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Russia's Arctic Military Posture: Considerations for Congress

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Russia's Arctic Military Posture: Considerations for Congress

The Arctic is a key strategic region for Russia with significant military and economic implications. Russia is the largest of the Arctic states in terms of territory, stretching over 24,000 kilometers of coastline. The Arctic is central to Russian strategic and military concerns and is home to Russia's Northern Fleet, which operates about two-thirds of Russia's submarine-based nuclear deterrent, according to the U.S. intelligence community's 2026 Annual Threat Assessment. The Arctic also plays an important role in Russia's energy and economic development plans. After the Cold War and prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Arctic was a region of multilateral cooperation, but tensions have since grown in the region between Russia and the other Arctic states. In a March 2025 speech at the Arctic Forum in Murmansk, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated, "the role and importance of the Arctic for Russia and for the entire world are obviously growing. Regrettably, the geopolitical competition and fighting for positions in this region are also escalating."

For over a decade, Russia has increased its military capabilities in the Arctic, including reestablishing old Soviet-era military bases, building new bases and infrastructure, announcing the creation of new units and increasing the size of existing forces, reorganizing command and control structures, and undertaking new efforts to modernize the Northern Fleet—including its submarine forces. It remains unclear whether Russia has the financial and personnel resources to carry out its military modernization efforts and plans in the Arctic, or in what time frame it could do so. Additionally, the Russian military posture in the Arctic has become increasingly precarious with the accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO (in 2023 and 2024, respectively) and heavy ground-force losses suffered in Ukraine. According to Lieutenant General James Adams, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, in April 2026 testimony before Congress, "As the Arctic becomes a focal point of international competition, the Kremlin is increasingly concerned by the growth of NATO forces in the region and the perceived threat they pose to Russia's economic interests. In response, Moscow is modernizing its military forces in the region to counter NATO, defend these economic interests, and ensure its dominance over the Northern Sea Route, though requirements in Ukraine constrain resources devoted to these efforts."

Depending on Russia's military modernization efforts in the Arctic, Congress may assess U.S. national security priorities in the region. Congress also may consider how increased Russian military capabilities could threaten U.S. and allied interests; evaluate allied and NATO plans and military posture; and deploy various legislative and oversight tools to support, reject, or otherwise modify the Administration's approach to the region. Potential considerations for Congress include

- the scale and speed of Russian military posture adjustments in the Arctic and the feasibility of Russia achieving those goals, including how those adjustments could affect U.S. and allied security and strategic objectives in the region;
- how to exercise oversight of plans to increase and/or modify the U.S. military presence in the Arctic;
- the state of current and future appropriations for Arctic-capable military assets, such as icebreakers; and
- how U.S. strategic and military plans for the region incorporate and synchronize with other allied partners and NATO.

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Introduction

The Arctic region is one of Russia's top strategic priorities.¹ According to the Department of Defense's (DOD's) *2024 Arctic Strategy*, "The Arctic plays a significant role in Russia's security and economic calculations."² Russia is the largest of the Arctic states in terms of territory, covering over 24,000 kilometers of Arctic Ocean coastline—some 53% of the Arctic Ocean's total coastline.³ The Arctic holds an important role in Russian strategic thinking, and the region's economic development is a central component of Russia's energy and economic growth plans.⁴ In March 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated, "Today, the North has become central to [Russia's] development efforts. This is a sovereign and historical choice.... [T]he objectives we set for and address in the Arctic, and the projects we undertake here must match this historical scale and have a horizon spanning decades, if not centuries."⁵

Russia's strategic position in the Arctic has declined since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The Arctic region holds considerable economic potential, but Russia's ability to develop natural resources in the Arctic has been constrained by U.S. and European sanctions. Russia's military position also has become more vulnerable with conventional ground forces losses in Ukraine.⁶ In addition, the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO (in 2023 and 2024, respectively) brought NATO military capabilities, including long-range precision strike systems, closer to—and in range to potentially threaten—Russia's Northern Fleet, with its ballistic missile submarines.⁷ On August 31, 2026, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated, "NATO and other Western countries make no secret of their true motives, openly declaring their intention to turn the Arctic into a new front for opposing the development of Russia and its like-minded partners."⁸ Some observers assert that these factors have contributed to a heightened Russian government perception that its Arctic economic and security interests are interconnected.⁹

¹ Some observers use the term *high north* to refer to the Arctic. Elizabeth Buchanan, *Red Arctic: Russian Strategy Under Putin* (Brookings University Press, 2023); Mathieu Boulegue, *The Impact of the War Against Ukraine on Russia's Arctic Posture: Hard Power on Vulnerable Ice*, Wilson Center, June 2024.

