

Beyond the Arctic Circle: U.S. Missile Radar Targets Russia

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Region: [Europe](#)

Global Research, June 02, 2012

[Voice of Russia and Stop NATO](#) 2 June 2012

Radar keeps an eye on Russia

Meeting in Chicago last Month, NATO leaders looked at all aspects of the potential Iranian threat and how to unravel the Afghan knot, and once again they assured Moscow that a missile defense shield that is currently being deployed in Europe is not directed against Russia.

Quite peace-loving statements, only sometimes out of tune with reality.

Far north of the Arctic Circle, the tiny windblown Norwegian town of Vardø on the Barents Sea has for years been home to the Globe-2 radar. The United States and Norway have reportedly been using it to track satellite and space junk in low-Earth orbits.

A few years ago, however, Norwegian journalist Inge Sellevag found out that NASA had no such radar in its space surveillance network.

According to the Bergens Tidende, Norway's fourth largest newspaper, the above radar was once named Have Stare and stationed in the town of Vandenberg in California, being part of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative or "Star Wars" program. The same newspaper cites an Internet report by Raytheon, a California-based corporation, which says that radars of that class are used in missile defense to obtain data about ballistic and cruise missiles.

That's true, said Colonel General Leonid Ivashov, head of the Center for Geopolitical Studies in Moscow.

"The radar's deployment coincided with Bill Clinton's policy of withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense Treaty. So, Americans simply dismantled their radar in California and moved it over to Vardø in Norway. We immediately suspected what was later confirmed by the intelligence, namely that that radar was for other purposes than the ones declared by Norwegians and Americans."

As for tracking space junk that may vary from a screw to a rocket stage, Vardø is the last place in the world for this task. Its location makes quality surveillance impossible. You just won't see most of the space junk from Vardø. Better do it at somewhere closer to the equator. Whereas, in terms of tracking Russian ballistic or cruise missile tests from Plesetsk to the Kura launch pad on Kamchatka, Vardø is just ideal.

Once, in 2000, a strong wind tore off the radar's dome. Beneath was a large parabolic

antenna directed towards Russia. A local newspaper editor joked back then that although he wasn't an expert, he had always been sure that space was somewhere up in the sky. Norway called the incident a sheer coincidence, to which Leonid Ivashov, then chief of the Russian Defense Ministry's international military cooperation department, retorted that Russia had targeted its tactical nuclear missiles at Vardø, frightening the townsfolk who, up to now, are equally fearful of a potential attack and the harmful effects of radar beams on their health.

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