



NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SUB-COMMITTEE ON  
DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE (CDS DG)

SUB-COMMITTEE ON  
TECHNOLOGY TRENDS AND SECURITY (STCTTS)

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## **MISSION REPORT**

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**OSLO, BODØ AND EVENES  
NORWAY**

**7 – 9 MAY 2018**

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance (CDSCG) and Sub-Committee on Technology Trends and Security (STCTTS) paid a visit to Norway from 7 to 9 May 2018. The delegation consisted of 30 members of parliament from 17 NATO Member States and was co-chaired by CDSDG Chairperson Vitalino Canas (Portugal) and STCTTS Chairperson Hannes Hanso (Estonia).

## II. NORWAY, NATO AND RUSSIA

2. Norway's senior government and military officials told a visiting delegation that Norway's defence and security policy in recent years had to adapt to the "new normal" in the Arctic, created by Russia's efforts to step up its military presence in the Arctic and to seek greater control over the region.

3. For Russia, the Arctic is a strategic region: it is the source of some 20% of the country's GDP, mostly from the Yamal peninsula. The Northern Sea Route, running along the Russian Arctic Coast, has a significant economic and strategic value for Russia. Russia's Northern fleet has recently been detached from the Western Military District and now has its own strategic command. It has significantly increased the scope of its operations in the Arctic. Moreover, it is reviving the Cold War 'Bastion' concept, which aims to create impenetrable maritime areas in the Arctic and expand its presence into the so-called GIUK gap (between Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom). New capabilities – such as modern cruise missile-capable submarines – are arriving in the Arctic, while abandoned Soviet military bases are being renovated and re-opened. Designated Russian special forces are receiving training and equipment to operate under extreme Arctic conditions. Russian military aircraft have also been acting more aggressively in recent years: in 2017, on three occasions Russian bombers from the Kola peninsula flew approaches towards various Norwegian military facilities in the High North, apparently simulating an attack. Russia's ambition is to be able to efficiently project power in the Arctic and beyond, the delegation heard. The Commander of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters Lt. Gen. Rune Jakobsen noted that Norway's military relations with Russia have been suspended, with the exception of a communication line to avoid accidents.

4. Russia's increased military activism in the High North necessitates the strengthening of NATO's northern flank, bringing back some of the capabilities NATO had in the region during the Cold War. According to Frank Bakke Jensen, Norway's Defence Minister, this entails the establishment of a new Atlantic command for NATO, deployment of additional Norwegian capabilities in the High North, increased preparedness to support Allied assets on Norway's territory, enhancement of situational awareness, reduction of reaction time and the establishment of the "military Schengen" across the Alliance.

5. Collective defence in the High North was a "two-way street", Minister Bakke Jensen argued. Norway has to do its part by modernising its military capabilities, while Allies must increase their readiness to come to Norway's or any other Ally's help in times of crisis. Norway's armed forces are indeed undergoing substantial modernisation efforts, including the procurement of new fighter and maritime patrol aircraft, helicopters, submarines, corvettes and anti-submarine warfare capabilities as well as an updating of the country's 'total defence concept'. Lawmakers also heard from John-Mikal Størdal, Director General of the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) and Norway's principal members on NATO's Science and Technology Board. Mr Størdal outlined Norway's approach to defence science and technology sector and the country's contribution to NATO's efforts to maintain the technological edge in the era of globalisation. NATO has relied on the technological edge for 50 to 60 years, but the West is losing that edge, he argued. Norway's defence research and development (R&D) budget amounted to 2 to 3% of its defence budget, which was roughly in line with Germany's R&D investment. As labour is costly in Allied nations, especially

in Norway, armed forces equipped with high-tech defence capabilities, relying increasingly on automation, is a necessity.

6. Minister Bakke Jensen highlighted the increased bilateral military cooperation with several Allies, including Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom. He welcomed the increased US military presence in Europe, but called on European Allies to do more to ensure fair burden-sharing. He also welcomed the creation of the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation, but stressed that it should be developed in harmony, not competition, with NATO's efforts. NATO's Trident Juncture exercise, to be hosted by Norway later this year, is a manifestation of the Alliance's renewed commitment to the collective defence of the region, the delegation heard. Norwegian interlocutors noted the aforementioned measures are necessary to maintain Allied freedom of movement in the North, which is challenged by Russia's military build-up in the Arctic. At the same time, Norwegian interlocutors suggested that the Alliance's presence in the Arctic should be prudent and led by NATO's Arctic Allies. "Norway is NATO in the High North", Minister Bakke Jensen said.