² Department of Defense (DOD), *2024 Arctic Strategy*, June 2024, p. 4. DOD is "using a secondary Department of War designation," under Executive Order 14347, dated September 5, 2025.

³ Russia's Arctic population is approximately 2.5 million inhabitants. Arctic Council, *Russian Federation*, <https://arctic-council.org/about/states/russian-federation/>.

⁴ Sergey Vakulenko, *Global Energy Competition in the Arctic: A Reassessment*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 17, 2025.

⁵ President of the Russian Federation, "The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue International Forum," March 27, 2025, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/76554> (hereinafter President of the Russian Federation, "The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue").

⁶ Economist, "Mikhail Komin on Why the Arctic Is Putin's Next Front," August 11, 2025; TASS, "Russian Navy Chief Points to Difficult Situation in Arctic Region," December 9, 2025.

⁷ CRS In Focus IF12672, *Russia's Nuclear Weapons*, by Anya L. Fink; Wilfred Wan and Gitte du Plessis, "Blurring Conventional-Nuclear Boundaries: Nordic Developments, Global Implications," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, January 14, 2025; Fabian R. Hoffman, "Small State Conventional Long-Range Strike Arsenals and Strategic Stability in Europe," *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2026), pp. 436-452.

⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "International Cooperation in the Arctic: Challenges and Opportunities," August 31, 2026, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/2136949/.

⁹ Michelle Grise et al., *Russia in the High North: Russian Strategy and Escalation Risks in the High North After the Russia-Ukraine War*, RAND, 2026, pp. 16-17 (hereinafter Grise et al., *Russia in the High North*).

Russian Arctic Policy

Russia's Arctic policy focuses on ensuring Russia's sovereignty and status as an Arctic power, exploiting the region's natural resources (e.g., oil, natural gas), and developing the Northern Sea Route (NSR)—a shipping corridor running along Russia's northern Arctic coastline—as a viable transportation artery. Developing the NSR would shorten transport times between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰ To achieve these objectives, the Russian government has increasingly securitized the Arctic and expanded Russia's military capabilities in the region to protect and project its Arctic ambitions.

Since 2020, the Russian government has adopted several new strategy documents outlining plans to bolster Russia's Arctic military capabilities, assert its sovereignty in the region, and develop the region's resources and infrastructure.¹¹ These documents include the following:

- *Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic to 2035*, March 2020 (amended in February 2023)
- *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Provision of National Security for the Period up to 2035*, October 2020 (amended in February 2023)

In addition to specific Arctic strategies, the Russian government's 2022 *Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation* identifies the “the Arctic basin adjacent to the coast of the Russian Federation, including the water area of the Northern Sea Route” as a “vital area” for Russia.¹² The Russian government's 2023 *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* also highlights the Arctic as a priority region.¹³

The Russian government has taken steps to improve its control and coordination of the various policy actors to guide and implement its strategies in the Arctic. In August 2024, President Putin announced the creation of the Maritime Collegium under the control of Russia's former Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev to oversee and coordinate Russia's various policy actors.¹⁴ The Maritime Collegium has been tasked with developing and protecting Russia's status as a global maritime power, overseeing the development of the Arctic, and advancing Russia's interests in the region.¹⁵

¹⁰ According to official Russian estimates, the Arctic region accounts for roughly 7% of Russia's gross domestic product, 11% of its exports, 17% of its oil production, and more than 80% of its natural gas. Erdem Lamazhapov and Arild Moe, “Russia's Geopolitical Position in the Arctic: What's New?” *Strategic Analysis*, vol 48, no. 6 (2024), pp. 604-618; President of the Russian Federation, “The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue.”

¹¹ President of the Russian Federation, *Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic to 2035*, March 2020 (amended in February 2023); President of the Russian Federation, *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Provision of National Security for the Period up to 2035*, October 2020 (amended in February 2023). The 2023 amendments to the aforementioned documents deleted any references to “cooperation” with the United States or the European Union (EU).

¹² President of the Russian Federation, *Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, July 21, 2022 (for an English translation, see <https://usnwc.edu/Research-and-Wargaming/Research-Centers/Russia-Maritime-Studies-Institute>).

