



ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA



ZHANG JIANSONG / XINHUA



ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE



INDIAN NAVY

Russian Bishop Bishop Iakov, top left, presides over the lowering of a "holy memorial capsule" into the sea at the North Pole in September in an attempt to "consecrate" the Arctic and reassert Moscow's claims to the territory. Efforts by nations to claim a stake in the oil-rich Arctic are increasingly common, with military and other government members of China (top right), Canada (bottom left) and India (bottom right) recently displaying their flags at the North Pole.

Norway: Kiss my ice, EU

Comment about drilling rights all the way to North Pole revives controversy about country's plans

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The European Union can vote for all the Arctic oil drilling bans it wants, but Norway has exclusive rights extending to essentially the North Pole and there's nothing the EU can do about it.

That scornful brush-off is being voiced by top Norwegian officials in response to a European Parliament's Environmental Committee's vote to enter a moratorium on Arctic drilling.

Among those making the declaration is Oil and Energy Minister Ole Borten Moe, who made similar remarks in August and said he hoped to present a plan to explore areas on the Arctic in a White Paper next year. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg quickly responded to objections by stating the ruling Labor Party has no plans to drill near the North Pole.

The EU is taking aggressive, but often vague, steps towards increasing its influence in Arctic policy. The body raised howls of objections from Norway, for instance, when news reports last year stated the EU was questioning the legality of the Svalbard Treaty. EU leaders quickly responded by stating that, while unresolved issues in the treaty should be addressed, they aren't seeking to challenge Norway's sovereignty of the archipelago.

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SPIES LIKE US

Battle for Arctic supremacy makes Svalbard a target for espionage, officials say – again

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Hmmm...maybe *that's* why our Russian neighbors dominated last weekend's sports exchange on Longyearbyen's home court.

Spying and espionage are increasing in Svalbard and other parts of the Norwegian Arctic, security officials said his week. They also

expect the Arctic's status as a primary target will continue to increase as nations fight for resources and jurisdiction in the area.

"I can confirm that we, like our Danish sister organization, are seeing growing intelligence activity in this area," said Martin Bernsen, manager of the Norwegian Police Security Service, in an article published today by *Aftenposten*. "We see that some countries are actively seeking to consolidate their positions in the north."

Bernsen's remarks came shortly after the
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Norwegian v. SAS III: Fee-for-all

Discount airline plans return to Svalbard, but for how long and what's the catch of lower fares?

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Fares will be lower, there's free wi-fi and more available seats are seen as a blessing by local hotels still hurting from the long recession.

On the other hand, the airline has bailed out twice before – stranding passengers – there's a lot more fees, customers complain about aging planes and employees may go on strike Oct. 10.

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NORWEGIAN AIR SHUTTLE

Norwegian Air Shuttle in planning to return to Svalbard on March 1, 2013, with three direct flights to Oslo a week. Listed debut fares are about 40 percent lower than Scandinavian Airlines, but fees offset much of the discount.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Schoolhouse rock



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Kjersti Kvile, right, explains a geology project Saturday at The University Centre in Svalbard as part of an open day at the Longyearbyen Science and Education Forum. The event – only the second such public tour, with the other occurring in 2007 – also featured activities such as visits to the EISCAT radar facility in Mine 7, demonstrations of a Airlift Super Puma rescue helicopter, and numerous hands-on research project overviews. The day was part of a month-long series of local events raising funds in affiliation with the annual NRK telethon, with this year's proceeds aiding Amnesty International's efforts to fight human rights violations abroad. UNIS is scheduled to host another event this weekend with a flea market from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. There will also be a first-event relay race in the center of Longyearbyen at 1 p.m. Saturday and a car wash at the governor's garage facility Sunday.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

As noted sarcastically in our spy story, **visiting Barentsburg schooled Longyearbyen in the first of two sports exchanges this fall.** The Russians are far fewer in number and their home facilities are for crap, but the 18 visiting athletes (often playing more than one sport) defeated the Norwegians at badminton, table tennis, hockey and basketball. Luckily for Longyearbyen, there was no chess match this time or the score would almost certainly have been even more lopsided. The Norwegians did rout the Russians at volleyball and football (soccer to you "Americans"), and will get a chance for revenge in Barentsburg on Oct. 13 ... Here's less-than-shocking news: **There won't be a CinemArctic festival in Svalbard this fall after the massive fiasco of the debut event last year.** Last year's festival was plagued with organizational turnover and uncertainty all the way up to the opening date, and attendance at the screenings was abysmal. Furthermore, a possible scandal looms as one-third of the inaugural one-million kroner budget (including a bunch of government grants) was ostensibly set aside for a festival this year – which organizers said was part of the reason last year's was skeletal – but there is no word what happened to the money. It should be noted, however, that officials are considering some kind of local satellite event during the annual Tromsø International Film Festival in January ... If we had any readers, they'd know we're big fans of the anti "helicopter parent"



