

Norway's Military Capability 2020

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With the re-emergence of great power competition and increased geopolitical tension, Norway is returning to the geopolitical position it held during the Cold War: that of “NATO in the North”, carefully balancing deterrence and reassurance in its relations with Russia. This “dual policy” entails being NATO’s eyes and ears in the high north, while also cooperating with Russia in areas of mutual national interest, such as fisheries management, energy, and search-and-rescue. In recent years, Norway has increased its military presence in its north, enhanced its surveillance capabilities to uphold situational awareness, and strengthened its ability to receive Allied reinforcements.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

While Norway never abandoned the national dimension of defence after the Cold War, it did downsize its Armed Forces and engage more frequently in international operations. Simultaneously, however, Norway sought to increase NATO’s focus on collective defence at home, especially after the Russo-Georgian War, in 2008.¹ This emphasis was strengthened severely following Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The 2016 Long-term Defence Plan concluded that previous plans belonged to a “different time”, and established deterrence and the ability to uphold Norwegian sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination as top priorities.

NATO’s collective defence has long been the cornerstone of Norwegian security, with the Norwegian Armed Forces tasked to avert and handle lower-level incidents and crises, and resisting a major attack until reinforcements arrive. In line with this, Norway aims to strengthen NATO’s collective defence, secure sufficient national military capabilities

to trigger and receive NATO reinforcements in a crisis, and pull its weight with regard to force contributions to Alliance initiatives and operations.² The clear majority of Norway’s political parties stand behind this long-standing, overarching, security policy.

In addition to NATO, Norway has striven for strong bilateral ties to the US.³ Norway has also sought a wider network of defence cooperation, including with the UK, the Nordic countries and the Netherlands and Germany. Norway takes part, alongside the latter two, in NATO’s eFP battlegroup in Lithuania and is procuring submarines in cooperation with Germany. Additionally, Norway is part of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force and the French-led European Intervention Initiative.⁴ Norway is not a member of the EU, but has access to the internal market.

Norwegian strategic thinking primarily evolves around the country’s northern parts, which in a crisis could be exposed, given the strategic importance for Russia of the

1 Jonsson, Pål, *The debate about Article 5 and its credibility: What is it all about?* (NATO Defense College, May 2010), p. 4.

2 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 151S, *Kampkraft og bærekraft – Langtidsplan for Forsvarssektoren*, 2016, p. 5, 22–23; and Hennum, Alf Christian and Nyhamar, Tore, ‘A Norwegian outlook’, in *Strategic Outlook 7*, FOI-R--4456--SE (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency – FOI, 201). Also see Wrenn, Yennie Lindgren and Græger, Nina, ‘The challenges and dynamics of Alliance policies: Norway, NATO and the High North’, in Wesley, Michael (ed.), *Global allies: Comparing US alliances in the 21st century* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017), p. 103, on Norway’s efforts to be seen as a valuable ally. While Norway is heavily dependent on NATO reinforcements in case of major war, there are scenarios and crises that Norway would want to handle without NATO involvement, so as to avoid possible (mis)perceptions of escalation and to retain freedom of action.

3 This relationship has been characterised an “alliance within the alliance” and includes prepositioned US Marine Corps (USMC) equipment on Norwegian soil. While Norway’s dual policy of deterrence and reassurance has seen it refrain from permanently hosting NATO troops in peacetime, the US Marine Corps (USMC) started six-month rotations of some 300 marines to Norway for exercises and training in 2017. The number was later increased to about 700 marines before new USMC priorities changed the program to shorter-term deployments with a lighter footprint in 2020. See Norwegian Ministry of Defence. *Unified Effort*. Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defence Policy. 2015, p. 36 and Browne, Ryan. ‘US to end deployment of US Marines in Norway after boosting it in 2018 amid Russian tensions’. *CNN*. 7 August 2020. For more details, see chapter 12 United States.

4 In Norwegian thinking, Norway is not likely to be the main front in a confrontation with Russia. Thus, NATO’s few high-readiness forces will most likely deploy to other regions. The bilateral ties to the US, but also possibly the UK and the Netherlands, are meant to facilitate reinforcements to Norway in such a scenario. See Hilde, Paal Sigurd, ‘Bistand fra NATO og allierte: Norge utløser artikkel 4 og 5’, in Larssen, Ann-Karin and Lage Dyndal, Gjert (eds.), *Strategisk ledelse i krise og krig: Det norske systemet* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2020).