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, March 31, 2023, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/.

¹⁴ TASS, “Putin Signs Decree to Create Maritime Collegium, With Patrushev at Its Head,” August 13, 2024.

¹⁵ The Maritime Collegium consists of 52 members and includes various government ministers, the Border Guard Service, military officials, corporations (including shipbuilders), regional governors, and other policy actors. President of the Russian Federation, “Meeting of the Council for the Strategic Development of the Navy Under the Maritime Collegium,” July 3, 2026.

Russian Military Posture in the Arctic

The Arctic plays a key role in Russia's security posture and sea-based nuclear retaliatory capability (see **Figure 1**). Russia has invested in increasing its air defense, naval, and ground forces in the Arctic region (discussed below).¹⁶ Russia's Northern Fleet—which covers much of the Arctic and is based at Severomorsk, in the Kola Peninsula bordering Norway and Finland—traditionally has received priority in the Russian Navy.¹⁷ According to the 2026 *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*,

The bulk of Russia's Arctic forces are concentrated in the Kola Peninsula, which hosts about two-thirds of Russia's second-strike nuclear capabilities. The area is home to Russia's Northern Fleet, including seven of the country's nuclear-armed ballistic missile strategic submarines. Russia has made major investments in the fleet, including adding long-range missiles, UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], and underwater drones. Russia has at least three air bases on the Kola Peninsula that host fighter jets, surveillance, and transport aircraft.¹⁸

Additionally, Russia has announced a large-scale increase in conventional ground forces in the Arctic. According to DOD's 2024 *Arctic Strategy*,

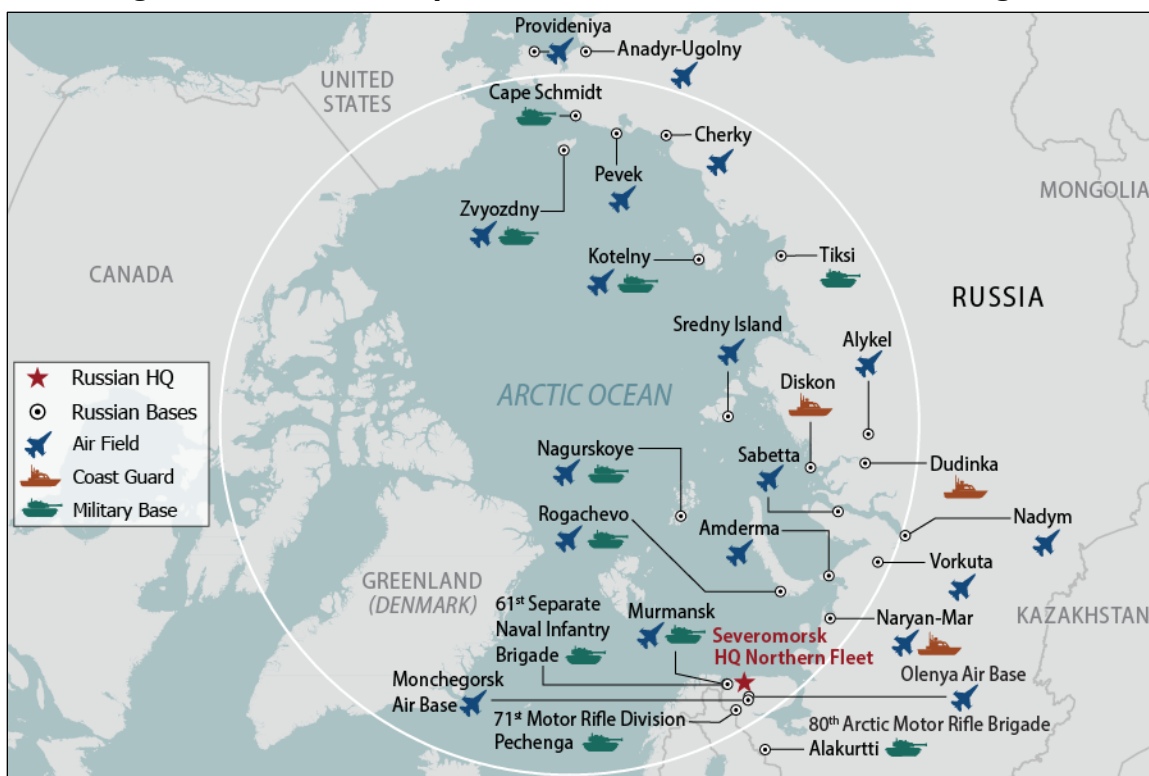
Despite some attrition of Russia's conventional land forces due to losses in Ukraine, its strategic, air, and maritime forces remain intact. Further, Russia has demonstrated the ability to reconstitute and reorganize its conventional ground forces, which illuminates the potential for future improved readiness and combat expertise in the Arctic.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kristian Atland et al., "Bolstering the Bastion: The Changing Pattern of Russia's Military Exercises in the High North," *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2024), pp. 145-160; Jonas Kjellen, "The Russian Northern Fleet Bastion Revisited," *Journal of Advanced Military Studies*, (2025), pp. 7-27.

