

UDC 343.326(985)(045)

DOI: 10.17238/issn2221-2698.2017.29.128

## Counterterrorism in the Russian Arctic: legal framework and central actors<sup>1</sup>



© Ingwill Moe Elgsaas, Fellow, Centre for Norwegian and European Security. Tel.: +47 23 09 59 07. E-mail: [ingwill.elgsaas@ifs.mil.no](mailto:ingwill.elgsaas@ifs.mil.no)  
Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (IFS), Oslo, Norway.

**Abstract.** Russia's strategic interests in the Arctic coupled with a complex and diffuse terrorist threat has produced a niche topic: Arctic counterterrorism. Arctic counterterrorism is a new and underdeveloped topic that has received only limited attention. This article contributes a discussion of the legal framework and the main actors involved in countering terrorism in the Russian Arctic. The author finds that the legal framework for counterterrorism is extensive yet centered in core documents.

Similarly, counterterrorism involves many and varied actors united in a relatively simple and streamlined national system for counterterrorism. Current legal regulation and organisation provide a solid base that may support efficient management of counterterrorism, also in the Arctic. A notable strength is the concentration of coordination responsibilities in the hands of one central actor, the FSB. Another important characteristic is that the system is symmetrical and follows Russia's federal organisation with coordinating bodies for all regions including those in the Arctic. Counterterrorism legislation is kept up to date and the trend is towards tougher punishments and a wide understanding of terrorist offenses. A potential weak spot is the unclear role of the newly formed National Guard. The uncertainty surrounding the role of the National Guard in the fight against terrorism may challenge the FSB and weaken coordination of the system for counterterrorism in the future.

**Keywords:** terrorism, counterterrorism, Russian Arctic, legislation, actors

### Introduction

President Vladimir Putin includes terrorism among the threats that must be considered to ensure comprehensive safety and security<sup>2</sup> in the Russian Arctic.<sup>3</sup> Although both "terrorism" and "the Arctic" are current topics, they seldom appear together. As much as we hope that this separation may persist and that the Arctic may remain relatively untouched by terrorism; there are good reasons why we should, as the Russian President does, include terrorism among the many challenges that we must be prepared to face in the Arctic. According to the Global Terrorism Index, terrorist activities have increased substantially over the last years and resulted in higher death tolls and a wider spread of high fatality attacks.<sup>4</sup> While most attacks take place in specific geographic regions far from the Arctic, recent attacks and terrorist propaganda show ability and will to strike outside regions commonly associated with terrorist activities. Furthermore, focus on the Arctic as a strategic asset and resource reserve runs the risk of the region being perceived as a

<sup>1</sup> This paper was written within the framework of the international research project "Maritime Preparedness and International Partnership in the High North" (MARPART).

<sup>2</sup> Russian *bezopasnost'* can be translated as either safety or security, or both.

<sup>3</sup> Kremlin.ru (2014) Security Council Meeting on Implementing State Policy in the Arctic [in Russian] URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20845> (Accessed: 31 May 2017)

<sup>4</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2014:2. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/Global-Terrorism-Index-Report-2014.pdf> (Accessed: 22 August 2017)

prestigious target for terrorists aiming to expand the reach of terrorism further. Coupled with increased activities in and access to the Arctic this may entice also unwanted activities such as terrorism.

This study discusses Russia's counterterrorist system with a focus on the Arctic. The objective is to understand the current state of Russian counterterrorism in the Arctic and the direction for further developments. The study presents developments and recent events in terrorism, Russian interests in the Arctic, the relationship between terrorism and the Arctic, and the methods and sources used in this study. It then proceeds with discussions of the legal framework for Russian counterterrorism, central actors in Russia's system for counterterrorism, and counterterrorist activities in the Russian Arctic, before it concludes.

### ***Short on terrorism***

While not a new phenomenon, international terrorism came to everyone's attention in September 2001 when the "9/11" attacks triggered a global war on terrorism. Despite this war on terrorism, we have witnessed many more terrorist attacks in recent years and the geographical reach of the terrorist threat is expanding. According to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, there was a nine-fold increase in deaths from terrorism between 2000 and 2014.<sup>5</sup> The index also shows a wider spread of high fatality attacks (50 fatalities or more).<sup>6</sup> The most recent Global Terrorism Index (2016) shows that two prominent terrorist organisations, Boko Haram and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)\*, have expanded their areas of operation.<sup>7</sup> ISIS surpassed Boko Haram as the deadliest terrorist organisation in 2015<sup>8</sup> and has been linked to several recent terrorist attacks in Europe. The international dimension of these terrorist organisations was underscored in March 2015 when Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS.<sup>9</sup> ISIS' ranks are also replenished by foreign fighters recruited from all over the world in what is described as a "truly globalized mobilization on an epic scale".<sup>10</sup> According to estimates, some 25,000–30,000 foreign fighters have arrived in

---

<sup>5</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2014:2. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/Global-Terrorism-Index-Report-2014.pdf> Accessed: 22 August 2017

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

\*Illegal in the Russian Federation.

<sup>7</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2016. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/02/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.pdf> Accessed: 22 August 2017

<sup>8</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2014:2. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/Global-Terrorism-Index-Report-2014.pdf> Accessed: 22 August 2017 and Global Terrorism Index, 2016. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/02/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.pdf> Accessed: 22 August 2017

<sup>9</sup> Elbagir, N. Cruickshank, P. and Tawfeeq, M. (2015) Boko Haram purportedly pledges allegiance to ISIS. *CNN*. 9th March. URL: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/07/africa/nigeria-boko-haram-isis/> Accessed: 10 May 2015

<sup>10</sup> Awan, A. N. (2014) What Happens when ISIS Comes Home? *The National Interest*. 29th September. URL: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/what-happens-when-isis-comes-home-11363>. Accessed: 10th April 2015.

Iraq and Syria from 100 different countries since 2011.<sup>11</sup> These foreign fighters are encouraged to bring *jihād* back to their countries of origin.

Russia is one of many countries from which ISIS recruits its foreign fighters. According to FSB director Aleksandr Bortnikov, as many as 1,700 Russian citizens may be fighting for ISIS in Iraq.<sup>12</sup> Bortnikov stresses the need to prevent people from going and to do everything possible to prevent terrorist attacks by foreign fighters that return.<sup>13</sup> Members of ISIS have also directed threats at President Vladimir Putin and Russia in response to Russian involvement with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.<sup>14</sup>

Russia is well versed in the threat of terrorism. Both Imperial Russia and the Russian Union Republic in the USSR had their experiences with terrorists and terror. The first major terrorist attack in post-Soviet Russia took place in June 1995 when a group of Chechen insurgents led by Shamil' Basayev attacked the city of Budënnovsk in neighbouring Stavropol Kray. The attack culminated in a siege of the city's hospital with over a thousand hostages. The Budënnovsk hospital siege is considered a turning point in the first Chechen war and is even accredited with bringing about the Khasavyurt Agreement that ended the war in August 1996 [1].

