

# Russia Calls Oslo's Reaction to Rogozin's Arctic Visit 'Absurd'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin

Russia said Monday that Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin had every right to visit a Norwegian island despite travel restrictions imposed on him over Ukraine, dismissing Oslo's condemnation of the trip.

Oslo has demanded Moscow explain Rogozin's Saturday stopover on the island of Spitsbergen in the arctic Svalbard archipelago.

The European Union imposed travel bans and other penalties after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea region, strengthening them further after accusing Moscow of backing rebels in Ukraine's east. Norway is not an EU member but has adopted the same sanctions.

The Ukraine crisis has triggered the worst standoff between Russia and the West since the Cold War, with tensions particularly high in Central and Eastern Europe and the waters

around the Nordic region where Moscow has stepped up military drills.

"Norway's voluntary endorsement of the European Union's anti-Russian sanctions is regrettable," Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "This reaction is puzzling," it added, calling Oslo's demand for an explanation "inexplicable and absurd."

The Russian ministry said Rogozin's visit was in line with a treaty regulating the Svalbard archipelago, which grants Norway sovereignty but allows other signatories, including Russia, residence and commercial rights.

The ministry added that Rogozin was on his way to Moscow's drifting exploration station in the Arctic, which is believed to hold vast oil and natural gas reserves and where Moscow has stepped up campaign to claim territory, angering other capitals.

Nordic nations have agreed to boost defense ties and work more closely with the Baltic states to counter what they see as a Russian threat. Moscow says its moves are a response to increased NATO activity in the region.

Svalbard is about 850 kilometers north of the northern tip of mainland Norway and holds the world's northernmost permanent settlements.

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