¹⁷ Jonas Kjellen, "The Russian Northern Fleet and the (Re)militarisation of the Arctic," *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, vol. 13, no. 1, (2022), pp. 34-52.

¹⁸ Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), *2026 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, March 2026, p. 11 (hereinafter, DNI, 2026 ATA). The Northern Fleet reportedly is creating a maritime unmanned systems regiment with reconnaissance and strike capabilities.

¹⁹ DOD, *2024 Arctic Strategy*, June 2024, p. 4.

Figure 1. Russian Military and Coast Guard Bases in the Arctic Region

Source: Map created by CRS. Adapted from Mathieu Boulegue, *Russia's Arctic Posture: Hard Power on Vulnerable Ice*, Wilson Center, June 2024, p. 16; Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus 2026*, February 6, 2026, pp. 29-31; Finnish Defence Forces, *Finnish Military Intelligence Review 2026*, January 2026, p. 9.

Northern Fleet

Largely unaffected by the war in Ukraine, the Northern Fleet continues to modernize and receive new and upgraded surface vessels and submarines.²⁰ According to the Norwegian Intelligence Service, “The modernization of the Northern Fleet is progressing slowly. More naval platforms are being armed with modern long-range precision-guided weapons. Over the course of 2026, the Northern Fleet will come to have three Severodvinsk-class multirole submarines and three frigates available, all carrying hypersonic Tsirkon missiles.”²¹

²⁰ Anna J. Davis, “Russia Prepares to Add Newest Nuclear-Powered Submarine to the Northern Fleet,” *Jamestown Foundation*, May 30, 2025; Thomas Newdick, “Russia’s Upgraded Nuclear Battlecruiser Back at Sea After Nearly Three Decades,” *The War Zone*, August 15, 2025.

²¹ According to the Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS), “[Northern Fleet’s] primary task is to ensure a credible deterrent by protecting the fleet’s own strategic submarines. Additionally, it provides deterrence through other capabilities, including missile-carrying surface combatants and submarines that are capable of threatening military and civilian targets in NATO countries as well as NATO’s maritime supply routes.” See NIS, *Focus 2026*, February 6, 2026, p. 29. NATO and U.S. officials have noted the stealth and offensive capabilities of the Severodvinsk class submarines. NATO Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum, @NATOJFCBS <https://x.com/NATOJFCBS/status/2095164975312429174>.

Additionally, the Northern Fleet (as well as Russia's other fleets) was returned to the direct operational command of the Russian navy in 2023, and Russian officials and other observers have noted an increased role for the navy in Russian strategic thinking.²² In 2025, Russian President Putin approved a new naval strategy to 2050 and allocated over 8.4 trillion rubles (over \$106 billion at current exchange rates) for new shipbuilding over the next decade, much of it to bolster the Northern Fleet.²³ Some observers assess there is a potential disconnect between ambition and reality for further development of the Northern Fleet, especially as Russia's shipyards struggle to meet current output and maintenance requirements.²⁴

Aerospace Forces

Russia's Aerospace Forces in the Arctic are also undergoing reorganization and are essential to detect and interdict any air threats.²⁵ Air defense units previously under the Northern Fleet's command have been transferred to the 6th Air and Air Defense Army assigned to the Leningrad Military District (see below), which coordinates air assets in the region in concert with Aerospace Forces Main Command.²⁶ The Northern Fleet's air units have been reorganized into the 7th Composite Aviation Corps and include reconnaissance, multi-role strike fighter, transport, and rotary wing aircraft.²⁷

Ground Forces

Russian ground forces are an essential part of Russia's military strategy to protect its northwest border and the Northern Fleet in the Kola Peninsula.²⁸ Amid Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO, the Russian military is adapting its force posture and has launched a large-scale reorganization effort to bolster its military capabilities in the region, including creating new units and increasing the size of existing forces (see text box, below).²⁹ In June 2026, Lieutenant General Pasi Välimäki, Commander of the Finnish Army, reportedly estimated that Russia could

²² Finnish Defence Forces, *Finnish Military Intelligence Review 2025*, January 2025, p. 12; President of Russia, "Meeting with Navy Personnel," July 26, 2026, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/80341>.

