



PER ARNE JUVANG / FORSVARET

A helicopter participates in a rescue exercise in Svalbard led by Norway's Ministry of Defense. Such exercises generally focus on emergency rescues.

The force is weak

'Battle for Svalbard 2030' study suggests military ill-prepared for Russian invasion of archipelago

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

We should be afraid today. And even more afraid tomorrow. And downright terrified in a decade or so.

Russia is likely to continue accelerating its military aggression in the Arctic and Norway's military capabilities "have to improve significantly" to fend off a full-scale attack in Svalbard, according to a Norwegian Armed Forces report and statements by Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs published this week.

The report, titled "Battle for Svalbard 2030," plays out various full-scale war scenarios in the archipelago and finds Norway facing an uphill battle, so to speak.

"A 2030 scenario in Svalbard represents a significant challenge for the Norwegian pattern of reaction, where the Navy is initiating operations from a home base located far from the operating theater," the report states.

There are two primary challenges, according to report. The first is military assets clustered in a small area would be vulnerable to attack or sabotage before actual conflict occurs.

"A specific consequence may be that Norwegian units never get out of the harbor, for example, due to sabotage or the ability of Russian cruise missiles to threaten units," the report notes. "Taking out the operational airbase or fighters and submarines has been a pronounced Russian ambition in the event a conflict with Norway arises."

In addition, Norway's naval fleet is inferi-



SERGEY MAMONTOV / SPUTNIK

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, forefront at center, and other dignitaries tour Barentsburg during a visit in April of 2015 that resulted in a change to Svalbard's entry requirements.

or and some vessels will be difficult to operate in Svalbard's waters.

"The consequence may be that less than half of the Norwegian naval strike missiles will be available in the operational area," the report states.

The report, not surprisingly, calls for boosting spending on things such as intelligence, logistics planning and certain weaponry more suitable for a war in Svalbard.

"The most plausible Norwegian measures will probably be a combination of submarines of the Neptune class and surface forces backed by fighter jets" the report declares. "Equipped with long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles and heavy torpedoes the submarines can be used to neutralize targets both on land and at sea."

Naval forces "must be ready to deploy with full equipment in hours, not days" and good intelligence will be a critical factor in knowing when a response is needed.

The report was released on the same day Norwegian Foreign Minister Børge Brende delivered his annual address to Parliament, in which he warned about "a more assertive and unpredictable Russia."

"The years 2014 and 2015 were difficult in foreign affairs, but we must prepare ourselves for even bigger trouble in 2016," he said, adding the refugee crisis and increasing tension among European Union nations are major issues of concern.

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