Other infamous acts of terrorism include the Dubrovka theatre siege in October 2002 and the Beslan school siege in September 2004. Death tolls following these attacks are in the hundreds. In both cases, the terrorists demanded Chechen independence and the withdrawal of Russian forces from the North Caucasian republic. The Beslan school siege is considered the third worst terrorist incident in the period 2002–2011.<sup>15</sup>

Russia has also suffered many terrorist attacks on a smaller scale, several of them nonetheless lethal. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism's Global Terrorism Database holds 2158 entries for Russia covering the period January 1992–December 2016.<sup>16</sup> According to former Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Prosecutor

---

<sup>11</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2015:3. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/2015-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf> (Accessed: 1 August 2017)

<sup>12</sup> RIA Novosti (2015) Head of the FSB: Up to 1.7 Thousand Russian Citizens May be Fighting in Iraq [in Russian] URL: <http://ria.ru/world/20150220/1048707159.html> (Accessed: 13 April 2015)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> IRAQI NEWS (2014) Video: ISIS personally threatens Russian President Putin with seized Russian fighter jets. 5<sup>th</sup> September. URL: <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/urgent-video-isis-personally-threatens-russian-president-putin-seized-russian-fighter-jets/> (Accessed: 13 April 2015)

<sup>15</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2012. URL: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/156010/2012-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report1.pdf> (Accessed: 22 August 2017)

<sup>16</sup> Global Terrorism Database. URL: [http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=yes&casualties\\_type=&casualties\\_max=&success=yes&country=167&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=1&count=100](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=yes&casualties_type=&casualties_max=&success=yes&country=167&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=1&count=100) (Accessed: 1 August 2017)

General's Office, Aleksandr Bastrykin, 661 terrorist offences were recorded in 2013 alone.<sup>17</sup> Thirty-one of these offences were terrorist attacks that claimed 40 lives and injured dozens more.<sup>18</sup> Most recently, a terrorist attack on the metro in Saint Petersburg killed 10 people and injured many more on 3 April 2017. The attack was allegedly ordered by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri in retaliation for Russian actions in Syria, Chechnya and Libya.<sup>19</sup>

The global terrorism indices present scores for direct and indirect impact of terrorism (0–10) and rank countries accordingly<sup>20</sup>. Russia's scores over the last years are high but decreasing. An overview of the number of years countries have been among the top ten countries most affected by terrorism shows that Russia has been in the top ten no less than 9 years over the period 2000–2014. This dubious honour is shared by Algeria and only topped by Iraq (12 years), Afghanistan (13 years), Pakistan (also 13 years), and India (14 years).<sup>21</sup> Russia is among several countries whose considerable numbers of terrorist incidents contributed to a steep increase in terrorism over the period 2002–2009.<sup>22</sup> Russia alone accounted for 4% of the global total of terrorist incidents over this period.<sup>23</sup>

The numbers for 2011 gave Russia a score of 7.07 and ranked it the ninth country most affected by terrorism.<sup>24</sup> In 2013 and 2014 Russia scored 6.76 and 6.207 and ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> respectively.<sup>25</sup> The most recent index provides the numbers for 2015 and has Russia listed as the 30<sup>th</sup> country most affected by terrorism with a score of 5.43.<sup>26</sup> This places Russia in the orange category (score 4–6) alongside countries like Saudi Arabia, the UK and the USA.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>17</sup> RT.com (2014) Russia hit by 31 terror attacks in 2013 — chief investigator. 27 February. URL: <http://rt.com/politics/russian-terrorism-investigator-committee-993/> (Accessed: 10 September 2014)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Kupfer M. After Metro Bombing, Russia Confronts New Terror Challenges, 2017. The Moscow Times. URL: <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/after-metro-bombing-russia-confronts-new-terror-challenges-57910> (Accessed: 9 May 2017)

<sup>20</sup> Impact of terrorism is here understood as lives lost, injuries, property damage and the psychological after-effects of terrorism.

<sup>21</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2015, Table 1. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/2015-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf> (Accessed: 1 August 2017)

<sup>22</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2012:6. URL: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/156010/2012-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report1.pdf> (Accessed: 22 August 2017)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2015. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/2015-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf> (Accessed: 1 August 2017) and Global Terrorism Index, 2014. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/Global-Terrorism-Index-Report-2014.pdf> (Accessed: 22 August 2017)

<sup>26</sup> Global Terrorism Index, 2016. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/02/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.pdf> (Accessed: 22 August 2017)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

### *The Russian Arctic*

Russia is one of five Arctic littoral states, alongside Norway, Denmark (Greenland), Canada and the USA (Alaska). Russia's Arctic waters stretch from the Barents Sea in the West, through the Kara and Laptev seas, to the East Siberian Sea. Leaving disputed maritime areas aside, Russia's internal waters, territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone in the Arctic cover an area about the same size as those of the other four Arctic littoral states combined. There are different ways to set the outer limit of the Arctic (the Arctic Circle, the tree line, and the July 10°C isotherm). Regardless of one's method for delimitation, the Russian Arctic is vast and varied — and so are Russia's interests in the region.

President Putin started his address to the Russian Security Council on 22 April 2014 by stating that the Arctic has been and remains in Russia's sphere of special interests and that “practically all aspects of national security are concentrated here: military-political, economic, technological, ecological, and resource [security]”.<sup>28</sup> Owing to this concentration of interests, Russian authorities seek to approach the Arctic systematically and in a long-term perspective. This approach manifests itself in a handful of strategic documents that address the Arctic specifically or where the Arctic appears as one region/topic of special interest for the Russian Federation.

In 2008, President Dmitriy Medvedev approved the Fundamentals of the Russian Federation's State Policy in the Arctic for the Period to 2020 and Further Prospects [the Arctic Policy].<sup>29</sup> The document lists Russia's national interests in the Arctic including utilising the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF) as a strategic resource base in order to safeguard the country's socio-economic development and utilising the Northern Sea Route as a unitary national transport line (Section II, Article 4). Russia's Arctic Policy goes on to list several goals and strategic priorities including securing the country's supply of hydrocarbons, biological resources and other raw materials; maintaining necessary military power in the region; and developing infrastructure in the AZRF (Section III, Articles 6 and 7). Among the basic tasks to be carried out to reach these goals is the formation of a comprehensive safety and security system to protect the territory, population and objects that are critical for Russian national security against natural and man-made emergency situations (Section IV, Article 8). The Arctic Policy is to be implemented in three phases and the final phase (2016–2020) should witness the AZRF being transformed into Russia's main base for strategic resources (Section VI, Article 11).

---

<sup>28</sup> Kremlin.ru (2014), Security Council Meeting on Implementing State Policy in the Arctic [Russian] URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20845> (Accessed: 31 May 2017)

<sup>29</sup> URL: <http://government.ru/media/files/A4qP6brLNJ175I40U0K46x4SsKRHGfUO.pdf> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

In 2013, Russia also adopted a Strategy for Developing the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security for the Period to 2020 [the Arctic Strategy].<sup>30</sup> The Arctic Strategy lists priority directions for developing the AZRF and ensuring Russia's national security including international cooperation in the Arctic and ensuring military security, defence and protection of Russian state borders in the Arctic (Section III, Article 7.) The Arctic Strategy upholds focus on the Arctic's importance to Russia's socio-economic development as well as its military security.

The reason why the Arctic figures prominently in Russia's long-term strategy for socio-economic development owes to the region's natural resources and strategic location. The Russian Arctic holds considerable deposits of minerals such as gold, diamonds, apatite, nickel and copper, among others and is important to Russia's expansive mining industry. Arctic areas account for as much as 90% of the country's total nickel and cobalt extraction.<sup>31</sup> The Arctic is also home to Russia's Northern Basin fish fleet. It is Arctic oil and gas deposits, however, that have drawn the most attention in recent years. According to numbers from the All-Russian Research Geological Institute, Russia's Arctic continental shelf holds in excess of 100 billion tons of oil equivalents, which make up 87% of the total hydrocarbon resources in Russia's continental shelf [2].

