



The Biggest-Yet Arctic Riverine Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: For the third time in four years, the Northern Fleet has conducted a riverine exercise on the mighty north-flowing Yenisei River to provide experience in quickly deploying to the major economic center of Norilsk. As the accompanying articles discuss, troops from the 70th Independent Arctic Motorized Rifle Brigade, the 61st Naval Infantry Brigade and airborne forces conducted an assault landing and then moved inland toward Norilsk. Norilsk sits on top of the planet's largest known deposits of nickel, copper and palladium and has significant deposits of cobalt, platinum, arsenic, cadmium, lead, selenium, zinc and coal as well. The Norilsk mines produce 17% of the world's nickel and 41% of the world's palladium. Production of Norilsk nickel alone provides 2% of Russia's GDP. Norilsk smelters turn the ores into metals before shipment from the river port of Dudinka. Of interest is the participation of the ministry of Internal Security, the Ministry of Emergency Services and the Federal Penitentiary Service. The city of Norilsk was built on the bones of thousands of political prisoners and criminals from the infamous *Norgulag* forced labor camp which worked tens of thousands as miners from 1935-1956. The *Marine Corps Gazette* will run an article on the first two riverine exercises in its November issue. (For earlier Arctic Riverine articles, see: *OE Watch*, September 2015 and November 2017) **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



Exercise briefing board.

Source: Mil.ru, https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12249434@egNews, CC BY 4.0

“Air Force units and ground forces from two military districts ...engaged in large-scale anti-terrorist combat near the strategically important industrial plants of Norilsk Nickel on the Taymyr Peninsula.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Arctic troops stage large exercise on tundra near Russia’s biggest nickel plant,” *Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 27 August 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/08/arctic-troops-stage-large-drills-around-remote-industrial-plant>

Arctic troops stage large exercise on tundra near Russia’s biggest nickel plant

The training area is located along the great river Yenisei, near the river port of Dudinka. The rich mines of the Norilsk Nickel company are located nearby. It is the third time that Russia has dispatched major forces to the Taymyr Peninsula, located in the far end of northern Siberia. This year, the magnitude of the exercise exceeded the previous exercises. Central to the exercise were Northern Fleet troops that last week disembarked from landing ships *Kondopoga* and *Aleksandr Otrakovsky*. In addition, there were airborne forces from the Central Military District and aircraft and helicopters from the Russian Air Force. A total of five helicopters and four Su-24 supersonic attack aircraft took part. The latter are based in one of the country's Arctic air bases and flew more than 1,000 km as part of the exercise. In-the-air re-fueling was conducted with two Il-78 tanker aircraft.

On the ground, a total of 85 combat vehicles, including T-80BVM tanks, 2S1 Gvozdika howitzers and various armored vehicles, engaged in combat. The training scenario included protection of a key industrial site against terrorist attacks and also included units from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Emergency Situations, as well as the Federal Penitentiary Service. Commander of the Northern Fleet, Aleksandr Moiseev, stated that the drills demonstrated these troops' readiness to protect Russian economic interests in the Arctic. “In the course of the exercise, valuable experience was gained in multi-service interaction, and this will be applied when preparing special units for the Arctic.”

Source: “Mock Battle at the Edge of the Continent,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 25 August 2019. redstar.ru

Mock Battle at the Edge of the Continent

A force grouping of more than one component service has been operating in the north of Krasnoyarskiy Kray. A tactical exercise on the Taymyr Peninsula trained for combat during an amphibious assault landing onto an austere bank of the Yenisei River in the vicinity of Dudinka. Northern Fleet ship crews, naval infantrymen, and Arctic motorized rifle troops, as well as Airborne Troops subunits, took part in the exercise.

According to the scenario, the Northern Fleet's amalgamated force grouping, supported by aviation and Airborne Troops subunits, needed to recapture a beachhead that hypothetical terrorists had seized and to support an amphibious assault landing of vehicles to mount an offensive into the interior of the peninsula to defend an important industrial facility in the Arctic zone. The mock battle commenced with an air strike on the hypothetical terrorists' positions and the infiltration of Spetsnaz teams into the militants' rear area for the purpose of adjusting artillery fire from the ships. On receiving target designations, the AK-100 battery crews of the large ASW ship *Vice-Admiral Kulakov* opened fire on the covered shoreline positions, crushing the notional adversary's weapon positions. The ship's crew, which was taking part in such an exercise on the Yenisei River for the first time, coped successfully with the assigned mission.

Next, Ka-27PS helicopters delivered teams of military engineers onto the bank, where they demined the approaches to the bank and prepared the area for vehicle landing and marked it out with blue signal lights. The engineers' operations were protected by the naval infantrymen, who had disembarked from aboard the large ASW ship *Vice-Admiral Kulakov* into high-speed boats.

Once the position for the amphibious assault vehicle landing onto the shoreline had been prepared, the large amphibious warfare ships *Kondopoga* and *Aleksandr Otrakovskiy* approached, one behind the other. From the ships' 'tweendecks, more than 20 wheeled and tracked vehicles of the naval infantry, the Arctic brigade, and the Airborne Troops formation disembarked directly onto the shore: BTR-82A, BMD-3, MT-LBV, SAU 2s1 Gvozdika, and TTM-4902PS-10.