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

It ain't "Titanic:" An audience of six watches one of the movies screened at Kulturhuset during the inaugural CinemArctic film festival last year.

mentality here, but **things might be going too far when The Local Paper of Misguided Deeds has to run a story reminding folks it's illegal to purchase booze for minors.** Vigdis Folde, manager at Nordpolet, said surveys show fewer parents are making such purchases, but "there's been more friend purchasing. We want to make young people aware of the fact that it is a criminal offense." Setting aside the weirdness of a statistically significant percentage of people admitting to lawlessness, they're also looking at six months in jail and legal liability for any problems incurred by kiddies getting loaded ... Bashing politicians comes so naturally here it definitely qualifies as weird to give them praise, as **Longyearbyen politicians are chopping three weeks off their summer vacations beginning next year,** with a break in meetings lasting from mid-June to late August, instead of mid-September.



HUGO ISAKSEN / KSAT

An antenna transmits data for the Svalbard Satellite Station (SvalSat), which is accused in a book and a U.S. government report of being an instrument of espionage and illegal assistance for military attacks. SvalSat and Norwegian officials say the facility collects and transmits weather and climate data available free to the public, and they're not culprits if such information is used by a military.

Warming makes Arctic a spy hotspot

SPOOK, from page 1

public release of a threat assessment by Jakob Scharf, head of Denmark's Security Intelligence Service. His report finds heightened interest in the Arctic makes espionage by foreign nations against Denmark one of the clearest trends.

"There is a significantly increased focus on the Arctic from a number of countries, and it is about climate change and development in the Arctic affecting the possibilities for greater access to the area," he wrote, according to *Berlingske Media*. "And thus to exploit resources in the Arctic, such as rare earths, rare metals and raw materials."

An increasing number of governing bodies seeking a role in the Arctic's future, including China and India, are partially responsible for the heightened risk. A similar finding is in Norway's 2012 threat assessment, published in January.

"In the coming years we expect a heightened intelligence focus on Norway's political processes, particularly those related to the North and Svalbard," the report states. "The increasing international attention regarding the possibility of resource extraction in the Arctic archipelago's location makes it ever more strategically important. Everyone who works on issues related to this area can be exposed to intelligence operations."

Such concerns – and accusations of illegal activity by Norway as well as countries allegedly committing acts of espionage here – aren't new. The Svalbard Satellite Station (SvalSat), for instance, has been at center of such discussions due to questions about how its data is be-

ing used and hackers illegally accessing the system repeatedly in recent years.

A U.S. government report released last fall states at least two of its environment-monitoring satellites were interfered with four or more times in 2007 and 2008, suggesting SvalSat was used to access them. While not directly accusing China, the report notes the techniques were similar. China denied responsibility and SvalSat officials denied the hacks even occurred.

A book released at about the same time, "Satellittkrigen" by NRK journalist Bård Wormdal, declared SvalSat data was being illegally used by multiple nations for military activities. Images of airports and other key infrastructure, for instance, were used by Italy for a military attack on Libya, the book claims.

Norwegian and SvalSat officials rebuffed the book's claims – many of them made in previous news reports – stating the facility collects and transmits weather and climate data that is available to the public, and they're not complicit if military officials are among those accessing such information.

Also making news last fall was massive espionage in Norway's oil and defense industries, which security officials said might represent the largest data theft in the country's history. The stolen industrial secrets were "sent out digitally from the country," according to a statement by the Norwegian National Security Authority, although no specific companies or suspects in the attacks were named.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Cleaning services must now be licensed; low pay an issue

Cleaning services in Longyearbyen must now be approved by the Norwegian Labor Inspectorate, a move intended to ensure employee safety, health and work conditions. ISS, the city's only licensed company, pushed for the change, saying it will allow them to compete on a more even basis. "Everyone who works at ISS is treated equally regardless of where they come from," said Gustav Halsvik, ISS' department manager in Longyearbyen. "We know there is a lot of social dumping in Longyearbyen" involving unlicensed companies and workers. However, a minimum wage requirement on the mainland still does not apply to Svalbard, which Halsvik said will still leave workers open to exploitation.

