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Intelligence and Analysis Division

WHITE PAPER SERIES

Norway: Country Overview

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INTENT

This white paper is designed to provide analysis of relevant, publicly available information on threat and hazard events/trends and their potential impacts to the interests of the United States, both at home and abroad. This product is not intended to be an all-encompassing assessment of the subject.



Norway: Country Overview

Introduction

Norway was founded as an independent state in 1814 and has evolved into a modern day Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy. Since the end of World War II, the state of Norway, like many other countries is still subject to modern domestic and transnational threats to both their government and citizens. In this paper, several threats directly related to Norway will be discussed. These threats to infrastructure and personnel in Norway come from a multitude of vectors, to include climate and weather-related hazards such as extreme cold, damaging winds, snow, and ice. Norway has recently experienced acts of terrorism, active shooter events, and Foreign Intelligence Entity (FIE) activity. Additionally, Russia poses a persistent threat militarily due to both Norway's close proximity to the country and its NATO member status. Nation backed adversarial groups, to include intelligence and military units, pose valid security concerns via the employment of cyber network activity and intelligence collection activity. Many of these threats have the potential to influence how Norway conducts its security operations, enforces its laws, and maintains relations with allies, to include the United States.

Climate and Geography

The country of Norway is located in Northern Europe, just West of Sweden and South of the Northern Sea. This Northern location has not only affected the climate of Norway but has helped shape the population (5,509,591) and culture of its inhabitants. Norway possesses a long Northern coastline which has helped enrich the economy and trade market with natural resources in the Northern Sea such as oil and natural gas. Being in Northern Europe, Norway is filled with Northern tundra's, glaciers and contains fjords with mountains and fertile valleys. The climate of this region consists of temperate weather conditions along the Western/Southern coast which consists of a lower altitude level and higher average annual precipitation measures modified by the North Atlantic current. In central Norway, a colder interior with decreased precipitation and population, more mountainous region and colder summers can be found.¹ With progressively colder winters in the North such as the city of Trondheim (sub 30 degrees Fahrenheit)², most of the population resides in Southern and Eastern Norway and where the climate is more moderate, especially during non-Winter seasons and abundant with fertile farmland and a stockpile of forestry.³

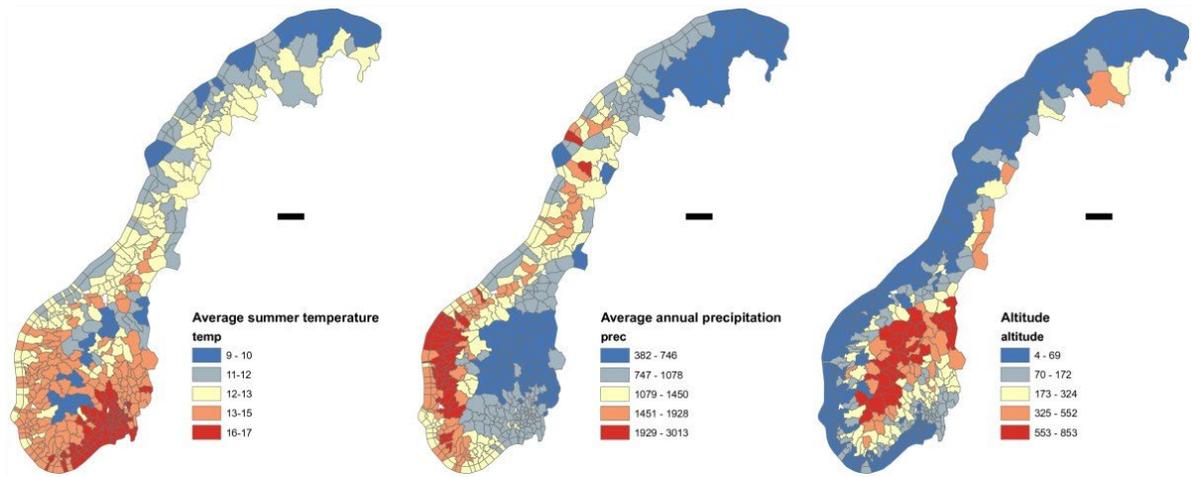


Figure 1

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Critical infrastructure & key resources, government buildings, and military bases/installations all remain susceptible to these climactic threats. Due to Norway's location in the High North, these conditions occur year-round and their affects lead to increased import of outside resources due to the inability to consistently produce high amounts of agricultural products.

Transnational Terrorists

Transnational terrorist organizations pose a potential threat to major states around the world to include Norway. Norway is committed to counterterrorism (CT) efforts and works closely with the United States on this issue. Norway currently uses the Police Security Service (PST) and CT to mitigate security concerns. Norway also has a Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS) which is responsible for external security such as tracking transnational terrorist groups abroad.⁶ Per the Department of State, individuals and groups inspired by "extreme Islamist groups" represent the most significant terrorist threat in Norway. From 1970-2010 there were 18 small-scale terrorist attacks in Norway. These have been minor events and the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Terrorism does not even recognize these acts of terror due to their limited severity.

Additionally, Norwegian authorities have noted an increased level of right-wing extremist group activity across the country. Two noteworthy extremist attacks on Norwegian soil involve right-wing extremists seeking to target individuals for their Islamic faith and support of anti-immigration policy. The extremist acts occurred in 2011 and 2019.