The Arctic's role for Russia's military security is linked to its geographic location and the military capabilities located in the Arctic. The Russian Arctic is home to the largest fleet in the Russian Navy, the Northern Fleet. The Northern Fleet is one of two fleets equipped with strategic nuclear capabilities and it is based on the Kola Peninsula in the Northwestern Russian Arctic. Today we see that military infrastructure and bases are being built or rebuilt along the Arctic coast. Recently, the organisation of Russia's Armed Forces has also been tweaked to address the Arctic dimension directly. A new "Arctic military district" has been formed, the Joint Strategic Command North (JSC North). This new military district is formed around the Northern Fleet (formerly in the JSC West) and also draws capabilities from the Central and Eastern JSCs. This reorganisation underscores the continued importance of the Arctic in a military strategic perspective.

The Arctic is also a topic in documents on Russia's strategic interests and aims more broadly, such as the National Security Strategy to 2020 (2009)<sup>32</sup> and the Military Doctrine (2014)<sup>33</sup>. Russia's National Security Strategy points to the importance of energy resources and asserts that international politics will, in the long-term perspective, centre in on control of energy deposits such as those located on the Barents Sea shelf and other areas in the Arctic (Section II, Article 11). The

---

<sup>30</sup> URL: <http://government.ru/media/files/2RpSA3sctElhAGn4RN9dHrtzk0A3wZm8.pdf> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

<sup>31</sup> RIA Novosti, Natural Resources in the Arctic: A Reference [In Russian]. URL: [https://ria.ru/arctic\\_spravka/20100415/220120223.html](https://ria.ru/arctic_spravka/20100415/220120223.html) (Accessed: 4 December 2017)

<sup>32</sup> URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/424> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

<sup>33</sup> URL: <https://rg.ru/2014/12/30/doktrina-dok.html> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)



strategy also states a need to raise the effectiveness of border protection in Russia's Arctic Zone (Section IV-2, Article 42). Russia's Military Doctrine lists the Arctic Strategy among the documents whose relevant provisions are considered in the doctrine (Article 4). Among the main tasks of the Armed Forces, other forces and bodies during peace time we find: to secure the national interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic (Article 32).

During his "direct line" earlier this year, President Putin was asked why Russia is so keen on the Arctic and spends vast resources on the region.<sup>34</sup> Putin's answer serves as a summary illustration of the official Russian view of the Arctic and priorities in the region:

*The Arctic is a most important region, which will ensure Russia's future. Opportunities for the Russian Federation will grow in the region. Around 30% of all hydrocarbons will be extracted in the Arctic. If the climate changes, this will mean that the navigation period in the Arctic zone will last longer. The region is attracting interest also from non-Arctic states. This is good. We are prepared to cooperate, but we must safeguard our priorities. It is necessary to ensure economic activity in the Arctic. It is also necessary to ensure a military presence, to ensure border control. We must keep watch of routes for intercontinental missiles that pass through there. Failure to do this was not due to a lack of interest, but because they were unable to do this. Today we can do this.*<sup>35</sup>

### **Terrorism and the Arctic**

Seeing as the Arctic is intended to become Russia's main base for strategic resources — oil and gas duly mentioned — it is no wonder that President Putin, when he expressed his concern for terrorism in the Arctic, stated that "Oil and gas production facilities, loading terminals and pipelines should be adequately protected from terrorists and other potential threats".<sup>36</sup>

Under the heading Terror's Next Target, Gal Luft and Anne Korin have argued that the world's energy system will likely become a favoured target among terrorist organisations [3]. Indeed, as the authors point out, oil and gas facilities have long been targeted by terrorists, but this has not received much attention as these attacks have been treated as part of the "industry's risk"[3].

According to the Energy Policy Information Center, "energy and terrorism have a long history, and the relationship between the two appears to be strengthened".<sup>37</sup> This claim rests on an

---

<sup>34</sup> Maksimov Ilya and Dmitriy Sosnovskiy, (2017). "Direct line" with Vladimir Putin. Online Transcription [Russian] *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. URL: <https://rg.ru/2017/06/15/priamaia-liniia-s-vladimirom-putiny-m-onlajn-translaciia.html> (Accessed: 15 June 2017)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Kremlin.ru (2014), Security Council Meeting on Implementing State Policy in the Arctic [Russian] URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20845> (Accessed: 31 May 2017)

<sup>37</sup> Energy Policy Information Center (2014) The Growing Connection between Oil and Terror. URL: <http://energypolicyinfo.com/2014/09/the-growing-connection-between-oil-and-terror/> (Accessed: 6 May 2015)

analysis that shows that attacks on oil and gas facilities have risen sharply in both aggregate and relative terms. Attacks on oil and gas facilities have risen from less than 100 attacks per year in the 1970s to almost 600 in 2013 alone.<sup>38</sup> In the mid–1990s attacks on oil and gas facilities made up less than 2.5 percent of total attacks while the 600 attacks on oil and gas facilities in 2013 made up nearly a quarter of the attacks that year.<sup>39</sup>

Industry risk or not, energy facilities' vulnerability to terrorist attacks is receiving more attention today. This comes partly as a result of actual attacks, such as the one on the In Amenas joint venture (Sonatrach, BP and Statoil) in Algeria 16–19 January 2013 that killed 40 people and disrupted operations for over a year.<sup>40</sup> In 2015, a US owned gas factory in Lyon, France, was among the targets in a string of what appeared to be coordinated attacks on energy facilities.<sup>41</sup> ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks.<sup>42</sup> According to John Siciliano, these attacks "raised the spectre of what many security experts call an inevitable physical or cyber attack on the U.S. electricity grid".<sup>43</sup>

Developments in cybercrime and the vast potential detrimental effects of cyberterrorism places this diffuse threat high up on the counterterrorist agenda. Cyberattacks would allow terrorists to target objects far beyond their geographical areas of activities and without establishing any physical presence in the areas where the objects are located. While cyberattacks are not among the *modi operandi* of terrorist organisations at present, there is concern that such organisations may soon adopt such methods. According to the Cybersecurity Strategy of the European Union, terrorists are among potential origins of threats to Europe's cybersecurity.<sup>44</sup>

One of just a few studies that address the nexus between terrorism and the Arctic directly is an article by Kseniya Bidnaya on cyberterrorism as a threat to state security in the Arctic region [4]. Bidnaya portrays a potential terrorist threat in the Arctic as stemming from tension between Arctic states. In the future, she writes, "the fight between Russia and the United States over the Arctic will move into cyberspace" [4]. Bidnaya also speculates that Russian drilling rigs can be

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Statoil, The In Amenas Attack, 2013. URL: <https://www.statoil.com/content/dam/statoil/documents/In%20Amenas%20report.pdf> (Accessed: 1 August 2017)

<sup>41</sup> Siciliano, John (2015). New wave of terror attacks shows energy infrastructure at risk, *The Washington Examiner* 27 June 2015. URL: <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/new-wave-of-terror-attacks-shows-energy-infrastructure-at-risk/article/2567159> (Accessed: 1 August 2017)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> European Parliament, et al., *Cybersecurity Strategy of the European Union: An Open, Safe and Secure Cyberspace*. 2013:3. URL: [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/policies/eu-cyber-security/cybsec\\_comm\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/policies/eu-cyber-security/cybsec_comm_en.pdf) (Accessed: 4 August 2017)



hacked and compromised so that oil spills into the Arctic and thus provide the United States with falsified evidence of Russian activities in the Arctic harming the environment [4].