Svalbard's population jumps to 2,642, 7X mainland growth

Svalbard's population is 2,642 as of July 1, 114 more than on Jan. 1. The 4.5 percent increase is more than seven times the 0.6 increase on the mainland during that period. The count by Statistics Norway shows there are 407 foreigners in Longyearbyen, including 106 Thais, 89 Swedes, 36 Russians, 18 Germans and 17 Danes. There are still fewer people in Svalbard than 20 years ago, when the population of 3,500 included 2,400 in the Russian settlements of Barentsburg and Pyramiden. About 400 people live in those settlements now.

City council to replace paper documents w/ digital tablets

A proposal to spend 250,000 kroner so tablet computers can replace paper documents generated controversy among Longyearbyen Municipal Council members at their Sept. 25 meeting. "It is absolutely the wrong time to discuss this, and it's embarrassing as a politician to go out in the city and defend it," said Lene Villumsen, a Non-Partisan member. Opponents also said the 5,000 kroner per-tablet cost is excessive. Proponents, who defeated an attempt to delay the purchase until after the next election by a 9-6 vote, said using tablets beginning in 2013 will save up to 50,000 kroner annually in copying and mailing costs.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. NW winds to 22 km/h. High 1C (-3 wind chill), low -3C (-7C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. S winds to 15 km/h. High -1C (-4C wind chill), low -4C (-8C wind chill).	Cloudy. SW winds to 25 km/h. High 1C (-3C wind chill), low -2C (-6C wind chill).	Cloudy. S winds to 25 km/h. High -2C (-7C wind chill), low -3C (-8C wind chill).
Sunrise 7:50a; sunset 5:39p	Sunrise 7:57a; sunset 5:31p	Sunrise 8:05a; sunset 5:23p	Sunrise 8:13a; sunset 5:15p
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -2C (-6C), -5C (-10C), light 8:46h; Monday, rain/snow, 1C (-5C), -5C (-10C), light 8:30h; Tuesday, rain/snow, 1C (-3C), -1C (-8C), light 8:13h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -1C (-9C), -7C (-14C), light 7:57h			
Data provided by storm.no			

What's your price for flight?

OUTBOUND : Longyearbyen-Svalbard - Oslo-Gardermoen				Friday 1. Mar 2013	
Departure	Arrival	Duration	Full fare	Low fare	
12:40 Longyearbyen-Svalbard	15:45 Oslo-Gardermoen	3:05	2,849 NOK	1,149 NOK	Free in-flight WiFi access (*)

RETURN : Oslo-Gardermoen - Longyearbyen-Svalbard				Friday 8. Mar 2013	
Departure	Arrival	Duration	Full fare	Low fare	
09:50 Oslo-Gardermoen	11:55 Longyearbyen-Svalbard	2:05	2,699 NOK	1,199 NOK	Free in-flight WiFi access (*)

Economy	Economy Flex	Economy Full Flex	Velg tidspunkt	Reisetid	Flyplasser
3 129,-	3 342,-	4 042,-	14:45 - 19:00	4:15	LYR - OSL
2 402,-	3 575,-	4 275,-	04:05 - 08:35	4:30	LYR - OSL
04:05 - 05:40 SK4493 Longyearbyen - Tromsø					
06:40 - 08:35 SK4403 Tromsø - Oslo					

Economy	Economy Flex	Economy Full Flex	Velg tidspunkt	Reisetid	Flyplasser
2 979,-	3 192,-	3 892,-	09:55 - 13:55	4:00	OSL - LYR
SK4414 Oslo - Longyearbyen via: Tromsø, 0:35					

Norwegian Air Shuttle

- **Taxes:** 484 kr.
- **One-way fees (partial list):** Service charge 89 kr.; Checked bag: 44-274 kr., excess weight 67 kr./kg.; pet 274-370 kr.; pick seat 44-81 kr.; soda: 25 kr.; food: 20-75 kr.

