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Norway: 40,000 Troops in Arctic To Train for 'Larger Global Conflict Involving Russia in the North-Atlantic

The Barents Observer reports that next year's Cold Response war games in northern Norway will include the participation of 40,000 troops. The biennial exercise has been conducted since 2006 when 10,000 military personnel were involved. The last iteration in 2020 included 15,000 service members but was cancelled after two weeks because of the coronavirus outbreak. So next year's Cold Response will feature a qualitative increase in the number of soldiers involved. In fact that number will be the largest in any Arctic exercise since the Cold War.

Cold Response 2020's 15,000 participants came from NATO members Norway, the U.S., Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany and the Netherlands and NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner Finland and Sweden. Traditionally invitations have been extended to all NATO members and partners to participate.

In a phone interview with *The Barents Observer* the head of the Norwegian armed forces, General Eirik Kristoffersen, provided the 40,000 figure. He also confirmed that the exercise "will be the largest military exercise inside the Arctic Circle in Norway since the 1980s." Despite the unprecedentedly large amount of military personnel projected to be involved, it is planned to be largely a naval and air force undertaking.

It's to be held in the Ofoten region in Northern Norway, where it's recently been announced [the Pentagon is to construct a new facility at the Evenes air base](#). That base will also host Norway's newly-acquired P8 Poseidon maritime surveillance planes, described by their manufacturer Boeing as "excelling at anti-submarine warfare; anti-surface warfare; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and search and rescue," along with NATO's two northernmost Quick Reaction Alert F-35s fighter jets.

The region also contains training areas employed by the U.S., Britain and the Netherlands for Arctic warfare exercises, according to *The Barents Observer*, which states of it: "For NATO and the Nordic countries' defense partnership, Ofoten is core strategic important [sic] in case of a larger global conflict involving Russia in the North-Atlantic." The news site also quotes Norwegian Defense Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen asserting next year's war games, which he describes as being motivated by purposes of deterrence, were designed to protect NATO interests in the Arctic.

Estimates of the number of troops participating in the ongoing Defender Europe 2021 exercise conducted in twelve nations from the Baltic to the Black Seas range from 30,000 to 37,000. The amount to participate in next year's Cold Response is larger yet. Both are targeted against one nation: Russia.

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