²³ President of the Russian Federation, "Meeting on the Navy Development Strategy," press release, April 11, 2025; Andrew Monaghan, "Russia's Naval Futures: New Horizons 2050," *NATO Defense College*, December 16, 2025.

²⁴ NIS, *Focus 2026*, February 6, 2026, p. 29; Jeff Hawn, "Russian Navy Between Practicality and Fantasy," *Riddle*, January 27, 2026.

²⁵ Russia combined its air force, air defense, and space warfare units into a single command in 2015. Lester Grau, "Russian Defense Ministry Approves Five-Year Plan to Expand and Modernize Arctic Air Bases," *OE Watch*, June 1, 2023.

²⁶ President of Russia, "6th Leningrad Red Banner, Order of Zhukov Air Force and Air Defence Army Awarded Honorary Guards Designation," December 22, 2025, <http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/78832>; Amos Chapple and Mark Krutov, "Russia Strips Arctic Air Defenses as Ukraine War Strains Military," RFE/RL, July 14, 2026.

²⁷ Key.Aero, "Russia's Killing Fields," December 17, 2025.

²⁸ Troy J. Bouffard et al., "Russian Arctic Land Forces and Defense Trends Redefined by NATO and Ukraine," *U.S. Army War College*, September 16, 2025.

²⁹ According to President Putin at the March 2025 Arctic Forum, "However, we [Russia] are closely monitoring the ... [accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO], developing an appropriate response, enhancing the combat capabilities of the Armed Forces, and modernizing military infrastructure." President of the Russian Federation, "The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue"; Mathieu Boulegue, *The Impact of the War Against Ukraine on Russia's Arctic Posture: Hard Power on Vulnerable Ice*, Wilson Center, June 2024; Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, "Russia's Armed Forces Are Expanding: The Example of the 44th Army Corps," *International Security and Estonia 2025*, December 20, 2024, pp. 8-10.

increase its ground forces based near Finland's borders from 20,000 to upwards of 80,000.³⁰ In 2024, the Russian military reactivated the Leningrad Military District to oversee and coordinate Russia's military posture in the region.³¹ According to Finnish military intelligence, "the Leningrad Military District, which is located close to Finland, is planned to be significantly reinforced in the future. In the Kola region, an army corps will be expanded into an army, and a completely new army corps will be established in Karelia and several brigades will be expanded into divisions."³²

To support its revised posture in the Arctic, the Russian military reportedly is supporting extensive infrastructure projects, which include renovating defunct Soviet-era military facilities and constructing new ones on Russia's borders with Finland and Norway.³³

Organization of Russian Arctic Ground Forces

Russia's Arctic ground forces are under the command of the 14th Army Corps (located on the Kola Peninsula and in the Murmansk region), which reportedly is being increased to a Combined Arms Army—with more logistics, missiles, and artillery units. The 14th Army Corps oversees the 71st Motor Rifle Division and the 80th Motor Rifle Brigade. Also based in the Kola Peninsula are the 61st Naval Infantry Brigade (which reportedly is to be increased to the size of a division) and the 536th Coastal Missile and Artillery Brigade under the command of the Northern Fleet. Additionally, the Russian military has announced that the 44th Army Corps is based in Karelia, on the border with Finland. The 44th Army Corps oversees the 72nd Motorized Rifle Division and the 128th Motorized Rifle Brigade.

Russian military's Arctic ground forces redeployed to fight in the war in Ukraine have suffered significant casualties, posing challenges to Russia's force posture in the Arctic.³⁴ Russia faces reconstituting units that suffered attrition in Ukraine, and it would take time for Russia's Arctic units to regain the lost experience and for personnel to be adequately trained to operate effectively in an Arctic environment.³⁵ Some observers and allied intelligence assessments indicate that it is unclear whether the Russian military will be able to fully achieve its stated objectives in the Arctic given the demands for units and personnel in other regions.³⁶

³⁰ SVT, "This Is Where Russia Is Arming Itself—Just Kilometers from NATO's Border," June 10, 2026; Meduza, "Joint Investigation Maps Russia's Buildup Along Its NATO Border. Finland Could Now Face 80,000 Troops," June 10, 2026.

