



Sweden Increases Sub-Arctic Defense

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying article from the *The Barents Sea Observer*, Sweden is upgrading its defense capabilities in places like Arvidsjaur in light of concerns about Russian military action in the region. The increased defense spending is part of the recently submitted 5-year defense budget. Arvidsjaur is located 110 kilometers south of the Arctic Circle and sees its share of snow and cold in the winter. Sweden, like Finland and Norway, is keeping track of the Russian buildup in the Arctic and is taking precautionary and financial steps should the political situation deteriorate rapidly. As the article points out, this will lead to a 50% increase in the size of the armed forces, which will increase from about 60,000 today to approximately 90,000 in 2025. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

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Source: “Sweden to re-establish northern regiment, fears armed attack”, *The Barents Sea Observer*, 17 October 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/10/sweden-re-establish-northern-regiment-fears-armed-attack>

Sweden to re-establish northern regiment, fears armed attack

“Sweden will be affected if crisis or an armed conflict arises in our neighborhood. An armed attack against Sweden cannot be ruled out,” said Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist as he presented the defense bill for the next five-year period. “This represents the largest increase in the level of ambition in defense capabilities in 70 years. The bill is based on the defense commission’s proposal for both civilian and military defense. It is a signal to the Swedish people and our neighborhood that we are taking the security situation extremely seriously,” Defense Minister Hultqvist said. He said all branches of the war organization will be expanded, including a substantial boost for investment in military equipment.

Sweden’s military partly disarmed after the Cold War but has seen a steady increase after Moscow annexed Crimea and sent military personnel and weapons to the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, including from units on the Kola Peninsula. Including the increased defense spending from 2014 to 2020, the Swedish military will have increased its funding by 85% in fixed prices between 2014 and 2025, the proposal says.

Five regiments will be re-established, including the Norrland Dragoon Regiment (K4) in Arvidsjaur. The cavalry regiment in Arvidsjaur was decommissioned in 2005 and the military presence in town has since been the Army’s Ranger Battalion, an elite light infantry unit trained to carry out reconnaissance missions and direct actions behind enemy lines. Defense Minister Hultqvist said one reason for re-establishing the K4 Dragoon Regiment is to stay stronger in military cooperation with Norway and Finland in a crisis situation....

In addition to re-establishing the regiment in Arvidsjaur, other organizational units are coming back: the Älvsborg Amphibious Regiment (Amf 4) in Gothenburg; Uppland Wing (F 16) in Uppsala; the Bergslagen Artillery Regiment (A 9) in Kristinehamn; the Dalarna Regiment (I 13) in Falun; and the Västernorrland Regiment (I 21) in Sollefteå, with a training detachment in Östersund.

As tension with Russia grows, the Armed Forces is tasked to study additional measures to strengthen its presence in northernmost Sweden. One suggestion is the establishment of border troopers designed to cooperate with Finland and Norway in a sub-Arctic winter environment, according to Minister Hultqvist in an interview...

The number of positions in the armed forces will increase from about 60,000 today to approximately 90,000 in 2025. This means that the number of young Swedes undergoing basic training in the national total defense service will gradually increase to about 8,000 per year until 2025. “The proposals in the bill should be seen against the background of the deteriorating security situation in Sweden’s neighborhood and in Europe over time according to Minister Hultqvist. “The proposals in the bill are key to being able to implement the increase of capabilities in military and civilian defense that the Government considers to be necessary. It is a matter of continuing to be able to assert our sovereignty in an increasingly complex security reality.”

Sweden, like Finland, is not a member of NATO but a close partner and regularly trains with NATO countries in joint exercises.