



The Northern Fleet's Combat Training with an Arctic Focus

OE Watch Commentary: Vice Admiral Oleg Vyacheslavovich Golubev, the commander of the Kola Multiforce Flotilla and Deputy Commander of the Northern Fleet, discussed the 2020 training calendar with a *Krasnaya Zvezda* [Red Star] correspondent. According to the excerpted interview, this looks like another lively training year in the Russian Arctic. Expect increased aviation missions, fleet activity and amphibious landings-as well as another riverine assault up the mighty Yenisei River. It turns out that the Russian Arctic was not a bad place to shelter-in-place during the COVID-19 pandemic given its natural and demographic conditions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gru)**

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Source: Yuliya Kozak, “Combat training with an Arctic accent,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 May 2020. <http://redstar.ru/zapolyarnyj-aktsent-boevoy-podgotovki>

Combat Training with an Arctic Accent

The Northern Fleet ... is a unique multiservice strategic formation, comprising submarine and surface ships, the VVS [Air Force] and PVO [Air Defense] Army, ground and coastal troops, logistic and search-and-rescue support forces. The training of each of these components has its own peculiarities, but there is also one common feature -- the Arctic focus. Vice Admiral Oleg Golubev, the Northern Fleet deputy commander, told our Krasnaya Zvezda reporter on how the Arctic focus is being implemented in combat training of naval formations, air force and air defense units, ground and coastal troops' formations.

[Krasnaya Zvezda] Oleg Vyacheslavovich, tell us, what is different about combat training for the military units and ships of the Northern Fleet.

[Golubev] *We focus on preparing for resolute actions in the harsh conditions of the Arctic. The Arctic focus ... is equally relevant for naval formations, the VVS and PVO units, ground and coastal troop's formations.*

In the winter training period -- the maintenance of personnel combat proficiency and the training of formations, ships, military units, aviation squadrons, and subunits of ground and coastal troops guarantees their capability to perform their missions within multiservice groupings.

The servicemen of ground and coastal troops rehearsed multiservice coordination in tactical exercises with the fleet's units of the VVS and PVO army and Kola Multiforce Flotilla, in the course of which a naval infantry brigade guarded command posts and airfields, while subunits of separate motorized rifle brigades acted as enemy sabotage groups. They also took part in a joint tactical special exercise on the protection and defense of special weapons storage facilities countering hypothetical enemy sabotage and reconnaissance groups in the Northern Fleet zone of responsibility. We also participated in providing high-altitude parachute jumps for our airborne assault troops' comrades-in-arms on Alexandra Land Island of the Franz Josef Land Archipelago.

In January, the crews of the missile cruiser Marshal Ustinov and the large antisubmarine warfare ship Vice Admiral Kulakov took part in a joint exercise of the Northern and Black Sea fleets in the Black Sea, as part of a mixed-force grouping. In May, the missile cruiser Marshal Ustinov and the ships of the Kola Mixed Forces Flotilla's three formations rehearsed similar operations in the Barents Sea. Despite the harsh weather conditions, persisting in the waters of the Barents Sea virtually throughout the spring period, we managed to accomplish a number of performance-evaluation tactical exercises at sea competently.

The Northern Fleet servicemen's combat training is planned in such a way so as to ensure that missions on providing security in the Arctic are resolved by the Navy with the maximum competence.

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[Krasnaya Zvezda] Oleg Vyacheslavovich, as you have already noted, one of the main focuses of the Northern Fleet's activity is to ensure Russia's security in the Arctic zone. How is the fleet personnel's combat training organized to support this focus?

[Golubev] In the winter training period, the weather conditions, which are particularly harsh in the polar region -- low temperatures, strong winds, abundant precipitation, contribute to the preparation of the personnel for operations in the Far North and in the Arctic. This relates both to the preparations of the crews of surface ships and support vessels for operations in areas with complex navigational-hydrographic conditions and ice situation, and to that of our land-based component. The Arctic combat training of ground and coastal troops' formations ... mainly takes place on our polar ranges on the Kola Peninsula, as well as on islands of the Arctic Ocean, and on the coastline of the Russian mainland along the Northern Sea Route.

In the winter training period we mainly train our personnel at our established training facilities. Around 100 company tactical exercises of ground and coastal troops, over 20 battalion drills, and more than 200 squad and 110 platoon live firings were conducted at ranges.

The crews of surface ships and submarines mainly engaged in basic and individual training at sea. The military sailors began to rehearse operations in the composition of formations at the end of April, and will continue throughout the summer training period, during the Arctic voyage and the muster-voyage of surface ships.

Looking ahead ... at the beginning of fall, we will rehearse a series of tactical exercises in the Arctic along the Northern Sea Route, on islands and the coastline of the mainland, in accordance with combat training plans.

Purposeful and high quality work was conducted on the personnel training of the coastal missile and artillery troops, including the combat crews of Bastion mobile coastal defense missile systems, deployed on islands of the Arctic archipelagos of Franz Josef Land and the Novosibirsk Islands.

