The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Military Opens 2nd Arctic Base

November 27, 2014



Russian troops moved into the Defense Ministry's second base erected recently in environmentally protected territories in the Arctic, RIA Novosti reported Thursday.

The autonomous base — shaped like a five-point star — is located on Cape Schmidt in the far-eastern Chukotka region.

Lieutenant Colonel Sergei Surovikin, who announced the settlement, did not say how many troops were stationed at the base.

But he said work in Chukotka would continue, with a drone detachment to be deployed by the year's end, and an airport on the cape set to be built in 2015.

In late October, Russian troops move into a base on Wrangel Island, 140 kilometers north of Cape Schmidt.

Wrangel Island, which has been dubbed a "polar bear nursery," is a UNESCO world heritage site, and Cape Schmidt, which hosts a walrus rookery of 40,000 pinnipeds, is a regional wildlife reserve.

Two more Arctic bases are set to open by 2015, on Kotelny Island off the coast of Yakutia — a federal nature reserve — and Alakurtti village on the Finnish border, to host a motorized infantry brigade, which usually numbers around 7,000.

Construction in natural reserves is prohibited by law, but it has nevertheless continued, perhaps reflecting Russia's zeal in the "Arctic race."

Moscow has laid claim to 1.2 million kilometers of Arctic shelf with the hopes of exploiting the area for its vast reserves of oil and gas allegedly found close to the North Pole.

Arctic expansion has been slammed by environmentalists, who say drilling in the Arctic is too costly to be profitable and a deadly hazard for fragile local ecosystems.

On Thursday, a tanker spilled some 200 kilograms of oil in the far-eastern port of Vladivostok, the third spill in the region since June, RIA Novosti reported.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/11/27/russian-military-opens-2nd-arctic-base-a41799