Scandinavian Airlines

- **Taxes:** Included.
- **One-way fees (partial list):** Checked bag; 1st free (23 kg.), additional 369 kr. (540 kr. for bikes and excess weight bags); pet: 795-1,420 kr.; wi-fi: 57 kr.;

Norwegian has turbulent history

COMPETITION, from page 1

Norwegian Air Shuttle announced in late September it will begin providing three direct flights a week between Oslo and Longyearbyen beginning March 1, 2013. Tickets are scheduled to go on sale beginning Thursday.

The lowest listed round-trip fare for the inaugural flight is 2,348 kroner, about 40 percent lower than Scandinavian Airlines. But taxes of 484 kroner negate part of the difference.

Customers will pay a larger range of fees, including ones for assigned seats and a first checked bag not charged by SAS. But more fees doesn't always mean they are higher, with Norwegian's rates for pets among those notably lower than those of SAS.

Also, failing to book one of Norwegian's limited number of lowest-fare tickets means facing prices much more similar to those of SAS.

In addition, Norwegian is only scheduled to fly from March to October, and their two previous attempts to offer flights in 2004 and 2008 only lasted one season.

Norwegian, the country's second-largest airline, is taking aggressive steps toward growth, announcing in January it may make the largest aircraft purchase in European history by buying

up to 377 planes. Included its plans for expanded routes is long-haul service to New York City and Bangkok.

But that high-budget mentality isn't perceived in the minds of 836 cabin crew employees, who say they will go on strike unless demands for better wages and working conditions are met. Pilots for the airline also threatened their first-ever strike at the airline in April.

Norwegian isn't perceived in the same (non) class as Ryanair or Spirit Airlines, which are infamous for taking pride in screwing their customers. But passengers were incensed when Norwegian abruptly abandoned Svalbard in 2008, leaving many stranded with unusable tickets.

Complaints from customers at travel review websites are plentiful, even when they award a high rating based often on cost, citing faults such as unclean planes, non-reclining seats, faulty check-in machines and poor wi-fi signals.

SAS officials have indicated their Svalbard fares will reflect an effort to be competitive, although no specific commitment to reduce prices has been made.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

'EU has no jurisdiction in the Arctic'

DRILLING, from page 1

The EU moratorium on Arctic drilling was unanimously approved by its environmental committee in September in an effort to implement common standards following the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

"We heard compelling evidence that if a blow-out occurred just before the dark Arctic winter returned it may not be possible to cap it until the following summer – potentially leaving oil spewing out under the ice for six months or more with devastating consequences for wildlife," said Joan Walley, the committee's chairperson, according to *Barents Observer*.

"The shocking speed at which the Arctic sea ice is melting should be a wake-up call to the

world that we need to phase out fossil fuels fast," Walley added. "Instead we are witnessing a reckless gold rush in this pristine wilderness as big companies and governments make a grab for the world's last untapped oil and gas reserves."

Deputy Oil and Energy Minister Per Rune Henriksen, in media interviews published this week, declared "the EU has no jurisdiction in the Arctic; no member country has a continental shelf in the Arctic."

"The EU is free to argue what it wants, but this would almost be like us commenting on camel operations in the Sahara, which we do not have anything to do with," Henriksen said.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Oct. 3

6 p.m.: Movie: "Barbara," German drama, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 4

Sale of surplus government furniture, time to be announced. Proceeds benefit annual NRK telethon. Statsbygg.

Oct. 5

8 p.m.: Movie: "Hypnotisören," Swedish crime/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 6

10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Flea market at UNIS. Fundraiser for annual telethon.

1 p.m.: Relay race to center of Longyearbyen. Fundraiser for telethon. Details at svalbardturn.no.

Oct. 7

10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Flea market at UNIS.

Annual car wash by governor to raise telethon funds. Time to be announced. Governor's garage building.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Hotel Transylvania" (3D), U.S. animated/family film, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Hypnotisören," Swedish crime/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 8

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

Oct. 9

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

6 p.m.: Bydrift Board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Oct. 10

6 p.m.: Movie: "Taken 2," French action/crime dubbed in English, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 13

7 p.m.: Free Flow Film Tour, featuring winter sports movies. Kroa.

7:30: Harvest festival, feast and concert. Huset.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Roman Empire had greenhouse gas*
- *Norway: No Arctic jurisdiction for EU*
- *Oops: 21M, not 100, cod in North Sea*
- *Climate change to slow marathons?*