³¹ TASS, "Putin Re-Establishes Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts—Decree," February 26, 2024; Juha Kukkola, *The Leningrad Military District: The Past and Future of the Northwestern Direction*, Finnish National Defence University, 2024.

³² Finnish Defence Forces, *Finnish Military Intelligence Review 2025*, January 2025, p. 12.

³³ Jeffrey Gettleman et al., "Russia Beefs Up Bases near Finland's Border," *New York Times*, May 19, 2025; Havard Guldahl et al., "The New Frost Line," Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, June 10, 2026.

³⁴ According to the Special Inspector General-Operation Atlantic Resolve,

Force attrition in Ukraine has prevented Russia from increasing the size of its Arctic ground forces as planned. Russia likely continues low-level training at Arctic ground-force garrisons that is diminished compared to pre-war training. However, despite these near-term manpower shortages in the Arctic, Russia is expanding existing Arctic military infrastructure—particularly in the Leningrad Military District that was reestablished in 2024—in response to Finland and Sweden joining NATO. Some of the new infrastructure will facilitate Russian ground forces' eventual expansion.

Special Inspector General-Operation Atlantic Resolve, *Operation Atlantic Resolve: Including U.S. Government Activities Related to Ukraine, January 1, 2026-March 31, 2026*, Report to Congress, p. 13.

³⁵ Grise et al., *Russia in the High North*, p. 27.

³⁶ Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus 2026*, February 6, 2026, pp. 29-31; Finnish Defence Forces, *Finnish Military* (continued...)

U.S. Policy and Considerations for Congress

The Trump Administration has highlighted the importance of the Arctic for U.S. national security interests and has argued for an increased U.S. and NATO presence to counter activities by Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) in the Arctic. According to the 2026 National Defense Strategy, "we [the United States] have seen adversaries' influence grow from Greenland in the Arctic to the Gulf of America, the Panama Canal, and locations farther south."³⁷ The Department of Defense reportedly is working on improving coordination among the combatant commands (European, Northern, and Pacific) with areas of responsibilities that overlap in the Arctic.³⁸ The Trump Administration also has sought to bolster some U.S. Arctic capabilities, such as the acquisition of icebreakers.³⁹ In October 2025, the Trump Administration signed a memorandum with Finland to procure up to 11 Arctic Security Cutters (ASCs), including 4 to be produced at shipyards in Finland, to address what the Administration describes as a "critical capability gap" with potential adversaries.⁴⁰

NATO has increased its operations and presence in the Arctic, including by launching a new mission in February 2026 called Arctic Sentry in response to "Russia's increasing military activity and China's growing interest in the Arctic."⁴¹ Among other actions, NATO has established a Forward Land Force in Finland's Lapland region, and the United Kingdom (UK) has pledged to double the number of UK troops deployed to Norway to 2,000.⁴² In May 2026, the United States, Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden released a joint statement on Arctic security that recognized the strategic importance of the Arctic and acknowledged increased Russian military activity.⁴³

Intelligence Review 2026, January 2026, p. 9-10; Andrew Berrier, "Russia's Arctic: Lack of Ground Forces a Manageable Problem, For Now," *Delphi Global Research Center*, May 1, 2026.

³⁷ DOD, *2026 National Defense Strategy*, p. 9.

³⁸ U.S. Northern Command, "NORAD, USNORTHCOM, SHAPE, EUCOM Leaders Discuss Homeland Defense, Cross-Command Synchronization," press release, October 2, 2026.

³⁹ The U.S. Coast Guard currently has two operational Arctic Security Cutters. According to the 2026 ATA, "The Russian Arctic Fleet has 42 icebreakers, including eight nuclear and 34 diesel-electric. Russia is building what could become the most powerful nuclear icebreaker in the world, which is reported to be operational by 2030." DNI, 2026 ATA, p. 12.

⁴⁰ White House, "President Donald J. Trump Authorizes Construction of Arctic Security Cutters," press release, October 9, 2025.