A more comprehensive discussion of the topic is presented by Roman Zalyvskiy in his article on the threat of terrorism in the Russian Arctic [5]. Zalyvskiy addresses several important underlying factors for terrorism in Russia, such as unemployment among youth etc. [5]. He also points to interesting trends, such as “distraction strikes” that have preceded several major terrorist attacks in Russia including the attacks on the Dubrovka theatre and school No. 1 in Beslan [5]. Zalyvskiy entertains controversial claims of a Cold War plot to destabilise Russia by fuelling Islamic discontent in the Caucasus and Central Asia [5]. In Zalyvskiy’s words, “this plan, as we can see, is being carried out quite successfully by Russia’s ‘good colleagues’” [5]. Zalyvskiy goes on to claim that Russia’s “friends” are even financing terrorists [5].

In the author’s opinion, a potential terrorist threat in the Arctic is disconnected from potential conflicts over the Arctic and other tensions between Arctic states. No Arctic state has been labelled as a terrorist organisation and, although they certainly affect relations between Arctic states in a negative way, recent hacking incidents have not been labelled cyber-terrorism. The state-centred outlook and focus on tension between Russia and “the West” (and thus among the Arctic states) presented by Bidnaya and Zalyvskiy distract attention from the real origins and potential for terrorism in the Arctic. A terrorist threat in the Arctic will arguably come from terrorist organisations, should they become active in the Arctic (physical presence) or through cyber-attacks targeting Arctic objects from outside the region.

If the Arctic states go ahead and utilise oil and gas deposits located in the Arctic it cannot be ruled out that terrorists (including eco-terrorists) might target oil and gas facilities there. Environmentalists are paying attention to the Arctic and campaign against economic projects that may impact the vulnerable Arctic environment. Greenpeace's 2013 protest at the Prirazlomnoye oil platform in the Pechora Sea illustrated the vulnerability of such facilities. While we might think that Arctic oil and gas facilities enjoy a certain level of security simply from being located far away and in an inhospitable climate, the fact that a group of activists made their way to the platform and even started scaling it before they were apprehended proves otherwise.

This weakness has not gone unnoticed by the head of the FSB, Aleksandr Bortnikov, who has stated that:

*the current work of anti-terrorist agencies in the [Arctic] region has some faults, especially in ensuring the security of the Northern Sea Route and maritime-based economic enterprises [...] In particular, we need to perfect the legal basis that regulates the anti-terror protection of nuclear*

*icebreaking fleet, maritime drilling rigs and underwater facilities. We must also develop a protocol for the minimization and liquidation of any consequences of terrorist attacks on infrastructure of the North Sea Route. [...] regional anti-terror commissions must launch constant control programs assessing the state of protection at Russia's Arctic sea ports.*<sup>45</sup>

Besides oil and gas facilities (present and future) and the Northern Sea Route's infrastructure, there are also other potential targets of terrorism in the Arctic. These targets range from public areas and events that draw crowds to strategic objects that may be targeted due to the massive damage potential, e.g. airports, train stations, schools, nuclear objects etc. Two of Russia's 10 active nuclear power plants are in the Arctic (Kola NPP in the Murmansk region and Bilibino NPP in the Chukotka region). Additionally, many nuclear objects belonging to the Armed Forces are in the Arctic. In her article on cyber-terrorism as a threat in the Arctic region, Bidnaya singled out Russia's anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system as well as computer control systems of drilling rigs as potential targets [4].

Among the numerous incidents registered in Russia in the post-Soviet period according to the Global Terrorism Database, two took place in the Russian Arctic. In 1998, a group of "unidentified sailors" took children and teachers hostage at a school on Novaya Zemlya (Arkhangelsk Oblast') and threatened to start killing hostages if their demands for weapons and a plane were not met.<sup>46</sup> The second incident took place in the same region in 2006, when a car bomb blew up near a department belonging to the Ministry for Natural Resources and Forestry in the regional capital.<sup>47</sup>

It is difficult to predict with much accuracy what trajectory developments in the Arctic will take in the long term. However, what is certain is that the larger role the Arctic plays, say as a strategic resource deposit or as an important transport route, the more likely is the region going to attract even more attention. Such attention may come from investors looking to make a profit, from activists looking to deter economic activities in the Arctic, or from terrorists looking to strike strategic assets.

---

<sup>45</sup> RT.com (2015) Russian security chief urges stronger anti-terror defense for Arctic. 11 August. Available from <https://www.rt.com/politics/312187-russian-security-chief-urges-international/> (Accessed: 12 August 2015)

<sup>46</sup> Incident Summary GTD ID 199809050002. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland. URL: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=199809050002> (Accessed: 16 August 2016)

<sup>47</sup> Incident Summary GTD ID 200602020002. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland. URL: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200602020002> (Accessed: 16 August 2017)

### ***Methods and sources***

Arctic counterterrorism is a relatively new and under-researched topic. The current study's objective is to start the process of filling this gap by providing an initial case study of counterterrorism in the Russian Arctic. This is in many ways an exploratory case study, but it is limited to two select units of analysis: legal regulation and formal organisation. The choice of these two units of analysis rests with the novelty of the topic, which necessitates laying down the groundwork for subsequent analyses of more sophisticated specificities of Arctic counterterrorism.

This legal and organisational case study is largely based on primary sources such as federal laws and concept and strategy documents. The method of analysis used to inform this case study based on these documents is methodical qualitative text analysis. The choice of this method rests on these documents' function and authority. The federal laws, concepts and strategic documents here subjected to text analysis are legally binding and steering documents. These texts are the public expression of the Russian authorities' tasks and objectives on questions pertaining to the topic at hand. In other words, these texts reveal the legal framework and organisation of Russia's Arctic counterterrorism as the Russian authorities perceive and prescribe them. Secondary sources have also been consulted, such as the global terrorism indices and the media. Secondary sources mainly inform the context and they also provide insights on counterterrorist activities in the Russian Arctic.

### ***Counterterrorism in the Russian Federation***

This section considers the organisation of counterterrorism in the Russian Federation in general and in the Russian Arctic. The section is organised into three parts: a presentation of the legal framework that regulates counterterrorism, a presentation of the actors that formulate and carry out counterterrorist measures, and a presentation of counterterrorist activities in the Russian Arctic.

#### ***Legal framework***

There are several legal documents that regulate counterterrorism in the Russian Federation. Central among these are the federal law No. 35 On combating terrorism (2006) and the Concept of Counterterrorism (2009). Russia's anti-terrorism legislation reaches much wider than this with many legal acts regulation relevant activities (laws regulating travel, transport, communication, intelligence activities etc.). The current presentation focuses on federal law No. 35, the Concept of Counterterrorism as well as the Russian Criminal Code. The presentation concludes with a few comments on the most recent changes to counterterrorism legislation, the Yarovaya-law package.