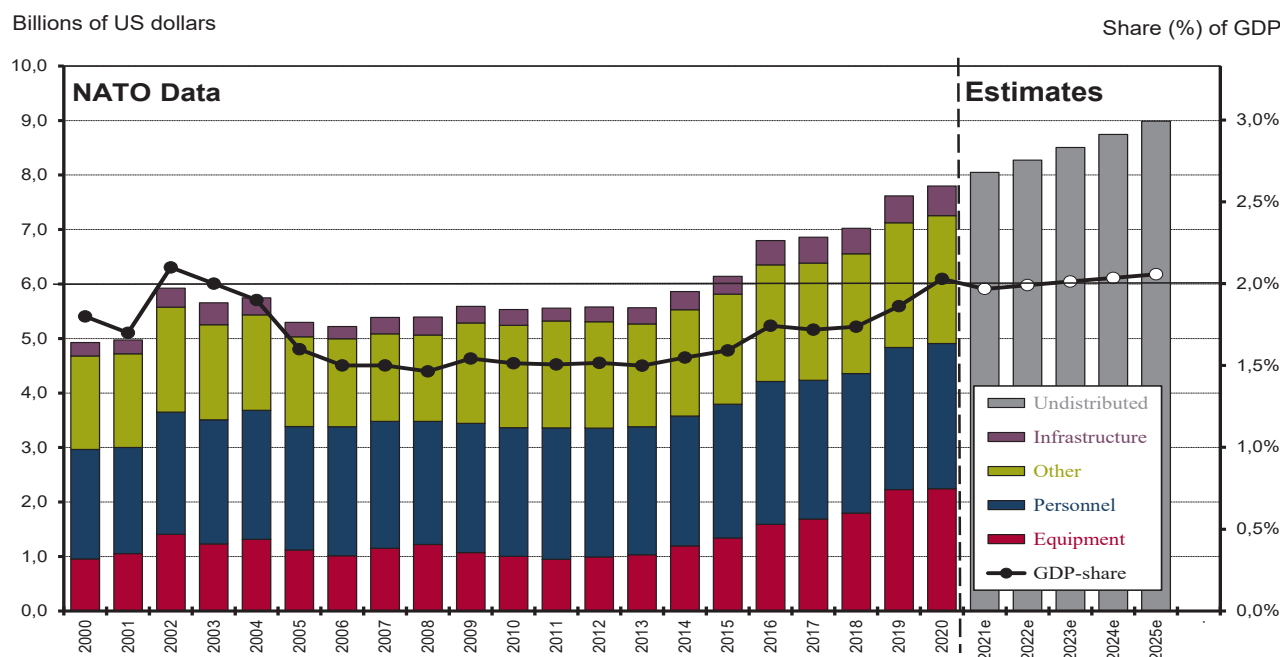


Figure: The military expenditures of Norway 2000–2025: Billions of US Dollars/2015 prices (columns) and as share (%) of GDP (curved line)

Source: Bergstrand, Bengt-Göran, *NATO military expenditures*, Working Document (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency – FOI, October 2020).

NB: Estimates based on the Long-term defence plan, presented on 17 April 2020.

Barents region, to Russian aggression.⁵ Increased Russian activity in these areas underlines the importance in Norway of situational awareness, air surveillance and maritime security assets. Years of focus on out-of-area operations brought about good capabilities for stability operations, but also a lean force unsuited for high-intensity warfare. In addition, underfunded defence plans led to many shortfalls in personnel, logistics, maintenance, spare parts and ammunition. Since 2017, Norway has worked to improve availability and readiness by addressing these shortfalls, rather than expanding the force structure.⁶ Additionally, a number of legacy systems are currently in the process of replacement, including fighter jets, submarines, maritime patrol aircraft, main battle tanks and artillery.

