsequent accomplishment of the combat training missions for the first time in world history. No one has ever done that prior to us”, Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov reported. “This is General of the Army Sergey Shoygu’s direct order and we have successfully accomplished it.”

Denmark, Canada, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, the US, and even China are competing for the Arctic. Each of these countries has its own reasons. According to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Arctic states possess the sovereign right to develop the mineral resources within the exclusive economic zones that belong to them. This is 200 nautical miles from the coast and 350 nautical miles - from the continental shelf.... Russia resorted to preventive measures to secure its right to the possession of the territories along its coast in the Arctic Zone. Six military bases are deployed there today: on Kotelnyy Island (the Novosibirsk Islands), Aleksandra Land (part of the Franz Josef Land Archipelago), Sredniy (Severnaya Zemlya), and also in the Village of Rogachevo (Novaya Zemlya), on Mys Shmidt (Cape Schmidt), and on Wrangel Island (part of Chukotka Autonomous Okrug). Besides these, there are more than a dozen military airfields, air defense missile systems’ positions, and military ports here. This entire infrastructure operates round-the-clock.

The “Arctic Trefoil” is located at the entrance from the European Portion of the Continent to Asia. Approximately 150 Russian...servicemen are working autonomously there. Contact with the mainland is limited by sea conditions and the capabilities of Military Transport Aviation. But they are not subject totally to the will of nature. VDV [Airborne Troops] exercises just demonstrated this. They did not simply conduct a landing from a record altitude of 10,000 meters but also demonstrated this type of troops’ new capabilities for combat in adverse climatic conditions.

All of the paratroopers completed special training at the VDV 309th Special Parachute Training Center in Ryazan. All of them were equipped with special breathing masks for high altitudes. Their descent onto the ice used the latest “Arbalet-2” parachute systems. They were developed to meet the requirements of VDV reconnaissance and special subunits. They allow paratroopers to jump from all types of military transport aircraft and helicopters at speeds of up to 400 kilometers per hour. These parachutes can handle additional equipment exceeding two times a paratrooper’s body weight. The paratroopers had new Arctic clothing and survival gear which allows them to function for a long time in the unfavorable arctic weather.

This is not the VDV’s first experience in airborne assaults in the Arctic. They began in 2014. At that time, as now, an airborne assault force landed on drift ice. The goal of the exercise was the same - to defend the Russian infrastructure in the region from outside aggression and to rehearse an evacuation. The complexity of the event increased because the military personnel parachuted onto an unprepared landing zone. Navigation instruments and communication gear operate poorly near the North Pole and the weather changes frequently. Nevertheless, the VDV accomplished their assigned mission. The second phase had difficulties as the weather deterioration prevented the first attempt to extract the paratroopers. The second attempt demonstrated the capability of the Il-76MD military transport aircraft. The aircraft not only supported the landing of the assault force and a cargo drop but also conducted a landing at the new Franz Josef Land Archipelago’s military airfield.

**Source:** Thomas Nilsen, “Paratrooper jump at 10,000 meters over Russian Arctic base,” *The Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 26 April 2020. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/04/paratroopers-jump-10000-meters-over-russian-arctic-base>

### *Paratrooper jump at 10,000 meters over Russian Arctic base*

The jump took place over Aleksandra Land, the westernmost island on the archipelago of Franz Josef Land. Here, at 80 degrees north, Russia’s Arctic forces have built its northernmost military complex with a new 2,500-meter-long runway and a huge building infrastructure.

The Nagurskoye base is equipped with the latest gear for Arctic military warfare. That includes snowmobiles, personnel carriers, helicopters, radar, and anti-aircraft missile systems like the S-300 aimed at strengthening control over Arctic air space....

With the new runway, bombers like the MiG-31K can use the airport. So can large transport planes. The airport is built about three kilometers west of the runway Russia abandoned after the end of the Cold War.

After landing in the snow, the paratroopers began the main stage of the tactical and special exercise. Several dozen of them conducted reconnaissance and search operations aimed at destroying the conditional enemy sabotage and reconnaissance group... The soldiers also used a UAV in their search for the enemy.

The exercise continued for three days along the northern shores of Aleksandra Land, around Cape Nimrod, close to the eastern edge of the largest glacier on the island. In the end, the soldiers advanced to their collection point and went back to the Nagurskoye base.

Lt. Gen. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov promises more training like this. “We will conduct similar exercises annually, in different regions of the Arctic, with different compositions of the participants involved and at different phases of training.” Before being appointed Deputy Minister of Defense last summer, Yevkurov headed the Republic of Ingushetia for more than ten years. At Franz Josef Land, Yevkurov observed the exercise together with another Deputy Defense Minister, Colonel-General Andrei Serdyukov, Commander of the Airborne Forces. He headed up the Russian effort in Syria last summer.