With respect to the training of the VVS and PVO Army personnel, ... for the first time in many years we have resumed the maximum range flight patrols of our long-range antisubmarine warfare aircraft over the Arctic and Atlantic oceans.

In the winter training period, the flight personnel of all aircraft regiments... have improved their flight skills: in total, more than 200 flight training missions were conducted, and their total flying time significantly exceeded 2,500 hours. Over 60 field exercises of air defense units and tactical flight exercises were conducted. In the winter training period, the fleet personnel fulfilled combat training plans in full and with high quality indicators.

[Krasnaya Zvezda] The majority of our readers associate the Northern Fleet with people of a heroic profession -- the submariners. What were the final results of their winter training period?

[Golubev] ... In general, the intensity of their combat training remains at a high level. As Northern Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Aleksandr Alekseyevich Moiseyev, noted earlier in his interview with *Krasnaya Zvezda*, our boats undertaken more missions at sea. For example, last year the total time spent underway exceeded the planned figures by 41 percent. Three nuclear-powered vessels from various maritime areas of our zone of responsibility carried out intercontinental ballistic missiles launches, successfully destroying hypothetical targets on ranges at distances of several thousand kilometers. The crews of Kalibr cruise missile-carrying submarines also proved themselves in the course of a whole series of exercises.

Since December and until now, scheduled combat training sessions are underway, in addition to performing combat stand-by duty and executing assigned missions. They are held not only at bases and training centers, but also in the Barents and White seas, and under the ice of the Arctic Ocean. Several crews "sailed under the ice," rehearsing combat training tasks, related to the employment of modern naval weapons.

We are expecting that in the near future, the composition of our submarine forces will be augmented by the arrival of the new strategic missile submarine cruiser *Knyaz Vladimir*, which has recently entered the White Sea to check the elimination of the latest shortcomings, which were identified in the course of state sea trials.

[Krasnaya Zvezda] Oleg Vyacheslavovich, you mentioned the immediate prospects, tell us in more detail: what combat training tasks are to be accomplished by the Northern Fleet in the summer training period?

[Golubev] For the Northern Fleet personnel, this period is traditionally saturated with various large-scale combat training activities, which will be conducted at sea, on land, and in the air....

First, there is the muster-voyage, which will take place under the leadership of the Northern Fleet commander. Second, the continuation of a number of performance-evaluation tactical exercises with groupings of the fleet's mixed forces and troops.

In the summer, we plan to carry out the next -- the ninth -- Arctic voyage of ships and support vessels of the Northern Fleet, in the course of which we intend to conduct multiservice combat training....

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[Krasnaya Zvezda] *It is not the first time that you will personally lead an Arctic grouping of the Northern Fleet; tell us, what are the Northern Fleet personnel expecting this year?*

[Golubev] *During each Arctic voyage, we try to rehearse some new elements: the landing of an amphibious assault force at locations, where, figuratively speaking, no human has set foot on; striving to travel the routes, which previously have not been crossed by ships of this class and displacement. A great deal can be done for the first time in the Arctic, as its active exploration has only begun not that long ago.*

This year, when our country celebrates the 75th anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War, and humanity celebrates the end of World War Two, we will deploy the Victory Banner over the Arctic. We will take a replica of the Banner with us into this voyage. And all the amphibious assault landings on the open Arctic coastline of the continent and islands in the seas of the Arctic Ocean will be carried out under the Banner, which was deployed 75 years ago over the defeated Reichstag. We will raise the Great Victory Banner in various remote corners of the Russian Arctic along the entire voyage route, as well as during the conduct of tactical exercises on the coast of the Taymyr Peninsula, the Novosibirsk Islands, Yakutia, and Chukotka.

Large landing ships and large antisubmarine ships of the Kola Multiforce Flotilla, support vessels of the auxiliary fleet and of the fleet's Search and Emergency Rescue Directorate, as well as naval infantry personnel and the Arctic Brigade, will take part in the next Arctic voyage.

I would like to stress that all our exercises in the Arctic zone are exclusively defensive in nature.

We will continue the research activity, which we launched jointly with the Russian Geographic Society, to study the history of explorations of the Russian Arctic and the seas of the Arctic Ocean.

[Krasnaya Zvezda] *Will the pandemic interfere with these plans? Has the new coronavirus infection pandemic affected the Northern Fleet's combat training and the quality of personnel training?*

[Golubev] *The complex sanitary-epidemiological situation, which originated in the middle of March in the regions of Russia where the Northern Fleet forces and troops are stationed, has not had a significant impact on the conduct of the planned combat training measures.*

First, most of the accomplished activities were carried out during the first three months of the new training year.

Second, the Defense Ministry leadership and the command of the Northern Fleet promptly adopted measures to prevent the spread of infection among the personnel.

Third, in those places of the Far North and the Arctic, where our servicemen improve their professional skills and abilities, the natural and demographic conditions definitely do not contribute to the spread of the pandemic.

In general, even the seasonal flu has remained at an average level among the servicemen. Therefore, all the assigned combat training tasks were accomplished, despite harsh weather conditions and the coronavirus.

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