In April 2020, the conservative-liberal government submitted a new proposal for a Long-term Defence Plan. In general, the proposal continues the implementation of

current reforms. It broke with the traditional four-year outlook, describing instead defence developments until 2028, with most of the relatively few reforms placed at the later end. Citing the lack of near-term initiatives and clarity on future developments within the Navy, the parliamentary opposition rejected the proposal. Furthermore, the proposal fell well below the Chief of Defence's 2019 recommendations. The government presented a revised proposal that addressed some of these concerns through for example more ambitious recruitment goals in 2021, a change that gained parliamentary approval in December 2020.⁷

MILITARY EXPENDITURES

After a temporary rise and fall in 2002–2005, Norwegian military expenditures were more stable in the following ten years. During this period, the increases in the defence

⁵ Norwegian authorities assess that Russia, to protect its Kola Peninsula-based Northern Fleet, nuclear second-strike capabilities and access to the Atlantic, could seek to activate its purported “bastion concept” by establishing sea control in the Barents region and sea denial along the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap. For Norway, this could mean Russian attacks on surveillance and defence facilities in Finnmark, efforts to deny NATO and Norwegian presence near the Kola Peninsula, or an occupation of Norwegian territory; see Tamnes, Rolf, ‘The significance of the North Atlantic and the Norwegian contribution’, *Whitehall Papers*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2016; and Hilde, ‘Bistand fra NATO’.

⁶ Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Capable and sustainable*, 2016.

⁷ Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 62S, *Vilje til beredskap – evne til forsvar*, 2020; and Skårdalsmo, Kristian, ‘Bakke-Jensen får forsvarsplan i retur fra Stortinget’, *Aftenposten*, 19 May 2020; and Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop 14S, *Evne til forsvar – vilje til beredskap*, 2020

budget followed economic growth, and military expenditures as a share of GDP consequently remained the same, at approximately 1.5 per cent. The distribution between various categories of expenditures was also remarkably stable.

Military expenditures have risen steadily since 2014. In absolute terms and 2015 prices, they increased from USD 5.9 billion in 2014 to USD 7.4 billion in 2019. As a share of GDP, expenditures rose from around 1.5 per cent in 2014 to 1.8 per cent in 2019. Although Norway is committed to and reached NATO's target of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence in 2020, it has not stated this as an explicit policy goal.

Equipment expenditures have nearly doubled since 2014, from USD 1.2 billion to USD 2.2 billion in 2019, i.e. to nearly 30 per cent of the defence budget. A large part of this rise is related to the purchase of 52 new F-35A fighter aircraft. The F-35 programme implies that Norway will continue to have high expenditures on equipment for a number of years to come. Since 2017, to address the recurrent problem of underfinanced force structures, Norwegian long-term defence plans have taken into account cost escalations specifically associated with military materiel.⁸

The new Long-term Defence plan, presented in 2020, included plans to increase the military expenditures by NOK 16.5 billion, to NOK 75.5 billion in 2028, in 2019 prices, a 27 per cent rise from 2020, and equivalent to an average annual increase by 2.8 per cent, up to 2028. This suggests that in 2024–25 Norway will stay at the NATO target of 2 per cent of GDP, partly as a result of the decline in GDP caused by the coronavirus pandemic, as shown by the graph above.

However, the plan also proposes that NOK 2 billion will be released from cost-saving measures, prompting the Chief of Defence to warn against overly optimistic assumptions.⁹ Commenting on the unsure economic future, the prime minister established that the defence budget will not be compromised, and that the government will allocate more funds to compensate for the relative weakness of the Norwegian currency, if necessary.¹⁰

ARMED FORCES

The Norwegian Armed Forces have nine main tasks, related to both national and international security. The tasks include enforcing Norwegian sovereignty and authority, upholding deterrence and, ultimately, the defence of Norwegian and allied territory. Furthermore, the Armed Forces survey Norway's vast territories and protect civil society and commercial interests, such as shipping. Internationally, the Armed Forces participate in multinational crisis management operations and contribute to international cooperation on security and defence within the UN and NATO frameworks.¹¹

The Norwegian Armed Forces consist of the Army; Navy, with the Coast Guard; Air Force and Home Guard. The Norwegian Joint Headquarters, situated in Reitan in the middle of the west coast of Norway, commands operations. As the defence of Norway is planned to be led by NATO, Norway seeks close cooperation, coordination and interoperability between its national headquarters and NATO's command structure.

Army

The Norwegian Army consists of approximately 8100 soldiers. Of these, 3700 are professionals and 4400 conscripts.¹² The Army headquarters are stationed in Bardufoss. The Army is built around the mechanised Brigade North. In addition, Norway has a light infantry battalion, in Oslo, an intelligence battalion, and a Border Guard battalion, on the Norwegian-Russian border.

