

New Russian Radar Deployed in Arctic To Detect UAVs

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

According to Russian daily broadsheet newspaper *Izvestia*, the Russian Arctic is now protected against unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) thanks in large part to the Sopka-2 S-band Arctic radar. The Sopka-2 S-band radar is designed to detect stealth and small aircraft. It consists of a primary phased array radar with two secondary radar whose antennae are mounted on the back of the primary radar plus a monopulse secondary surveillance radar. It can be remotely operated by one technician. The *Izvestia* article also reports that while most of

the Russian Arctic Ocean is the responsibility of the Northern Fleet, the Pacific Fleet has responsibility for the Chukotka Peninsula. The Pacific Fleet and Eastern Military District have become more active in the region during the past two years. As the military officer quoted in the article states, “We are not reclaiming the Arctic, but are returning to it...”. The deployment of this Arctic radar greatly helps Russian make that perspective a reality.

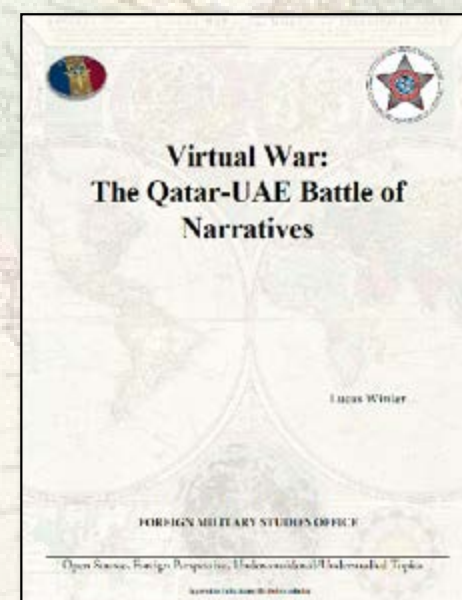
“The Russian Arctic has received protection from stealth and unmanned aerial vehicles. Exercises on the detection of drones occurred under adverse polar conditions in the country’s northeast - on Chukotka and Kamchatka Peninsulas.”

VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

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For much of the past decade, Qatar and the UAE have been engaged in a battle of narratives. Their ongoing dispute dates to 2011 and is rooted in foreign policy and ideological disagreements. Following a hack of the Qatari News Agency in 2017, the nature of Qatari-Emirati competition shifted from being primarily the purview of government officials, spokespeople, journalists, analysts and authors, to one where coders, influencers, trolls and cybersecurity experts played a vital role. Since then, both countries have worked to increase their capabilities in the cyber and informational domains. Their relationship in these domains has evolved into one of strategic competition. This paper looks at how these dynamics may affect the regional operational environment, with a particular focus on the cyber and informational domains.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/329799>

Continued: New Russian Radar Deployed in Arctic To Detect UAVs

Source: Anton Lavrov and Anna Cherepanova, “Полярный друг: как в Арктике учились защищаться от беспилотников (Polar friend: How the Arctic force learned to track UAVs),” *Izvestia* (pro Kremlin daily newspaper), 16 June 2021. <https://iz.ru/1179073/anton-lavrov-anna-cherepanova/poliarnyi-drug-kak-v-arktike-uchilis-zashchishchatsia-ot-bespilotnikov>

The Russian Arctic has received protection from stealth and unmanned aerial vehicles. Exercises on the detection of drones occurred under adverse polar conditions in the country’s northeast - on Chukotka and Kamchatka Peninsulas. A grouping, which is deployed both on the mainland, and also on the archipelagos and Wrangel Island, was utilized. Experts note that the U.S. and other countries are actively developing their presence in this portion of the Arctic Region at the present time. Therefore, an impenetrable radar screen - more state-of-the-art than in the times of the USSR - is being recreated on the country’s northeastern coast today...

Sources in the Military Department state that the unique arctic exercises occurred at the beginning of the summer. Their mission was verification of the capabilities of Russian radar systems, which cover Russia’s northeast. They successfully improved their capability of detecting groups of small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which were flying at various altitudes. Joint training of air defense and radar subunits cooperated to accomplish this.