7. While Norway supports the policy of sanctions on Russia for violating the international law, Norway seeks to maintain – in parallel and as a good neighbour – a constructive dialogue and practical cooperation with Russia in less sensitive areas by working together in such areas as Search and Rescue (SAR), fisheries and people-to-people contacts across the border. When it comes to encouraging people-to-people contacts, Oslo has expanded the visa free regime in its Finnmark province for Russians living in neighbouring regions. Norway and Russia have established an efficient framework for joint management of fishing stocks and collaboration of seafood industries. Norwegian and Russian state gas companies also cooperate in exploring oil and gas resources in the Barents Sea, although the Arctic oil and gas production is a divisive subject in Norwegian politics. The Commander of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters Lt. Gen. Rune Jakobsen noted that while links with the Russian Northern fleet have been suspended, Norway's cooperation with the Russian FSB unit in Murmansk on coast-guard issues has not been affected.

8. Apart from Russia's military activities, there is some degree of concern among the Norwegian interlocutors with regard to Moscow's use of hybrid methods. Despite sharing a border, Russia has traditionally viewed Norway – as a NATO member – as a country beyond its sphere of influence. As a result, Moscow appears to be less inclined to use hybrid techniques vis-à-vis Norway, compared with other Nordic neighbours Finland and Sweden. Nevertheless, Norwegian experts have noticed a clear trend of increased Russian espionage and cyber activities against Norwegian state, military, industrial and civilian targets. Norway has taken steps to address growing cyber challenges by unifying state cyber protection units into a new National Security Authority. Russia has also been investing in electronic warfare techniques. The use of these techniques has been recorded on Norwegian soil, when, in parallel with the Zapad-2017 exercise, the GPS signals were jammed over eastern Finnmark. It remains unclear whether the jamming was conducted on purpose to signal Norway or whether it was an unintended by product of the exercise.

9. Lars Rowe, Senior Research Fellow at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute, presented an alternate view on Russia's current foreign policy. He argued that Russia's current aggressive behaviour is closer to its "historical norm". Russia's more restrained behaviour during the 1990s was an historical outlier. He thus called on Western powers not to over-react to Russian hybrid activities and to wind down what he believed to be escalatory actions and rhetoric vis-à-vis Russia.

10. The delegation visited the Norwegian Joint Headquarters near Bodø. Commander Lt. Gen. Jakobsen told NATO parliamentarians that the Headquarters are prepared to serve a bigger role in the framework of NATO's Host-Nation Support Concept. He also noted that members of the Norwegian armed forces are actively participating in international operations: currently, some 326 people are deployed across the world, including special operation forces in Kabul, in South Sudan, Mali and Iraq as well as Lithuania (as part of NATO enhanced Forward Presence).

11. The delegation also visited the Bodø Main Air Station, one of the largest airbases in Europe. The base is home to the Norwegian F-16 fighter aircraft who can be scrambled on short notice to

deter, defend, and respond to threats to the Norwegian airspace. The aging F-16s will be gradually replaced by F-35s by 2025. Some of the F-35s will also be located at a new base that is currently being built further north in Evenes – a base which the delegation had the opportunity to visit.

### III. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEARCH AND RESCUE IN THE HIGH NORTH

12. The NATO PA delegation also discussed the challenge of the rapidly changing environmental situation in the High North, including the nexus between security and the climate change in the Arctic. Rolf Rødven, Executive Secretary of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), noted that January 2016 in the Arctic was 5°C warmer than the 1981–2010 average for the region, and monthly mean temperatures in October through December 2016 were 6°C higher than average for these months. Sea temperatures are also increasing, both near the surface and in deeper water. Sea ice thickness in the central Arctic Ocean declined by 65% over the period 1975–2012. Arctic glaciers and ice caps represent only a quarter of the world's land ice area, meltwater from these sources accounts for 35% of current global sea-level rise. He also warned that near-surface permafrost in the High Arctic has warmed by more than 0.5°C since the period of 2007 to 2009. Thawing permafrost is expected to contribute significantly to future greenhouse gas emissions. The decline in sea ice thickness and extent, along with changes in the timing of ice melt, are causing significant stresses and disruptions for marine ecosystems and biodiversity.

