



NATO Arctic Exercise Draws Russian Response

OE Watch Commentary: The Russians are a bit skeptical that the NATO exercise “Trident Juncture 18” is not directed at them, as noted in the accompanying excerpt from *Gazeta.ru*, particularly since Finland and Sweden will also join in the exercise in some capacity. Russia has spent a good deal of scarce national treasure on protecting her interests in the Arctic. As indicated by Konstantin Makiyenko from Russia’s Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Trident Juncture will help justify the continued expenditure of national resources. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

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Group of US Marines prepare to for cold weather training in Iceland.

Source: Courtesy Photo - Allied Joint Force Command Naples, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/4838415/trident-juncture-2018-oct-19-united-states>, Public Domain.

Source: “Что стоит за обвинениями Нидерландов в провокациях в Арктике (What Lies behind the Netherlands’ Accusations of Provocations in the Arctic),” *Gazeta.Ru*, 15 October 2018. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2018/10/15/12022009.shtml>

NATO believes that Russia has nothing to worry about, since the Trident Juncture ... exercises are “not directed against it.” However, during these maneuvers, the NATO countries will rehearse repulsing notional enemy aggression within the framework of implementing Article 5 of the alliance’s Charter on Collective Defense.

“But in that case a perfectly legitimate question arises: Who might be a ‘notional enemy’ for NATO within the borders of the Northwestern Theater of Military Operations?” Lieutenant General Valeriy Zaparenko, ex-Deputy Chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Directorate for Operations, pointed out.

According to the military chief, apart from Russia there is no other state in this region that is capable, in terms of its potential, of posing purely hypothetical threats to the alliance. “Therefore all the NATO leadership’s arguments to the effect that Trident Juncture is not directed against Russia do not have a leg to stand on,” according to the general. The upcoming NATO exercises will be the largest since 1991. Some 50,000 soldiers, 150 aircraft, 60 ships, and more than 10,000 fighting vehicles will be mobilized for it.

...forces will arrive in the operational areas from different parts of Europe and from North America ... to test ... elements of the deployment of priority strategic reserves. Special attention will be devoted to improving logistical support. “Whatever the alliance maintains, Trident Juncture represents a bid to prepare for large-scale armed conflict in areas directly adjacent to the Russian Federation,” Gen. Zaparenko stated.

Konstantin Makiyenko, Deputy Director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, states “A natural question arises: Why do the leaders of many countries proclaim the priority of opening up territories to which they did not pay such close attention to previously before? The answer is simple: As much as one-fourth of the potential world resources of oil and gas may lie in the Arctic....

According to the the Russian Federation Ministry of Natural Resources, 15.5 billion tons of oil and 84.5 trillion cubic meters of gas are located in an area of 6.2 million square kilometers....

Transport routes are another Arctic resource... The volume of shipments over the Northern Sea Route is growing by rapidly in connection with the thawing of Arctic waters. Lloyd’s Register predicts that the volumes of shipments over the Northern Sea Route will reach 15 million tons in 2021. “To this should be added something like 25 million tons of Russian hydrocarbons that will be exported in ever greater volumes across northern seas. Russia’s forecast for 2030 for shipments over the Northern Sea Route is for 50 million tons of freight a year,” according to Makiyenko.

The route from China to Western Europe by the Northern Sea Route is approximately 8,100 nautical miles long. The way through the Suez Canal is 2,400 miles longer. If ships skirt Africa, they add over 4,000 miles more. Use of the Northern Sea Route promises substantial profits for the growing freight flow from Europe to East Asia – something like a million dollars for one voyage by a large container ship.

The 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention allows Russia to regulate shipping over the Northern Sea Route. Makiyenko stated “This is our privilege, which we cannot lose and must maintain by all possible means.” “It cannot be doubted that the thrust of NATO’s training in the Arctic Region will change little in the immediate future, and exercises like Trident Juncture will be conducted more frequently and at increasingly high latitudes.”