The Ministry of Defense reported that a “Sopka-2” radar station on Wrangel Island participated in the search for small targets, which simulated UAVs, at the beginning of July. According to the military, all of them were detected and identified. They collated and analyzed the information and then expeditiously transmitted it to the Eastern Military District Air Defense Command Post.

Military Expert Vasily Kashin stated that in the Soviet era, a continuous network of radar, permitting the surveillance of the air situation, was dispersed along the Far Eastern Arctic Coast. “Wrangel Island - is in the Arctic’s northeast, and now the Americans have published a number of strategic documents concerning the buildup of their military presence in this region. This will largely occur on Alaska, where they plan to deploy additional forces, and the redeployment of troops from other areas of the US on a rotational basis. The Americans are using several types of strategic reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicles in support of both the Air Force and also of the Navy, which can also certainly be utilized over the arctic territories. The Russian Side is preparing to deal with this. The “Sopka-2” Radar was installed on Wrangel Island in 2016 and the Russian armed forces are incorporating modernized versions to conduct exercises to combat various types of high-tech threats.”

The “Sopka-2” dual-use radar is one of the elements of the restored airspace monitoring system. It monitors the situation in the sky in a radius of 450 kilometers around the clock. The characteristics permit its use to surveil both civilian traffic with special transponders and also military aircraft. The radar detects them at a distance of 350 kilometers. The radar has been installed in a special protective dome for operation in the harsh arctic climate. This provides the capability to employ it during cold weather of minus 40 degrees and a wind speed of up to 40 meters per second.

The radar are deployed on the mainland at Mys Shmidta [Cape Schmidt] and near the City of Tiksi. Self-sufficient modular garrisons have been built for their personnel. Bases on the Novosibirsk Island, Severnaya Zemlya, Novaya Zemlya, and Franz-Josef Land archipelagoes continue the chain of radar further to the west along the Northern Maritime Route and Russia’s arctic coast.

Russia’s military-political leadership is restoring the former glory of the northern radar of the times of the Soviet Union right now but with improved quality and combat capabilities, according to General-Lieutenant Aytech Bizhev, the former Air Force Deputy Commander-in-Chief for Commonwealth of Independent States Joint Air Defense System Issues. “We are not reclaiming the Arctic, but are returning to it. Our Air Defense is well familiar with the difficulties of the work there: the polar night, low temperatures, inaccessibility, the seasonal nature of the transport of petroleum and lubricants and equipment, and the organization of the servicemen’s shifts. But our capabilities for transportation and mobility have seriously improved with the appearance of the contemporary icebreaker fleet.” Air defense equipment has greatly improved as have our weapons. In the expert’s words, “the air defense equipment has become much better right now. We have weapons, which will successfully combat drones”.

Now there is the capability to react immediately to the detection of a UAV or aircraft-intruder. New air defense missile complexes and systems, including the long-range S-400s, are in the arctic zone. The presence of combat aircraft is also being restored. Fighter direction posts have been deployed on Wrangel Island and Mys Shmidta and in Tiksi. A group of MiG-31BM fighter aircraft from the 317th Composite Naval Aviation Regiment in Kamchatka have been continuously performing alert duty at Chukotka’s Anadyr Airfield since 1 December of last year.

MiG-31BM and Su-33 carrier-based fighter aircraft have also begun alert duty at the airfield of Novaya Zemlya Archipelago. They are also sometimes located at Nagurskaya Airbase on Franz-Josef Land. They plan that they will also be able to use the takeoff and landing strip at Mys Shmidta for the takeoff and landing of military aircraft after its restoration.

Regular deliveries of cargo, using super-heavy Mi-26 helicopters, have also been organized for Kotelnyy and Wrangel islands and also Mys Shmidta. The Mi-26s participated in the construction and reactivation of the arctic bases and radar infrastructure. The latest Mi-8AMTSh-VA helicopter arctic modification is also being used for these missions from the Chukotka airfields.

The Combined Command of the Troops and Forces in the Northeast, which is subordinate to the Pacific Fleet, coordinates the region’s defense. The ground forces, aviation, air defense systems, and the fleet on Kamchatka are under its command and control. One of Russia’s three very large arctic outposts - the “Polar Star” Base, which was built from scratch on Wrangel Island is part of this command.