13. Autumn and winter temperatures in the Arctic will increase to 4-5°C above late 20th century values before mid-century, under either a medium or high greenhouse gas concentration scenario. This is twice the increase projected for the Northern Hemisphere. The Arctic Ocean may be ice-free in summer already by the late 2030s, Mr Rødven said. If increases in greenhouse gas concentrations continue at current rates, the melting of Arctic land-based ice would contribute an estimated 25 centimetres to sea-level rise between 2006 and 2100.

14. The speaker stressed that complying with the Paris Agreement would make a difference. If states lived up to their promises, it would allow the international community to be able to stabilise Arctic temperatures in the second part of the century. Implementation of the Paris Agreement would reduce end-of-century sea-level rise by 43% compared with that projected to occur under a business-as-usual emissions scenario.

15. The issue of search and rescue (SAR) was a constant feature on the visit's agenda. In Bodø, NATO Parliamentarians visited the Joint Rescue Coordination Center North Norway (JRCC NN). Bent-Ove Jamtli, Director of JRCC NN, noted that Norwegian SAR service is coordinated by two JRCCs – one in Sola (for southern Norway) and one in Bodø (for northern Norway). SAR services are performed through a cooperative effort involving governmental agencies, voluntary organisations and private companies. The public sector is obliged to participate with all available resources if asked by JRCC. JRCC NN had to deal with almost about 3,000 incidents in 2017, most of them in the sea. Mr Jamtli noted that there is an overall trend of slight increases in the number of accidents each year.

16. Since the 1980s, Norway's SAR services rely on the International Cospas-Sarsat system which utilises a network of satellites to detect and locating radio beacons activated by persons, aircraft or vessels in distress. The satellite coverage over the Arctic has so far not been adequate, but Mr Jamtli praised the new Medium-Earth Orbit (MEOSAR), which will become the dominant space-segment capability of the Cospas-Sarsat system. MEOSAR satellites will pick up the distress signals in near real time with more accuracy, versus the current system that can take as long as two hours. The speaker also noted that Norway's 12 aging Sea King SAR helicopters will be replaced by 16 new helicopters AW-101 by 2020 with an expanded radius of operation. Norway's SAR capabilities also include a number of other important assets, such as NH-90 naval helicopters, CGV Svalbard icebreaker and M/S Polarsyssel expedition- and research vessel.

17. The director of JRCC NN said that his organization co-operates closely with Norway's armed forces and provided an example of requesting an assistance of a F-16 fighter from Bodø air base while searching for a missing plane in the neighbouring region of Norway. Voluntary organisations – such as Norwegian alpine or glacier rescue teams – are instrumental to the success of Norway's approach to SAR. He also noted a good level of cooperation between Norwegian and Russian SAR services in protecting human lives and infrastructure in the framework of the Barents Agreement.

#### **IV. OTHER ISSUES**

18. During the visit, the delegation was also briefed on Norway's approach to counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism. Prominent Norwegian expert Thomas Hegghammer explained how Norway's approach to countering terrorism and extremism evolved over the years. The horrific lone-wolf attack by right-wing radical Anders Behring Breivik in 2011 exposed serious weaknesses in Norway's crisis response system. These weaknesses have largely been addressed since, according to Mr Hegghammer. Moreover, the country appears to have found ways to neutralise the jihadist scene that expanded rapidly in Norway since the early 2010s. Norwegian authorities' approach included a mixture of community-based policies, involving teachers and parents, with decisive prosecution of radical jihadist leaders. Nevertheless, it is too early to conclude that the jihadist radicalism in Norway is completely defeated, since jihadists have "strategic depth" and can retreat to other areas in Europe or beyond. The speaker also praised the benefits of Norway's "long-leash" approach to funding anti-extremism research, whereby experts are given considerable freedom in choosing the fields of research. This approach resulted in a number of innovative ideas in the field of combatting violent extremism.

19. The delegation also heard about Norway's substantial humanitarian assistance policy, particularly towards the war-torn Syria. Norwegian experts reminded the delegation that some 5.6 million Syrians became refugees and more than 6 million are internally displaced; 69% of Syrian population live in extreme poverty. Norway's programme to support Syrian people is the largest humanitarian effort in Norway's history. Since 2011, Norway has allocated about \$1.1 billion to that programme. Per capita, Norway is by far the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to Syria. Norway's main priority area is investing in education in Syria. Norway also allocated \$44 million to support Iraq. Norway's Red Cross works together with the Syrian Red Crescent to deliver aid to millions of people across front lines. However, more needs to be done to expand access areas for humanitarian workers, the delegation heard.