- In 2011, Anders Breivik killed 8 individuals with a bomb at a Norwegian Oil and Energy Department building. This explosive was placed next to the Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's office. After this act of terror, Anders Breivik quickly traveled to Utoya where he shot and murdered 69 individuals at a summer camp attended by the youth wing of the governing Labour Party. Anders Breivik condemned multiculturalism, Islam,

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cultural Marxists, and Norway's Labour Party. This was a clear act of right-wing extremism against Norwegian citizens and is listed as a major European act of terrorism.⁷

- In 2019, a much smaller act of right-wing extremism occurred in Norway. Philip Manshaus shot and killed his stepsister then sought to attack the Al Noor Islamic Center. However, the attack was unsuccessful as the extremist was overpowered by a member of the mosque. Open-source press reporting indicates that Manshaus was attempting to start and inspire other in a race war. Additionally, he shared anti-immigration and other far-right views and intended to express this through this use of violent, right-wing inspired extremism.⁸

Norway hosts and participates in NATO operations with its allies and was a contributor to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, which provided training, advice, and support to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Norway is an active member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and has deployed trainers to Iraq in the support of Operation Inherent Resolve.⁹ Norway is committed to a better future for the Afghanistan people and is providing approximately \$120 million annually in development assistance and joining the international community in encouraging Afghan governance reform efforts."¹⁰ As Norway continues to support states such as Afghanistan immigration and the integration of ethnic minorities continues to rise, this could contribute to an increase in Islamic extremists using Norway as a safe haven to carry out attacks against the West. Conversely, this could lead to an increase in right-wing extremists' attacks by individuals opposed to immigration by ethnic minorities.

Foreign Nation-State Military Threats

Norway contains six climate-controlled caves spread across central Norway that are used for the storage of U.S. owned munitions and ground equipment. This was established in 1981 to support Norway defense and United States Marine Corps expeditionary operations.¹¹ These facilities are critical as they maintain pivotal defense, federal, economic, and transportation roles which makes them a potential target of U.S./NATO adversaries such as China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Russia poses a distinct military threat to Norway due to Norway's close ties with the West and role in NATO, and the close proximity of these nations potentially puts Norway at increased risk militarily. The two countries share a 197.7 km (122.8 mile) long border in the northern part of Norway. As access to the Arctic increases, the potential for conflict increases along with it.

Open Source reporting indicates that Russian doctrine identified NATO as the primary threat due to regional build-up, expansion, and posture closer to Russian borders. As such, since 2008, Russia has enhanced its military capability in all areas in the Arctic by investing in mobile systems, special forces, new military bases, infrastructure and long-range precision weapons. Per the NIS, there are examples of Russia targeting Norway with simulated weapons usage.¹²

- In 2018, during the NATO exercise Trident Juncture in Norway, Russia demonstrated assertiveness through deploying surface vessels and patrol aircraft to the exercise area, flying strategic sorties over the Norwegian Sea and performing live firing off the coast of Norway.¹²
- In addition, there have been several incidents of Russian jamming resulting in lost GPS signals for both civilian and allied air traffic in the northern part of Norway.¹²



FIE Threats

FIE activities pose a potential threat to the security of the country as U.S. DoD weapons and equipment across Norway are likely to be considered viable collection targets by FIEs and terrorist organizations seeking to acquire information or intelligence on the U.S. military. The Trondheim Metropolitan Area has a number of potential FIE collection priority targets in the defense, government, critical infrastructure, technology, and economic sectors. Russia has been identified as the most likely origin of FIE activity in Norway, and there are examples of Russian FIE activity as recent as 2020. In this instance, a Norwegian citizen was reportedly arrested in August 2020 for threatening the national interests of Norway by meeting with a Russian intelligence officer in Oslo, Norway. Counterintelligence officials in Norway discovered that the citizen had access to information that could be useful to such as Russian intelligence agencies.¹³

Russia historically uses military and federal intelligence organizations to acquire key equipment and intelligence on the United States.

Cyber

The abundance of oil, natural gas and critical infrastructure in Norway probably makes Norway a target from foreign organizations seeking to profit off Norway's supplies with cyber-attacks. Potential cyber adversaries include nation states, terrorist groups, cyber criminals, and insiders. With a known U.S. presence in Norway, nation-states such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran pose a potential distinct cyber threat to Norwegian and U.S. installations in the region. Intelligence information can be gained using strategic cyber network operations. Additionally, cyber adversaries may seek to conduct exploitative and offensive cyber operations against infrastructure, such as shutting down oil and natural gas lines. However, it should be noted this more destructive course of action is less likely in the near term due to the potential for retaliatory cyber operations.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has listed that in the past year Norway has been victim to two sets of cyber-attacks. These cyber-attacks were sent via email to several members and employees in the Norwegian Parliament as well as public employees. Norway has openly accused Russia of the attack. In addition, another Parliament cyber-attack was transmitted through email in March of 2021 by China.¹⁴ Countries such as Norway with key natural resources, technology, alliances, and economy are consistently a target of cyber network operations. Cyber warfare is quickly becoming a key avenue to gain the strategic and tactical advantage for nation-states, specifically the ones listed, when it comes to competition amongst world powers. Norway likely proves a valuable target as a direct ally to the U.S. and NATO member.



Conclusion

Norway is a unique country with a rich history dating back centuries. A beautiful landscape surrounded by the Northern Sea, filled with tundra's, fjords, and glaciers is what makes Norway visually appealing. However, due to Norway's geographic location, its status as a NATO member, and internal politics, there are persistent threats posed to Norway, and many of these threat actors are intent on exploiting perceived vulnerabilities throughout the country to accomplish their objectives.

Source List

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¹⁴ “Significant Cyber Incidents.” *Significant Cyber Incidents | Center for Strategic and International Studies*, <https://www.csis.org/programs/strategic-technologies-program/significant-cyber-incidents>.