*Criminal Code*

The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation<sup>48</sup> holds a chapter on crimes against public safety, including acts of terrorism. It defines an act of terrorism as any action that:

*evokes fear in the population and creates danger for loss of life, causes substantial material damage or other severe consequences with the aim to destabilise activities of state bodies or international organisations or to influence their decisions; and also, the threat to undertake such actions with such aims.* (Article 205, section 1).

Carrying out an act of terrorism is punishable by a custodial sentence of 10–20 years and potentially followed by a restricted freedom regime. Aggravating circumstances include that the act of terrorism is carried out by an organised group or that it trespasses on a nuclear facility (Article 205, sections 1, 2 and 3).

Other related charges include participation in terrorist organisations or associations and public calls for, or justification of, terrorism. Such crimes are punishable by one or a combination of custodial sentences (2–20 years), restricted freedom regimes (1–2 years or indefinitely), fines (≤1,000,000 RUB or ≤5 years income), forced labour (≤5 years), and embargo from offices or activities (≤5 years) (Articles 205–205.5).

There have been several calls to reinstate the death penalty in Russia and terrorism is one of the categories of crimes claimed to justify such punishment. While these calls have been unsuccessful, other ways to expand the reach of the Criminal Code and to punish terrorists directly and indirectly are also being promoted. More on this below.

*Federal law No. 35 On combating terrorism*

Federal law No. 35 On combating terrorism was adopted 6 March 2006<sup>49</sup>. The law lays down the basic principles for counterterrorist measures and lists the powers vested in the Russian president, the federal government, regional authorities, and local authorities. Three topics are given particular attention: suppressing terrorist acts in the air; suppressing terrorist acts at sea (in internal waters and the territorial sea, on the continental shelf and to protect national shipping) and use of the Armed Forces in the fight against terrorism. In broad strokes, any aircraft or marine vessel that fails to respond to and comply with commands can be annihilated by the Armed Forces to prevent loss of life or an ecological disaster (articles 7,8 and 9). The Russian Armed Forces can also be used in counterterrorist operations beyond Russia's state borders (article 10).

---

<sup>48</sup> URL: <http://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/10108000/paragraph/26654339:5> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

<sup>49</sup> URL: <http://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/12145408/paragraph/17901:2> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

Counterterrorist operations can be initiated if other means to prevent an act of terrorism are deemed insufficient (Article 12.1). In this event, a special legal regime can be introduced to regulate the area for the duration of the operation to prevent and expose the act of terrorism, minimise the effects thereof and protect vital interests. This could include expelling people from the area or quarantining them in it, commandeering vehicles, tapping phones and other sources of information, among other things (Article 11). The law opens for the possibility to engage in negotiations with terrorists during a counterterrorist operation, but any political demands are not to be considered (Article 16).

### *Concept of Counterterrorism*

In October 2009 President Dmitriy Medvedev affirmed the Concept of Counterterrorism in the Russian Federation<sup>50</sup>. Its stated goal is to lay down the basic principles for Russia's state policy on counterterrorism and to set the goal, tasks, and course for further development of a nationwide system for combating terrorism in the Russian Federation (Preamble). The concept includes a list of general contemporary trends in terrorism, among them an increase in terrorist acts and casualties thereof as well as a wider geographic span and international character of terrorist organisations (Section I, article 1, a) and b)).

The concept presents a national system for counterterrorism that consists of the aggregate of subjects [bodies] combating terrorism and normative legal acts that regulate their activity on detection, warning (prevention), suppression, exposure and investigation of terrorist activities, minimising and (or) eliminating the consequences of terrorism (Section II, Article 5). The organisation of this national system for counterterrorism is presented in the next section on central actors.

The legal base for the national system for counterterrorism is, according to the Concept of Counterterrorism: the Russian Constitution, universally recognised principles and norms of international law, international treaties that Russia is party to, federal constitutional laws, federal laws, normative legal acts of the president and the government, the National Security Strategy till 2020, the Foreign Policy Concept, the Military Doctrine, the Concept of Counterterrorism, and other relevant normative legal acts (Section I, article 9). While these are important documents (or general categories of documents) in the Russian legal hierarchy, many do not or only superficially address terrorism.

Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020 (2009) touches upon terrorism as well as the Arctic, but these topics are not explicitly linked. The strategy identifies terrorism, international and domestic, among threats to Russia's national security. To ensure national security in the long term,

---

<sup>50</sup> URL: <https://rg.ru/2009/10/20/zakon-dok.html> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

the strategy reads, it is necessary to continuously improve law-enforcement measures to expose, prevent, suppress, and detect acts of terrorism (Section IV-1, article 36). As already mentioned above, the National Security Strategy emphasizes the importance of energy deposits and improved border control in the Arctic.

The Foreign Policy Concept (2016)<sup>51</sup> describes the strengthening of international terrorism as one of the most dangerous threats of today (Section II, Article 14). Globalisation allows for the formation of criminal power centres that pool resources and further increase the influence of criminal organisations, also through connections with terrorist and extremist organisation (Section II, Article 16).

Russia's Military Doctrine (2014) lists terrorism among both external and domestic military threats to the Russian Federation (Articles 12 and 13). Participation in international counterterrorism is listed among the tasks Russia undertakes to contain and prevent military conflict (Article 21). The doctrine also asserts that international cooperation in counterterrorism is insufficiently effective, a condition that allows the "threat of global extremism (terrorism) and its new manifestations" to grow (Article 12).

#### *The Yarovaya law package*

In the summer of 2016, an anti-terrorism law package was adopted. The so-called 'Yarovaya law' (federal laws No. 374 and No. 375, 2016<sup>52</sup>), introduced changes to several legal acts including federal law No. 35 On combating terrorism and the Criminal Code's article 205 on acts of terrorism. This new law package has been widely criticised both in Russia and abroad for what is perceived as a widening of scope for anti-terrorism legislation among other things.<sup>53</sup>

The changes introduced to the Criminal Code raise the minimum punishment for some terrorist crimes. While carrying out an act of terrorism previously qualified for 8–15 years in prison, the minimum custodial sentence today is 10 years. If the terrorist act was carried out by an organised group, the scope for custodial sentencing used to be 10–20 years and is now 12–20 years (Article 205). Public calls for or justifications of terrorism in mass media used to qualify for up to 7 years in prison. Today such statements made in mass media or via electronic or information-telecommunication networks including the internet, still qualify for maximum 7 years in prison,

---

<sup>51</sup> URL: [http://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2542248](http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2542248) (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

<sup>52</sup> URL: <http://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/71437484/paragraph/1:1> (Accessed: 4 August 2017) and <http://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/71437612/paragraph/1:3> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

<sup>53</sup> Borshchevskaya, Anna (2016) "Brave New World": Russia's New Antiterrorism Legislation in Forbes 8 July. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/annaborshchevskaya/2016/07/08/brave-new-world-russias-new-anti-terrorism-legislation/#17509123d559> (Accessed: 6 September 2016)

but now there is also a minimum sentence of 5 years for such crimes (Criminal Code, Article 205.2). Controversially, a new category of terrorist crimes has been added to the Criminal Code: failure to report someone for preparing, carrying out or having carried out a terrorist crime (Article 205.6). Changes to the federal law “On combating terrorism” consist of a few additions and specifications of responsibilities, particularly relating to coordinating efforts between the different actors and involving lower level actors in fundamental preventive activities. More on this in the section on actors below.

