



Upgrading the Arctic Air Fleet

OE Watch Commentary: As reported by the Russian Ministry of Defense, some AN-72 military transport aircraft will be modified for use in Arctic conditions. The Russian AN-72 (NATO designation Coaler) was designed as a short-takeoff-and landing military transport aircraft for unprepared strips. It was first in production in 1977 and has been incorporated into commercial aviation as the AN-74. It has long been a mainstay of Arctic and Antarctic aviation, because it can be fitted with wheel-skis landing gear, de-icing equipment and other severe weather upgrades as well as airdrop cargo. It has a five-man crew and can handle 52 passenger or ten tons of cargo with a range over 2,500 miles. Adding the additional fuel capacity will facilitate flight operations in the vast Arctic region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The primary task is to increase the takeoff weight from 32 tons to 34.8 tons. This will permit it to carry more fuel and a greater payload.”

Source: Yevgeniy Devyatyarov, Aleksey Ramm, and Aleksandr Kruglov, “Ан-72 добавят взлетной массы (They Will Add Takeoff Weight to the An-72),” *Izvestia*, 7 June 2018. <https://iz.ru/743135/evgenii-deviatiarov-aleksei-ramm-aleksandr-kruglov/72-dobaviat-vzletnoi-massy>

A Russian Ministry of Defense spokesman announced that the Military has furnished...its requirements to modify the An-72 military transport aircraft...for use...in Arctic conditions. The primary task is to increase the takeoff weight from 32 tons to 34.8 tons. This will permit it to carry more fuel and a greater payload.

Six An-72 aircraft, two from Naval Aviation, and four from the Aerospace Forces, are initially involved. All of them are based at Moscow's Ostafyevo Airfield...Specialists will study the operational life of the airframe and the landing gear design, conduct static strength analyses, and analyze cracks and areas of corrosion damage in order to verify the durability of the aircraft for continuous operation...

Aircraft engineers have successfully managed to combine good takeoff and landing and high-performance flight characteristics in the An-72 light military transport aircraft. Thanks to the landing gear's all-terrain capability and the comparatively short takeoff run (less than one kilometer), the aircraft in the civilian version is being actively employed in the Arctic. In this region, the construction and maintenance of landing strips is extremely expensive. The An-72 is also being used for landings on ice floes. When so doing, the aircraft cannot carry a heavy cargo due to the need to install a ramp and a heavy all-terrain landing gear, and also increased reliability and survivability requirements.

Away All Boats!

OE Watch Commentary: According to the Russian Northern Fleet, “The Northern Fleet has embarked on its largest exercise in ten years.” The Northern Sea Fleet is the largest of Russia's four fleets, so when they do scramble, it is of interest. Of particular interest is that the fleet has all three of its large amphibious landing ships present and participating. The Northern Fleet has been a frequent contributor of its large amphibious landing ships to the supply effort in Syria, which is putting a maintenance strain on Russian amphibious landing ships. Clearly there will be an amphibious landing component to the exercises. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Northern Fleet has embarked on its largest exercise in ten years.”

Source: Thomas Nilsen, “Alarm-drill: 36 Russian warships sail out to Barents Sea,” *The Independent Barents Observer*, 13 June 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2018/06/36-russian-warships-sails-out-barents-sea>

According to the Russian Northern Fleet Press Release of 13 June, “The Northern Fleet has embarked on its largest exercise in ten years.” A total of 36 warships and support vessels are currently sailing to the Barents Sea. Also, about 20 aircraft are airborne. Along the coast of the Kola Peninsula, more than 150 different rocket- and artillery weapon systems and other special equipment are deployed. Large areas in the Barents Sea are now closed off for civilian shipping and overflights by civilian passenger aircraft. The drill will last until the end of next week [23 June].

The press-service of the Northern Fleet explained that the exercise is a full-range defensive action to combat a massive enemy attack. The fleet will conduct firing with various naval weapons, including launching cruise-missiles, mines and torpedoes and other missiles. Among the warships are the missile cruiser “Marshal Ustinov”, the anti-submarine ship “Severomorsk”, the destroyer “Admiral Ushakov”, the large landing ships “Kondapoga”, “Georgy Pobedonosets” and “Aleksandr Otrakovsky”....nuclear-powered and diesel submarines are also participating....

The press-spokesman at Norway's military Joint Head Quarters, Major Brynjar Stordal, stated that Norway was not informed about the naval exercise. “Russian forces in the north have, over time, had a relatively high level of activity in different fields, something they have the right to do within own territory and in international waters and airspace”....Russia's military activities in areas close to Norway are of course monitored in order to “maintain a satisfactory understanding of the situation.”

Source: “Almost 40 ships, submarines taking part in large-scale Northern Fleet drills,” *Interfax*, 13 June 2018.

The Russian Northern Fleet will test new weapons during the largest exercise in the past ten years...”Thirty-six warships, submarines and supply vessels, some 20 aircraft, over 150 units of weapons, military and special equipment, coastal rocket artillery and ground forces, marine infantry and air defense troops will be involved in the largest exercise of the Northern Fleet in the past decade....”