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Russia Will Deploy New Missiles to Defend Arctic, Admiral Says

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The Russian military plans to bolster its positions in the Arctic with additional air defense systems as it flexes its muscle in the hydrocarbon-rich region, a top naval commander has said.

The Defense Ministry has worked at breakneck pace to reassert its presence in the region by reopening old defense installations and deploying new weaponry. Russia in particular aims to secure access to the Northern Sea Route, a strategic shipping corridor between Asia and Europe.

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"New air defense formation units will soon be placed in the Yakut village of Tiksi," Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, the commander of Russia's Northern Fleet, told the Defense Ministry's Krasnaya Zvezda publication.

“They’re designed to ensure the safety of airspace over the Northern Sea Route,” he said.

Yevmenov said the Northern Fleet will be reinforced with coastal defense missiles, which took part in Arctic drills last fall, as well as a Tor-M2DT short-range air defense missile system.

As it vies to hold back rivals Canada, Norway and the United States, Russia has restricted the passage of foreign warships in the Arctic Ocean with requirements including submitting a 45-day advanced notice.

Underscoring the Arctic’s strategic importance, President Vladimir Putin last month renamed the Far East Development Ministry to the Far East and Arctic Development Ministry.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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