

# *NATO and Allies Begin Aerial Drills over Arctic*

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Brussels, May 26 (RHC)-- NATO members and allies are taking part in large scale aerial war games, dubbed the Arctic Challenge Exercise 2015 (ACE 2015), over northern Europe. The two-week long military exercise, which got underway on Monday, is headed by NATO member Norway and involves over 100 aircraft and 4,000 personnel.

"The aim is to exercise and train units in the orchestration and conduct of complex air operations, in close relations to NATO partners," said drill leader Norwegian Brigadier General Jan Ove Rygg in a statement. NATO countries Britain, France, Germany, the U.S. and the Netherlands are taking part in the drill along with non-NATO allies Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland.

According to a Norwegian Armed Forces press release, Lockheed Martin F-16s, Tornado GR4 fighters, and Eurofighter Typhoons are among the multitude of aircraft present in the maneuvers. The geographical setting in "unique cross-border airspace makes ACE 2015 a one-of-a-kind training ground for increasing interoperability and skills in all parts of the chain," Rygg added.

ACE 2015 is taking place near the Arctic Circle, which is an area of contention among the United States, Canada, Denmark, and Norway, as well as Russia, which has had drifting research stations there since 1937 and has recently conducted its own drills in the region.

Some parts of the land on the Arctic Circle are also divided among Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. The area north of the Arctic Circle is about 20 square kilometers and covers about four percent of the surface of the Earth.

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