### ***Central actors***

Many different actors have an obligation to participate in Russian counterterrorism ranging from state bodies through non-governmental organisations to individual citizens. This presentation focuses on the formal organisation of Russian counterterrorism and on the most central state actors with a special attention given to the coordinating bodies in the national system for counterterrorism.

#### *President of the Russian Federation*

The highest authority for counterterrorism in the Russian Federation is the president. The president sets the basic direction of state counterterrorist policy, he determines the jurisdiction of federal executive bodies subordinate to the presidency in this field, and he can also decide to use Russian forces to fight terrorism outside of Russian territory.<sup>54</sup> The president also has the power to set up an authoritative body to coordinate and organise counterterrorist activities of federal and regional executive bodies and local bodies. He can also decide that relevant bodies must be formed with representatives from territorial divisions of federal executive bodies, and from regional state bodies, among others. Decisions made by these bodies within their area of responsibility are legally binding for all state bodies.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Federal government*

The federal government determines the jurisdiction of federal executive bodies subordinate to it in this field, it develops and implements counterterrorist measures according to the president’s guidelines, and it is responsible for ensuring that counterterrorist activities of federal and regional executive bodies and of local bodies are carried out with sufficient means and resources.<sup>56</sup> The federal government is also responsible for categorising objects in need of protection from terrorists; criteria for protecting them, controlling that these criteria are observed, as

---

<sup>54</sup> Federal law No. 35, 2006, article 5, section 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* Article 5, sections 4 and 4.1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* Article 5, section 2.



well as issuing security passports for such objects.<sup>57</sup> New, as of the introduction of the Yarovaya law is that the federal government sets procedures for cooperation between federal, regional and local authorities as well as individuals and organisations when assessing information about an impending act of terrorism and when informing subjects combating terrorism about identified terrorist threats.<sup>58</sup>

#### *Regional authorities*

Regional authorities in the many federal subjects (regions) also play a role in Russian counterterrorism. This role mainly rests with the highest regional official, in most cases a governor, and the highest regional executive body, the regional government.

The governor organises the implementation of state policy on counterterrorism in the region, she coordinates preventive and reactive measures of regional state bodies, and she is obligated to organise activities of counterterrorist bodies with representation from territorial divisions of federal executive bodies, regional state bodies etc. set up on the president's order.<sup>59</sup>

The regional government, which is chaired by the governor, has many obligations when it comes to counterterrorism. This includes developing and implementing a regional state programme for counterterrorism, rehabilitation of victims of terrorism, organising training in methods to detect terrorist threats and minimise effects of terrorist acts, and carrying out interregional counterterrorist cooperation, among other things.<sup>60</sup>

#### *Local authorities*

Local authorities' role in combating terrorism has been minimal. Among the amendments introduced by the Yarovaya law, we find the inclusion of an article listing the competencies of local authorities in the field of combating terrorism. This includes articulating and implementing municipal programmes for prevention of terrorism, and organising outreach events in local educational institutions that explain the essence of terrorism and its dangers for society and that form hostility to terrorist ideology in the population.<sup>61</sup>

#### *National system for counterterrorism*

As mentioned above and according to the Concept of Counterterrorism, the national system for counterterrorism consists of the aggregate of subjects [bodies] combating terrorism. These bodies are: all authorised bodies of state power (i.e. federal and regional authorities) and of local self-government (i.e. local authorities) whose competencies include measures to combat ter-

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Article 5, section 2, paragraph 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Article 5.1, section 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Article 5.1, section 2.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Article 5.2.

rorism, as well as non-governmental organisations and associations and also citizens who cooperate with bodies of state power and local self-government in implementing counterterrorist measures.<sup>62</sup> Federal law No. 35 On combating terrorism also provides a description of a possible composition of a counterterrorist group (force): subdivisions, military units and formations of the Armed Forces, subdivisions of federal executive bodies pertaining to security, defence, internal affairs, ensuring the activities of the National Guard's troops, justice, civil defence, protection of the population and territory against emergency situations, fire safety and safety of people at sea, other federal executive bodies, and also subunits of regional executive bodies.<sup>63</sup> Needless to say, with such large and varied groups of actors involved, Russia's national system for counterterrorism requires solid coordination.

Responsibility for coordinating the national system for counterterrorism rests with the National Antiterrorism Committee (NAC) through its Federal Operational Staff (FOS) and regional operational staffs (ROS).<sup>64</sup> Additionally, there are regional antiterrorism commissions (RAC) in each of Russia's regions.<sup>65</sup> These coordinating bodies predate the Concept of Counterterrorism as they were set up by presidential decree in 2006 in order to improve the state's management of counterterrorism.<sup>66</sup> All members in the coordinating bodies in the national system for counterterrorism serve *ex officio*. NAC advises the President of the Russian Federation on the formulation of Russia's counterterrorism policy and on articulating Russia's counterterrorism legislation.<sup>67</sup> The NAC also participates in international counterterrorism cooperation, including preparation of international treaties.<sup>68</sup> The RACs coordinate activities between territorial subdivisions of federal executive bodies, regional executive bodies and local bodies in the fields of terrorism prevention and minimising (eliminating) consequences of terrorism.<sup>69</sup> The FOS and the ROS' are responsible for planning and directing counterterrorist operations.<sup>70</sup>

The coordinating bodies in Russia's system for counterterrorism bring together officials occupying leading positions in various governmental bodies, including the leaders of the most central security services. Table 1 lists the members of the NAC and identifies those holding central positions in the NAC.

---

<sup>62</sup> Concept of Counterterrorism, Section II, Article 7.

<sup>63</sup> Federal law No. 35 On combating terrorism, Article 15.3.

<sup>64</sup> Concept of Counterterrorism, Section II, Article 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Presidential decree No. 116, 2006, 'On measures to counter terrorism', Preamble.

<sup>67</sup> Provision on NAC introduced by presidential decree No. 116, 2006.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Presidential decree No. 116, 2006, Article 3.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* Article 4.

Table 1

*Members of the NAC and their positions*

| <b>Members of the NAC [Position in the NAC]</b>   |
|---|
| Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) [NAC Chairman]   |
| Minister of Internal Affairs (MVD) [Deputy NAC Chairman]  |
| Deputy director of the FSB [Leader of the NAC apparatus and deputy NAC Chairman]                          |
| Deputy Prime Minister and presidential plenipotentiary for the North Caucasus Federal District            |
| First deputy leader of the presidential administration  |
| First deputy Chairman of the Federation Council (by agreement)  |
| First deputy Chairman of the State Duma (by agreement)  |
| Minister of Emergency Situations (MChS)   |
| Minister of Foreign Affairs   |
| Minister of Defence   |
| Minister of Justice   |
| Minister of Health  |
| Minister of Industry and Trade  |
| Minister of Communications and Mass Media   |
| Minister of Transport   |
| Minister of Energy  |
| Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR)  |
| Director of the National Guard and chief commander of the National Guard forces (Added. N 657, 07.12.16)  |
| Director of the Federal Protective Service (FSO)  |
| Director of Rosfinmonitoring  |
| Head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and first deputy defence minister |
| Deputy secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation  |
| Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation   |

Source: Composition of NAC approved by Presidential decree No. 1258 (2012) with alterations and additions of 26 June 2013 and 7 December 2016.

