

Nordic countries support imperialist preparations for war with Russia in the Arctic and Baltic

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Finland's organisation of a series of military exercises involving some 15,000 troops near its lengthy border with Russia and Denmark's purchase of an additional 16 F-35 fighter jets are just two events from the past month underscoring the Nordic countries' expanded preparations for war. As the European powers intensify their rearmament drive to be in a position to wage war on Moscow independently of the US, governments in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are determinedly working to turn the Arctic and Baltic regions into key war fronts.

Finland's early winter military exercises began on November 8 and will run at various locations in the north and south of the country until December 5. In addition to professional soldiers, conscripts and reservists from the Finnish armed forces, personnel from NATO allies Britain, Sweden and Poland will also participate. Underscoring that these operations aim to prepare a northern front for waging war on Russia, a press release from the Finnish military declared on October 30, "The exercises ensure integration of lessons identified and learned concerning the war in Ukraine in training settings."

The largest exercise by far is the weeklong Lively Sentry 2025, running from November 27 to December 4. Led by the Jaeger Regiment, whose roots lie in the bloody counterrevolutionary violence organised by the Finnish bourgeoisie against the working class in 1918, around 6,500 participants will train with 900 vehicles. "The exercise will include execution of brigade-level units' joint operation involving a mechanised battlegroup's attack in a built-up area supported by urban jaegers," the army stated. Smaller exercises will include ground-based air defence operations and anti-tank missile practice.

Since joining NATO two years ago, Finland's 1,300-kilometre-long border with Russia has become a major flashpoint in the imperialist powers' drive to subjugate Russia to semi-colonial status and plunder its natural resources. Sweden's acceptance into the aggressive

US-led military alliance shortly afterwards helped transform the entire Nordic region into a base of operations for war on Russia. The ruling elites in both countries had long sought NATO membership but faced the problem of broad-based skepticism in their populations. A sustained propaganda campaign following the US-instigated Russian invasion of Ukraine helped create the political conditions to implement their war plans.

The right-wing government in Helsinki, a coalition led by the conservative National Coalition Party, has emerged as a close ally in Europe of the fascist-minded US President Donald Trump. President Alexander Stubb, who has significant influence over foreign policy issues, has repeatedly held one-on-one meetings with the would-be Führer, resulting in agreements for Finnish shipyards to supply the US with icebreakers to strengthen its military dominance in the Arctic and closer cooperation between the Finnish and US military forces.

Despite their comparatively small size, the Nordic countries combined are playing a significant part in the European imperialist powers' rearmament and war on Russia in Ukraine. In late October, Nordic heads of government met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Iceland for the fourth Nordic-Ukrainian Summit. The joint statement released following the gathering noted that the five Nordic states combined have provided over €20 billion in military and other assistance to Kiev. It continued to assert its support for Zelensky's "victory plan," the ongoing supply of arms to the Ukrainian army so that the bloodshed can persist and the use of seized Russian assets to help fund a loan to Kiev for war spending.

In a visit to Sweden, Zelensky and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson unveiled a multi-year agreement for the purchase of Saab Gripen fighter jets for the Ukrainian air force. In neighbouring Norway, a group of political parties has raised the demand for the country to use its €1.7 trillion oil fund, which has for decades been presented to the

population as a means to secure public services and living standards after the country's oil reserves expire, to fund the war on Russia.

The military escalation against Russia has been accompanied by sharpening tensions between the erstwhile Transatlantic allies, expressed in Trump's efforts to reach an accommodation with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the heads of the European imperialist powers and the trade war between the US and Europe. Led by Germany, the major powers are rearming at breakneck speed, with Berlin investing some €1 trillion in war spending as it aims to establish the largest and most capable conventional army on the continent.

Trump's threat to seize control of Greenland, a Danish territory, by military force if necessary is yet another point of conflict between the former Transatlantic allies. The Danish government, a coalition led by the Social Democrats and including the right-wing Liberals, has responded with a huge expansion of military spending since the beginning of the year. The latest announcement on October 10 included an investment of more than €4.5 billion in additional 16 F-35 fighter jets to expand air patrols around Greenland, on top of the 27 planes already purchased. A further €4 billion was announced for Arctic military infrastructure, such as drones and radar upgrades for remote parts of Greenland, and an expansion of Denmark's Joint Arctic Command headquarters in Nuuk, Greenland's capital.

Defence Minister and Liberal leader Troels Lund Poulsen declared, "We are going to be much more present in all parts of Greenland. This is in relation to the navy, the air force and the army."

One month earlier, the Danish government unveiled a plan to invest over €9 billion in long-range and medium-range surface-to-air missiles, which could hit targets inside Russia. Copenhagen chose the French-Italian SAMP-T system rather than US-made Patriot missiles and pledged to choose from a Norwegian-, German- or French-built medium-range option.

The major new purchases followed a hysterical warmongering campaign within the political establishment and media after a series of drone sightings over airports and military facilities in the country during late September. While the origin and number of drones in Danish airspace at the time remain unclear, the government-spearheaded fear-mongering campaign reached such a pitch that there were reports of residents inadvertently reporting bright stars in the sky to the authorities as drones.

The military build-up throughout the Nordic and Arctic regions is being carried out within the framework of NATO, but the European imperialists are increasingly attempting to assert their own aggressive geostrategic ambitions independently of the US. In October, German Defence

Minister Boris Pistorius visited Iceland to sign a letter of intent for expanded defence and security cooperation. The German navy will gain access to Icelandic ports and logistics for its frigates, submarines and reconnaissance aircraft for what a German Defence Ministry statement termed "situational awareness." Joint exercises and future cooperation on the procurement of military technologies were also discussed. Pistorius declared, "We are ready to assume greater responsibility for stability and security in the High North."

Iceland has no military of its own but has long played host to NATO air patrols to secure its airspace. A strong military presence in the region is key for the imperialists in their plan to wage a direct war on Russia, since the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap is one of the few remaining open routes for Russian vessels to reach the world's oceans. The Baltic Sea route has become increasingly risky, with military analysts describing the sea following Finland's and Sweden's entry into NATO as a "NATO lake," while Turkey has blocked ships from passing from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean since the US-instigated Russian invasion of Ukraine.

During World War II, British and then US troops were sent to occupy Iceland to prevent a Nazi occupation and the transformation of the island into a base of operations for military attacks on North America. For the same reason, Washington occupied Greenland and has retained military personnel there ever since.

The drawing once again of even the remotest parts of Europe into the rapidly escalating worldwide struggle between the major powers for markets, raw materials and spheres of influence underlines that the working class in every country must take up the fight to construct a global anti-war movement. This movement must stop the mad rearmament and preparations for war being enforced by every government, from Germany's Christian Democrat/Social Democrat coalition, to the Social Democrat- and Labour-led governments in Denmark and Norway, and Sweden's and Finland's right-wing governments that rely on support from far-right parties. This can only be done through the fight to link opposition to war with the struggle against the destruction of jobs and social programmes, that is, by fighting to replace the capitalist profit system, the root cause of war, with socialism.



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