Brigade North's units are primarily stationed in the northern towns of Bardufoss, Skjold and Setermoen. It consists of two mechanised battalions, a light infantry battalion, and a number of support units, including artillery, engineer, and combat service and support battalions. The brigade is tasked with delaying an aggressor, and denying him terrain, until reinforcements arrive. The light infantry battalion is being reorganised into a mechanised battalion, primarily by dividing the existing equipment of the two mechanised battalions.¹³

The brigade's personnel is a mix of conscripts and professionals, except for the fully professional high-readiness

8 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 151S, *Kampkraft og bærekraft*, p. 40.

9 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 62S, *Vilje til beredskap*, p. 47, 123.

10 Solberg, Erna, 'Regjeringen presenterer den nye langtidsplanen for Forsvaret', Speech at press conference, 17 April 2020.

11 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 62S, *Vilje til beredskap*, p. 23–25

12 International Institute for Strategic Studies – IISS, *The military balance 2020* (London: IISS, 2020), p. 132.

13 Forsvarets Forum, 'Slik ser brigadesjefen for seg Brigade Nord's framtid', 4 February 2020.

Telemark Battalion, which has served in many international operations. The battalion is not co-located with the rest of the brigade. Instead, it is based in Rena, some two hours north of Oslo. The Telemark Battalion and attached support companies from the brigade make up a high-readiness battlegroup.¹⁴ In recent years, the brigade's lack of readiness and equipment have been a matter of discussion. It currently lacks air defences, which it will receive before 2023 (NASAMS High Mobility Launcher). While Norway furthermore aims to procure a man-portable air defence system (MANPADs) by 2025, it is seemingly primarily intended for units in Porsanger, as described below.¹⁵

Since 2017, Norway has been part of NATO's eFP battlegroup in Lithuania, most often contributing a mechanised company from the brigade, with rotations every six months. Norway's presence in Lithuania is decreased during years of greater Norwegian contributions to the NATO Response Force (NRF). From 2019 to 2022, Norway is contributing a mechanised company with some 120 personnel, which is reduced to 50 personnel during NRF years.¹⁶

In addition to the sole brigade, Norway re-established a land forces HQ in the northern municipality of Porsanger in 2018, in an effort to increase its presence and situational awareness along the Norwegian-Russian border. The HQ commands both the Border Guard battalion and Home Guard units, with more advanced equipment, and a mechanised battalion currently being established. Conscripts and personnel transferred from other army units man this nascent battalion, which means it does not represent an actual increase in personnel.¹⁷

The Norwegian Home Guard's main tasks include territorial defence, protection of critical infrastructure and

facilitating allied reinforcements. Its personnel are former conscripts and professionals. Some 3000 out of its 40,000 personnel make up mobile high-readiness units, with more advanced equipment and more frequent exercises.¹⁸

Navy

The Royal Norwegian Navy, which includes the Coast Guard, employs approximately 3900 sailors, of which some 1800 are conscripts.¹⁹ The Navy's main tasks include resisting armed aggression, keeping sea lines of communication open for goods and allied reinforcements and, if needed, re-establishing Norway's territorial integrity, in cooperation with NATO.²⁰ The Navy's main base is located in the southwestern city of Mathopen. The main available platforms are 4 Nansen-class frigates, 6 Skjold-class corvettes and 4 Ula-class tactical submarines.²¹ Additionally, the Navy has a number of vessels for logistics and mine countermeasures, and a coastal ranger company.

The Sortland-based Norwegian Coast Guard has 13 vessels for upholding Norwegian sovereignty and authority, including, for example, fisheries inspection, handling oil spills and border control. Eight of the vessels, some of which can carry helicopters, are lightly armed (57mm cannon).²²

The Navy's main systems will reach the end of their life cycles around 2030. Four new submarines are to be developed by the end of the decade. The next generation of surface combatants, that is, the replacement for the current force of frigates and corvettes, was not covered by the 2020 Long-term Plan proposal, and is subject to further study in the years to come. However, the proposal did prolong the use of the current corvettes, which earlier had been slated for decommissioning around 2025, as it is said that the F-35 will fulfil their naval strike tasks. The Navy is still

14 Norwegian Armed Forces, 'Telemark bataljon', 11 February 2019.

15 Johnsen, Alf Bjarne, 'NATO-sjefens ønskeliste til regjeringen: En fullverdig norsk brigade', *Verdens Gang*, 14 February 2018; and Kasberg, Morten, 'Overtok bataljon med kampluftvern', *Nye Troms*, 18 June 2018; and Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop 2S, *Vidareutviklingen av Hæren og Heimevernet*, 2017, p. 17.