As we can see from Table 1, the Federal Security Service (FSB) both chairs the NAC and holds the leadership of its apparatus. The FSB's role in the national system for counterterrorism is further entrenched by the power of the NAC Chairman to appoint the leader of the FOS. The central role of the FSB in Russian counterterrorism is also visible in the regional counterterrorist bodies. While the top position as RAC chairman is occupied by the regional executive head, the head of the regional FSB division serves as deputy RAC chairman and is also the default leader of the ROS.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) also holds central positions in the national system for counterterrorism. The MVD minister serves as deputy FOS leader as well as deputy NAC chairman, and the head of the regional MVD serves as deputy ROS leader as well as a member of the

RAC. However, recent developments have weakened the MVD and its role in combating terrorism. 2016 witnessed the creation of a new organisation in Russia's security system: the Federal Service Troops of the National Guard (FSVNG), the National Guard.<sup>71</sup> The new service has taken over the interior troops previously belonging to the Ministry of the Interior including various rapid response and special purpose detachments.<sup>72</sup> The National Guard's long list of tasks includes protection of public order, public security and emergency rule, fighting terrorism and ensuring the legal regime of counterterrorist operations.<sup>73</sup> According to President Putin, the main objective of the National Guard is to fight terrorism and organised crime.<sup>74</sup> In December 2016, the director of the National Guard was included in the NAC and the FOS.<sup>75</sup>

The National Guard's inclusion in the coordinating bodies in the national system for counterterrorism has not introduced this new agency into these bodies' central positions. However, the creation of the National Guard and the emphasis placed on its role in combating terrorism have resulted in speculation as to the new agency challenging the FSB's position in Russia's fight on terrorism. Due to the novelty of these developments and the lack of publically available information, little can be said about such speculation other than, for the time being at least, the FSB retains its central positions in the coordinating bodies in the national system for counterterrorism and the National Guard is included among the coordinating bodies' rank and file members.

### ***The Russian Arctic***

The formation of a streamlined system for counterterrorism, the national system for counterterrorism presented above, ensures designated counterterrorist bodies also in the Russian Arctic.

#### *Counterterrorist bodies in the Russian Arctic*

In addition to the two federal bodies, the NAC and FOS, there are eight regional antiterrorism commissions and the same number of regional operational staffs with jurisdiction over Arctic territory: Murmansk RAC and ROS, Arkhangelsk RAC and ROS, Nenets RAC and ROS, Komi RAC and ROS, Yamalo-Nenets RAC and ROS, Krasnoyarsk RAC and ROS, Sakha RAC and ROS, and Chukotka RAC and ROS.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Presidential decree No. 157 (2016).

<sup>72</sup> Nikolsky A. Russia's New National Guard: Foreign, Domestic and Personal Aspects // Moscow Defense Brief. 2016. No. 2. Pp. 16–17. URL: <http://mdb.cast.ru/mdb/5-2017/item3/article3/> (Accessed: 13.11.2017)

<sup>73</sup> Federal law No. 226 (2016).

<sup>74</sup> The Moscow Times (2016). Putin Announces Establishment of Russian National Guard. URL: <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/putin-announces-establishment-of-russian-national-guard-52400> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

<sup>75</sup> Presidential decree No. 657 (2016).

<sup>76</sup> The number of regional coordinating bodies that have jurisdiction over Arctic territory varies depending on where one draws the external border of the Arctic. I have here included all regions with territory (land and/or maritime terri-

These bodies ensure some attention to the topic of counterterrorism, as their meetings are often reported in regional mass media along with brief presentations of central points on the agenda. Their agendas often include discussions of preventive measure in relation to public events, strategic objects etc. and counterterrorist exercises.

As could be expected, the *raison d'être* of counterterrorist activities in the Arctic today is related to developments outside this region rather than in the region itself. Speaking at a Krasnoyarsk RAC meeting in December 2014 Governor Viktor Tolokonskiy, asserted a need to improve the commission's efforts across the board in 2015, in the light of recent changes in the external environment.<sup>77</sup> In the fight against terrorism, the governor stated, we must strengthen the practical effort to the maximum. We all know of the severe consequences of activities carried out by extremists and terrorists in some of this country's regions.<sup>78</sup> At that same meeting the end of year results for 2014 were presented, including "no terrorist offences recorded in the region in 2014".<sup>79</sup>

Krasnoyarsk Kray hosts an annual exhibition forum, Contemporary Security Systems — Antiterror, that includes an all-Russian conference dedicated to theoretical and practical questions relating to countering terrorist ideology. Such events emphasise the wider geographic spread of counterterrorist activities than terrorist activities in Russia. Krasnoyarsk Kray is a large region that stretches from the very north of Russia almost to the southern border and the capital, Krasnoyarsk (where the forum and conference takes place), is itself located in the south of the region and not in its Arctic part. The region's capital city was also the location of the region's only incident registered in the GTD, a vicious beating of a foreign student in 2006.<sup>80</sup>

Counterterrorist activities in the Russian Arctic are not limited to meetings of bodies that happen to be physically located on Arctic territory. In fact, regular counterterrorist exercises are taking place in the Russian Arctic.

#### *Counterterrorist exercises in the Russian Arctic*

Here are a few examples of counterterrorist exercises that have taken place in the Russian Arctic over the past years. These examples are from the Murmansk Region located in the westernmost part of the Russian Arctic.

---

tory) north of the Arctic Circle. Were we, for example, to follow the standard set by the Arctic Council's SAR agreement of 2011 we would also include a ninth pair of regional coordinating bodies, Kamchatka RAC and ROS.

<sup>77</sup> Krasnoyarsk Kray Official Portal (2014) Viktor Tolokonskiy: In the Fight against Terrorism, it is Necessary to Strengthen Practical Activities to the Maximum [in Russian] 19 December. URL: <http://www.krskstate.ru/safety/news/0/news/76324> (Accessed: 4 June 2015).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> GTD incident No. 200604010030  
<http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200604010030> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

*Antiterror-2011.* This exercise took place at the Murmansk Seaport in June 2011. The scenario was as follows: a group of armed terrorists made their way into the port's area on a speedboat. They intended to capture a vessel and send it into the port terminal to inflict maximum disruption on the port's activities. A patrol boat intercepted the terrorists and, following a short chase and shoot-out; the terrorists were apprehended, and their boat was towed away. This was the second exercise using some of the functions of a new mobile system for physical protection of objects included in the region's arsenal two years prior. The system's radar was used to locate the terrorists' boat and its long-distance cameras then provided real-time footage of the terrorists' movements.<sup>81</sup>

*Antiterror-2013.* This exercise took place in Vitino port (on the White Sea) in August 2013. According to the exercise scenario, a terrorist placed mines around an oil deposit and made various demands. The whole area was sealed off, the culprit was located using radar and subsequently apprehended by a patrol boat following a short chase.<sup>82</sup>

*Kola Bay, June 2015.* According to a recent exercise scenario, terrorists high-jacked the ship Mikhail Dudin in the Kola Bay. The terrorists threatened to kill hostages and to blow up the ship. To prove that they meant business, the terrorists threw two crewmembers overboard. Negotiations with the terrorists revealed that they were out of fuel. Under the pretext of replenishing the terrorists with fuel, a neutralising operation was carried out. The remaining hostages were freed, the terrorists were apprehended, and the two crewmembers in the water were airlifted to safety. Commenting on the exercise, Governor Marina Kovtun emphasised that the Murmansk port and the whole of the Kola Bay, 'as key points for the Northern Sea Route', demand that attention is paid to ensuring security in these waters. Kovtun also asserted that such exercises are necessary to promote cooperation and coordination among those involved in counterterrorism.<sup>83</sup>