⁴¹ NATO, "NATO Secretary General Outlines New Activity—Arctic Sentry—Ahead of Defense Ministers Meeting," February 11, 2026; NATO, *Arctic Security*, June 18, 2026, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/arctic-security>.

⁴² UK Ministry of Defence, "UK Steps Up Defence of Arctic and High North from Rising Russian Threats," press release, February 11, 2026; NATO, "Forward Land Forces Finland Established to Contribute to NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture," press release, June 6, 2026.

⁴³ Government of Sweden, "Joint Statement on Arctic Security from the Arctic Allies—Canada, Kingdom of Denmark including Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States of America," press release, May 22, 2026.

In the 119th Congress, some Members have expressed concern regarding military activity and economic development in the Arctic by Russia and other foreign adversaries (see, for example, S.Res. 763 and S. 4708, the Arctic Security and Diplomacy Act) and their implications for U.S. security—such as early warning and monitoring for potential nuclear launches or bombers circumnavigating—in the region.⁴⁴ The FY2026 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 119-60, §5143) authorizes an Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic; among other duties, the Ambassador is to establish and carry out an “Arctic Watcher Program,” including to “monitor and combat the People’s Republic of China, Russian Federation, and other malign influence campaigns across the Arctic region.”⁴⁵ In addition, Section 5143(h) requires the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense, to annually submit to the “appropriate congressional committees a report on Russian and Chinese malign influence in the Arctic region.” Additionally, Section 7019(e) of the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026 (Div. F, P.L. 119-75), and H.Rept. 119-217 required the State Department to provide a report to Congress on U.S. diplomatic priorities for the Arctic.⁴⁶

In the 119th Congress, some Members may have an interest in assessing and conducting oversight of U.S. policy and considering legislation regarding the following:

- The effect of U.S. and European sanctions regimes on Russian military and economic infrastructure in the Arctic region, including the NSR.⁴⁷
- The status of Russia’s military reconstitution of Arctic forces and the implications for NATO, partner, and U.S. regional priorities and strategic objectives.
- The progress of U.S. strategic and military Arctic plans and priorities, including the training, modernization, and status of U.S. and allied Arctic military capabilities and coordination among combatant commands.
- Current or proposed appropriations to fund Arctic-specific military systems, such as Arctic Security Cutters.

⁴⁴ U.S. Congress, House Homeland Security Committee, Transportation and Maritime Security Subcommittee, *Arctic Security in an Era of Global Competition: Safeguarding U.S. Interests in Frigid Waters*, 119th Cong., 2nd sess., March 26, 2026; U.S. Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Nominations: Ms. Julia Nesheiwat, of Florida, to be Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic*, 119th Cong., 2nd sess., September 17, 2026.

⁴⁵ In 2022, the Biden Administration announced the creation of an ambassador-at-large for the Arctic region, and the position was codified into law in 2025. Department of State, “Establishing an Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic Region,” August 26, 2022.

⁴⁶ Department of State, *United States Diplomatic Priorities for the Arctic*, Report to Congress, pp. 2-3, <https://www.state.gov/united-states-diplomatic-priorities-for-the-arctic/>.

⁴⁷ Since 2018, Rosatom has been the sole corporation responsible for developing and managing infrastructure along the Northern Sea Route—including the operation of Russia’s fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers. Maxim Starchak, “Russia’s Arctic Policy Poses a Growing Nuclear Threat,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 1, 2024; Rosatom, “Northern Sea Route in the Spotlight,” press release, August 2025. Rosatom’s board of directors and other senior officials, as well as Russia’s Arctic LNG 2 project (which includes pipelines and processing facilities for the export of LNG on the Gydan Peninsula in Russia’s Arctic region), are sanctioned by the United States pursuant to E.O. 14024, “Blocking Property with Respect to Specified Harmful Foreign Activities of the Government of the Russian Federation,” 86 *Federal Register* 20249, April 15, 2021, as amended. Also see U.S. Department of State, “Sanctions to Degrade Russia’s Energy Sector,” press release, January 10, 2025. For EU sanctions, see Official Journal of the EU, “Regulation (EU) 2026/261 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 January 2026 on Phasing Out Russian Natural Gas Imports and Preparing the Phase-Out of Russian Oil Imports, Improving Monitoring of Potential Energy Dependencies and Amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1938”; Council of the EU, “Russian Gas Imports: Council Gives Final Greenlight to Stepwise Ban,” press release, January 26, 2026.

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