16 Norwegian Government Offices, 'Regjeringen øker innsatsen i internasjonale operasjoner', 10 July 2018; and Forsvarets Forum, 'Til stede på Natos østflanke: – Gjør oss tryggere', 17 December 2019.

17 Norwegian Armed Forces, 'Viktig satsing i nord', 20 April 2020; and Norwegian Armed Forces, 'Hæren styrkes i Finnmark', 10 January 2019.

18 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 151S, *Kampkraft og Bærekraft*, p. 68.

19 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The military balance 2020*, p. 133.

20 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 151S, *Kampkraft og Bærekraft*, p. 58.

21 Norway has 6 Ula-class submarines but, while waiting to receive their replacements, two will be decommissioned; see Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 151S, *Kampkraft og Bærekraft*, p. 60.

22 Norwegian Armed Forces, Kystvakten, 24 February 2020.

Table: Personnel and materiel in the Norwegian Armed Forces

Personnel/Materiel ^a	Numbers in 2020	Planned reforms towards 2025
Personnel		
Regular force	23,250 ^b	550 more professionals ^c
Conscripts	8050	700 more conscripts ^d
Territorial defence forces	40,000	
Reserves	-	Currently in development ^e
Materiel		
Tanks	52 (Leopard 2A4) ^f	To be replaced from 2025 ^g
Armoured combat vehicles	502 ^h (112 CV9030 ⁱ , 315 M113, 75 XA-186/200 Sisu)	
Heavy artillery pieces	26 (2 K9 Thunder, 24 M109A3GN)	M109s to be replaced by 24 K9. ^j
Attack helicopters	-	
Surface combatants	10 (4 Fridtjof Nansen-class frigates ^k , 6 Skjold-class corvettes).	
Submarines	4 (Ula tactical) ^l	
Combat aircraft	60 (35 F-16, 25 F-35A ^m)	52 F-35A
Transport aircraft	4 (C-130l)	
Air defence	3 batteries NASAMS II ⁿ	

NB: **a.** Numbers, if not otherwise stated are from IISS, *The military balance 2020*, p. 131–133, **b.** Of which some 8050 are conscripts, **c.** Norwegian Government Offices, 'Svar på spørsmål fra utenriks- og forsvarskomiteen oversendt i brev av 30. april 2020 vedr. Prop. 62 S (2019–2020), 2020', p. 1., **d.** Ibid, **e.** Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop 2S, *Vidareutviklingen av Hæren og Heimevernet*, p. 21, **f.** According to media reports, some 30 are operational; see Army Recognition, 'Norway to choose between upgrading Leopard 2A4NO or buying a new tank', 7 March 2019, **g.** Norwegian Government Offices, 'Svar på spørsmål', p. 6, **h.** Excluding 140 AUVs and 25 HMT Extendas, **i.** Mostly IFVs, but also command post and reconnaissance versions, **j.** Yeo, Mike, 'Norway orders K9 howitzers in latest win for South Korean arms industry', *Defense News*, 20 December 2017, **k.** While IISS lists these as destroyers, Norway calls them frigates; see Norwegian Armed Forces, Fridtjof Nansen-class, 28 June 2016, **l.** Norway has 6 Ula-class submarines but, while waiting to receive their replacements, two will be decommissioned; see Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 151S, *Kampkraft och Bærekraft*, p. 60, **m.** Dalløken, Per Erlén, 'Flere jagerfly til Ørland', **n.** Following upgrades in 2019, Norway calls the system NASAMS III; see Norwegian Armed Forces, 'NASAMS III', 23 April 2020.

struggling to keep all vessels operational, as maintenance, spare parts and sufficient crewmen are lacking, a situation that the 2016 Long-term Plan was meant to address.²³

Air Force

The Air Force consists of approximately 3600 airmen, 1000 of whom are conscripts.²⁴ Its main task is upholding control of Norwegian airspace. It is in a state of flux with the ongoing reception and integration of 52 F-35A fighter jets, of which 25 were delivered by 2020, and the replacement of six P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft with five P-8 Poseidons.²⁵ Currently, the Air Force maintains a fighter squadron of F-16s and a forming squadron of F-35s.