A similar scenario was exercised in June 2017: an oil tanker *en route* from Arkhangelsk to Murmansk was high-jacked by terrorists that had infiltrated the crew.<sup>84</sup> Tv21 reported that the

---

<sup>81</sup> News.vmurmanske.ru (2011) The exercise "Antiterror-2011" took place in Murmansk Port [In Russian] URL: <http://news.vmurmanske.ru/v-murmanskom-portu-proshli-ucheniya-antiterror-2011/> Accessed: 18 October 2016. Uvo-murmansk.ru, n/d. "Murmansk Sea Port. Antiterror-2011" [In Russian] URL: <http://www.uvo-murmansk.ru/component/content/article/1-latest-news/74-morskoy-port-antiterrir> (Accessed: 18 October 2016)

<sup>82</sup> TV21.ru (2013) The Antiterror-2013 exercise took place in Vitino sea port [In Russian]. URL: <http://www.tv21.ru/news/2013/08/27/vmorskoy-portu-vitino-proshli-ucheniya-antiterror-2013> (Accessed: 06 September 2016)

<sup>83</sup> Tv21.ru (2015). Large exercise with participation from all special services of Murmansk took place in the Kola Bay [In Russian]. URL: <http://www.tv21.ru/news/2015/06/05/v-akvatorii-kolskogo-zaliva-sostoyalis-masshtabnye-ucheniya-s-uchastiemvseh-specsluzhb-murmanska> (Accessed: 15 June 2015)

<sup>84</sup> Tv21.ru (2017). Conditional Terrorists who Seized a Tanker Neutralized by the Border Guard in the Barents Sea [Russian] URL: <http://www.tv21.ru/news/2017/06/07/v-barencemom-more-pogranichniki-obezvredili-uslovyh-terroristov-zahvativshih-tanker> (Accessed: 4 August 2017)

terrorist made “unthinkable political demands” and the operative staff decided to storm the tanker to free the hostages and neutralise the terrorists. To this end, vessels from the coast guard (FSB) and the Northern Fleet as well as FSB aviation joined forces in a counterterrorist operation that blocked off the tanker. While combat swimmers silently approached the tanker from the water, special forces descended from a helicopter. The exercise was declared a success after the terrorists were neutralized, their leader liquidated, and the hostages freed. A fire started by the terrorist before they were boarded was also extinguished without difficulty. According to the head of the FSB coast guard for the Western Arctic Region, Igor Konstantinov, everyone performed their tasks perfectly.<sup>85</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Counterterrorism in the Russian Arctic has become a recurring topic in relevant discourses, the discourse on Russia's interests in the Arctic and — to a lesser degree — the Russian discourse on counterterrorism. That said, the Arctic counterterrorism is a minor topic, also in the discourse on Russian interests in the Arctic, and it is an underdeveloped topic. Its inclusion on the agenda appears as an effort to cover all bases, rather than as a response to any direct threat. While this complicates the task of studying Arctic counterterrorism, the nature of terrorism calls for just such a better safe than sorry attitude.

Russian attention to the Arctic counterterrorism is related to the country's goal of making the Arctic its main base for strategic resources, and the fear that this may draw terrorists' attention to infrastructure of the Northern Sea Route and other maritime facilities. This fear is fuelled by recent developments in international terrorism with terrorist organisations moving beyond their traditional areas of operation. Russia is one of the countries in the world that are most affected by terrorism. In addition to the threat of international terrorism, Russia also has home-grown terrorist organisations whose cause is supported by international terrorist organisations.

While the timeframe set for the AZRF to become Russia's main base for strategic resources is highly unrealistic, the importance of the Arctic and its strategic resources in the long term is cause for preventive measures to be taken. What will likely become the region's strengths are areas of activities that have long been favoured among terrorists, energy and transport. Coupled with the potential wide reach and detrimental effects of cyberterrorism it is inevitable that we must consider the Arctic as a possible (if not, at present, very probable) target for terrorists.

This paper's main objective has been to provide an initial case study of counterterrorism in the Russian Arctic. The goal has been to produce insights into the current state of Russian counter-

---

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*



terrorism in the Arctic and the direction for further developments. This case study has addressed two formal aspects of Arctic counterterrorism, its legal foundation and its organisation. The selection of these two focal points rests with the novelty of the topic and the need to lay down a fundament for further analyses into what may well become a salient topic in the future.

The legal framework for Arctic counterterrorism is extensive, as is often the case in Russia's legal tradition. The existence of relatively recent core documents nevertheless makes this a relatively well-regulated area. We also see that counterterrorist legislation is kept up to date through revisions. This is positive, even though some observers take issue with some of the concrete revisions.

Russia's national system for counterterrorism complete with coordinating bodies on the two levels of state power has been established to make the counterterrorist effort more effective. We saw that the FSB enjoys a prominent role in this system. As of late, the FSB's status may be challenged by the newly formed National Guard. If so, the national system for counterterrorism may fall prey to a turf war between security bodies, a scenario that has a familiar ring to it in the Russian context. Such an eventuality would likely hamper smooth operations of the national system for counterterrorism.

A benefit of the national system for counterterrorism is that it streamlines Russia's counterterrorist activities across the federation, including the Arctic. Counterterrorist measures are also visible through regular exercises aiming to improve cooperation and coherence among actors involved in counterterrorism. These exercises and their scenarios reflect the perceived potential threat to economic activities and infrastructure in the Russian Arctic.

## References

1. Foxall A. Russia's Canary in the North Caucasus' Mine: Stavropol'skii krai. *The Fire Below: How the Caucasus Shaped Russia*, R.B. Ware, Editor. 2013, Bloomsbury: London.
2. Kaminskiy V., Suprunenko O., Smirnov A. Mineral'no-syr'evye resursy arkticheskoy kontinental'noy okrainy Rossii i perspektivy ih osvoenija [Mineral resources of the Arctic continental margin of Russia and prospects for their development], *Arktika: jekologija i jekonomika*, 2014, No. 3 (15), pp. 52–61. URL: [http://www.ibrae.ac.ru/docs/3\(15\)/052\\_061\\_ARKTIKA\\_3\(15\)\\_09\\_2014.pdf](http://www.ibrae.ac.ru/docs/3(15)/052_061_ARKTIKA_3(15)_09_2014.pdf) (accessed: 22.08.2017) [in Russian]
3. Luft G. and Korin A. Terror's Next Target, *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, December 2003. URL: <http://www.iags.org/n0111041.htm> (accessed: 23.08.2015)
4. Bidnaya K.W. Kiberterrorizm kak ugroza gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti v Arkticheskom regione [Cyber-terrorism as a threat to national security in the Arctic region], *Arktika i Sever*, 2012, No. 7, pp. 4–7. URL: [http://narfu.ru/upload/uf/60b/AaN\\_2012\\_7.pdf](http://narfu.ru/upload/uf/60b/AaN_2012_7.pdf) (accessed: 02.08.2017) [in Russian]
5. Zalyvskiy R.N. Ugrozy terrorizma v Rossijskoy Arktike [The threat of terrorism in the Russian Arctic], *Arktika i Sever*, 2014, No. 17, pp. 44–59. URL: <http://narfu.ru/upload/uf/eb0/17-ais.pdf> (accessed: 03.08.2017) [in Russian]