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# Russia Defends Arctic Military Expansion Amid Tensions With U.S.

By Bloomberg

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Sergei Lavrov **Bloomberg**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov defended his country's military buildup in the Arctic amid U.S. warnings of rising tensions in the remote and energy-rich region.

"We don't threaten anyone. We ensure sufficient defense capabilities given the political and military situation around our borders," Lavrov said during a panel at the International Arctic Forum in St. Petersburg on Tuesday. "We will always be ready to defend our security, interests and territorial integrity."

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Russia, which has about half the Arctic coastline, is building new bases and stepping up air and naval activity in the region. The military expansion comes as countries gear up to develop

the area's untapped oil and gas deposits with climate change accelerating the rate of ice melting.

U.S. Air Force General Terrence O'Shaughnessy, who heads the U.S. Northern Command, warned in January that the Arctic "is now the front line in our defense" against potential strikes on North America. He said in February that Russia was deploying cruise missile systems in the Arctic that would significantly increase its ability to control a large stretch of the Northern Sea Route, a key transport artery.

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