The integration of new fighter jets will see the Air Force taking on a greater role in supporting other service branches. Moreover, it entails a need for updated infrastructure and changes to air force bases. As opposed to the dispersal concept employed during the Cold war, the main base in Ørland will host the majority of the Norwegian fighter jets, with Evenes as a forward operating base. Thus, the need for advanced air defences is obvious, with the Chief of Defence calling for a doubling of NASAMS systems and procurement of long-range anti-ballistic missile systems.²⁶ The 2020 Long-term Plan proposal included upgraded sensors for the NASAMS systems and procurement of shorter-range missiles to protect air bases

23 Eide, Ole Kåre and Furrevik, Gro Anita, 'På jakt etter volum', *Forsvarets Forum*, 12 September 2017. Norway had five frigates until HNoMS Helge Ingstad was lost in an accident in 2018. The corvettes will make up for the capability gap created by this loss.

24 IISS, *The military balance 2020*, p. 132.

25 Dalløken, Per Erlén, 'Flere jagerfly til Ørland: Nå har Norge mottatt halve F-35-flåten', *Teknisk Ukeblad*, 26 May 2020.

26 Olsen, Dag Tangen, 'Forsvarssjefen vil ha mer luftvern'. Norges Forsvarsforening, 1 April 2020.

and other critical infrastructure for allied reinforcements, but deferred the introduction of longer-range systems.²⁷

In addition to the main systems, Norway has 18 Bell helicopters for tactical transports, 2 electronic warfare aircraft and a variety of missiles and bombs, including, for the fighter aircraft, Sidewinders, IRIS-T, AMRAAM and JDAMs. However, the quantities of the latter are unclear. There have been reports that the training and exercise levels are too low and that there is a shortage of pilots and technicians, which the introduction of F-35s is likely to exacerbate.²⁸

Personnel and materiel

In 2020, the Norwegian Armed Forces consists of 23,250 active service personnel, including about 8000 conscripts. However, readiness suffers from inadequate manning levels and strained resources, prompting political discussions of how to attract and retain personnel. In 2014, the Chief of Defence warned that the lack of personnel detrimentally affected endurance. Since then, the number of active service personnel has decreased from 25,800 to 23,250.²⁹ To increase readiness, operational units will no longer train conscripts, and conscript service will be more diversified, regarding length: that is, 12 months as standard and 16 months for key posts. The object is to lessen the burden on operational units and use conscription more effectively in support of readiness. A conscription system more geared towards operations than training decreases the need for reservists to replace conscripts in case of mobilisation, at least initially. Instead, an active reserve to fully man units in case of war will be created. Implementation of these reforms started within the Army in 2017, and the 2020 Long-term Plan proposal suggests expanding it to all service branches.³⁰

ASSESSMENT OF MILITARY CAPABILITY

As a consequence of the deteriorating European security situation and reduced warning times, Norway has attempted to adapt its Armed Forces towards increased

readiness and firepower. This is evident in the changes to the conscription system and the ongoing procurements of modern artillery and main battle tanks as well as in the efforts to address shortfalls in logistics and maintenance. During this transition, military representatives have been candid on the effects of years of under-financed defence decisions and the concomitant problems, in particular low readiness and inadequate force numbers.³¹

Given one week's notice, the Norwegian army can muster up to a mechanised battalion-sized battlegroup with artillery, other combat support and combat service support units attached, and parts of the Border Guard battalion and Oslo-based light infantry battalion. Depending on how far along their training conscripts are, some additional units could possibly be mobilised. In addition, around half of the special forces are probably available, as are the rapid reaction forces and parts of the regular forces of the Home Guard.

The core battalion of the battlegroup is fully professional and has extensive combat experience from international operations. In the case of a limited aggression, it should be able to delay an aggressor, especially if the Air Force is able to provide close air support. In the event of a more serious attack, however, the lack of volume and army air defences complicates the picture, especially as the sole air defence battalion should be preoccupied with protecting airports and allied reinforcement areas. Successful defence depends on Norway being able to move army units to its northernmost region of Finnmark, which the limiting terrain and enemy action may impede. While the mechanisation of the brigade's light infantry battalion has benefits, it also means that the flexibility of less terrain-dependent light infantry units, more capable of dispersed operations and with lighter logistical footprints and faster transports, is lost.³²

As noted by the Norwegian Chief of Defence, the core battalion is frequently on stand-by for NATO operations and, if deployed abroad, may leave few units for national

27 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 62S, *Vilje til beredskap*, p. 91

28 Bentzrød, Sveinung Berg, 'Kampflyene koster 268 milliarder kroner. Nå fryktes det at det ikke er nok piloter til å fly dem', *Aftenposten*, 7 March 2019; and Hjort, Christian Bugge, 'Det utdannes for få teknikere til Luftforsvaret', Norges Forsvarsforening, 23 March 2020.

