

More Chechen Spetsnaz Training in the Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

The Russian Ministry of Defense has a close relationship with Chechen Spetsnaz, which has included Arctic parachute jumps, joint training, and riverine exercises. This special relationship now extends to the Russian National Guard (RNG), also known as Rosgvardia, a full-time professional military force that maintains internal security in Russia. According to the following excerpted articles from *The Independent Barents Observer*, an independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English, which is blocked in Russia, now the RNG are also training to recapture icebreakers from terrorists and have incorporated Chechen Spetsnaz in the effort. Not only are Chechen Spetsnaz involved in the operation but senior Chechen leaders are also overseeing Chechen participation. The articles point out that the regional RNG forces from which the Chechen Spetsnaz come are commanded by Chechen President

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Ramzan Kadyrov’s first cousin Adam Delimkhanov. Kadyrov himself is quoted as saying, “The exercise in the Arctic zone plays an important role for Rosgvardia,” presumably meaning both the broader RNG and the North Caucasus regional Rosgvardia, of which the Chechens are a part.

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Chechen forces are back in the Arctic,” *The Independent Barents Observer* (privately owned internet newspaper covering Northern Norway and Russian economic and security news), 17 March 2021.
<https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2021/03/chechens-are-back-arctic>

The Chechen forces are part of an exercise initiated by the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia). The training is taking place in the Taymyr area on the great Yenisei River near Dudinka. The exercise is reportedly headed by Daniil Martynov, the special adviser to Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov on military issues. According to Kadyrov, members of the Chechen Spetsnaz University are taking part as instructors. “The exercise in the Arctic zone plays an important role for Rosgvardia,” Kadyrov stated emphasizing that new tactics, as well as new equipment, clothing and gear will be tested.

Daniil Martynov stated that several special purpose units are included in the exercise, including assault teams, paratroops and snow mobile groups. About 250 soldiers are engaged. Some of them will drive up to 700 kilometers on snowmobiles. It is not the first time that Chechen forces have engaged in Arctic training. In April 2016, a combat group of Chechen Spetsnaz trained at the North Pole. On their way north, they landed on the Norwegian Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. Chechen forces have also participated in National Guard training in Murmansk, as well as the far northern archipelago of Franz Josef Land.

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Source: Atle Staalesen, “Militant Islamic fighters train counter-terrorism in Russian Arctic,” *The Independent Barents Observer* (privately owned internet newspaper covering Northern Norway and Russian economic and security news), 7 April 2021.
<https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2021/04/jihadist-trains-anti-terror-russian-arctic>

“As-salamu alaykum,” stated Chechen Deputy Premier Vakhit Usmayev as he greeted the camera for a video recorded on the mighty Yenisei River near Dudinka in the Russian far north. The video records Spetsnaz from the Russian National Guard and instructors from the Chechen Spetsnaz University training in freezing temperatures down to minus 30. Usmayev ended his social media post with the words “Akhmat-Sila!” - a salute widely used in Chechnya to honor Akhmat Kadyrov, the Chechen strongman who was killed in 2004. He was the father of the current Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. “Akhmat-Sila” is normally combined with “Allah Akbar” (God is Great).

The Chechen training is taking place on the Taymyr Peninsula and started in mid-March.... This week, the training peaked with a counter-terrorism exercise onboard the icebreaking container vessel Nadezhda. Video footage shows the Chechens attacking with snowmobiles, special buggies and helicopters and subsequently taking control of the ship. The Nadezhda is one of several special ships shuttling to Dudinka as part of company Nornickel’s Arctic logistics shipping. It has top ice-class construction enabling it to sail up the icy Yenisei even in wintertime. The anti-terrorism exercise is conducted by the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardiya), and forces from several regions are participating. Rosgvardia leader Viktor Zolotov was present to observe the training.

The Arctic training continues with a several-hundred-kilometer expedition with snowmobile and buggies to Dikson... Chechen special forces have played a special role in the Russian National Guard ever since its establishment in 2016. They were actively involved in training in Murmansk in 2018 and a subsequent exercise in Franz Josef Land....

The regional Rosgvardia forces are headed by Adam Delimkhanov, a controversial former member of the State Duma, who repeatedly has been accused of grave human rights violations. The Arctic is a region of special attention for Rosgvardia. According to the service, it is responsible for the protection of three nuclear sites, seven nuclear-powered ships and nine seaports on the Northern Sea Route.