29 Bentzrød, Sveinung Berg, 'Forsvarssjefen: Forsvaret har for få soldater', *Aftenposten*, 22 April 2014. For personnel numbers in 2014, see IISS, *The military balance 2014* (London: IISS, 2014), p. 124. Comparisons over time might be misleading, however, as data reporting procedures may have changed. Furthermore, it is likely that the readiness and availability of today's force structure is better, and that personnel has been shifted from administrative positions to operational units.

30 Det Kongelige Forsvarsdepartement: Prop. 62S, *Vilje til beredskap*, p. 52. For example, there will no longer be periods where all conscripts are at the start of their training simultaneously.

31 It is likely that many countries face the same problems as Norway, but are not as frank as Norwegian officials are about them.

32 Bjørningstad, Bjørnar M. and Sandnes Becker, Mathias, 'Norge trenger lettinfanteri!', *Stratagem*, 10 April 2019.

defence. Even the occasional deployment of a mechanised company from Telemark Battalion to Lithuania, which in the past have involved nine tanks and a number of armoured vehicles, could represent a loss of about a quarter of the available high-readiness mechanised units.³³

The Norwegian Navy has a number of highly capable systems but suffers from a lack of crews, spare parts and maintenance.³⁴ Furthermore, recurring delays and maintenance issues in the introduction of on-board NH90 helicopters hamper ASW capabilities.³⁵ At short notice, the Navy could probably stand up 1–2 Nansen-class frigates, 2–3 Skjold corvettes and 1–2 submarines.

Assessing the Air Force's short-time readiness is difficult, as it is currently in a state of flux through the change of fighter aircraft. However, media reports in 2014 claimed that approximately 12–15 F-16s were immediately available.³⁶ While the actual numbers may be higher, the on-going replacement of F-16s should mean that they are given less priority in daily operations. The Air Force is further strained by a lack of personnel, exercises and base support.³⁷ Tentatively, some 15–20 F-16s and 5–10 F-35As would be available within a week.

Given the lack of volume, the units already deployed abroad, and transport times, Norway would struggle to

deploy any combat units to a contingency elsewhere in Northern Europe within a week. If needed, and if the situation at home allows for it, maritime surveillance aircraft and a small detachment of fighter aircraft might be an exception.

Given three months' notice, additional naval assets can most likely be added, and about ten more F-16s. The army should be able to stand up large parts of Brigade North, either by intensive combat training of conscripts and/or by mobilising reservists to augment units. However, the maintenance and personnel rotations required to sustain operations over time, and the lack of additional personnel in the not yet fully developed reserve system, indicate that the overall picture may not be markedly different for any of the service branches.³⁸

Within five years, the Norwegian Army will have received and integrated new self-propelled howitzers, short-range air defence for the army brigade, and counter-battery radars; continued work on two new mechanised battalions; and come further in the development of its active reserve concept. No particular developments are planned for the Navy until 2025, whereas the Air Force will have received all F-35As and reached the projected fully operational capability. ■

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33 Norwegian Armed Forces, *Et styrket forsvar - Forsvarssjefens fagmilitære råd 2019, 2019*, p. 28; and Fjellestad, Anders, 'Beroliger Litauen', Norwegian Armed Forces, 18 September 2017.

34 There are for example only five crews for the four frigates at present. See Norwegian Government Offices, 'Svar på spørsmål fra utenriks- og forsvarskomiteen oversendt i brev av 30. april 2020 vedr. Prop. 62 S (2019–2020)', 2020, p. 31.

35 Eide, Ole Kåre and Furrevik, Gro Anita, 'På jakt etter volum'; and Norwegian Government Offices, 'Svar på spørsmål fra utenriks- og forsvarskomiteen oversendt i brev av 13. mai 2020 vedr. Prop. 62 S (2019–2020)', p. 11

36 Bentzrød, Sveinung Berg, 'Forsvarssjefen'.

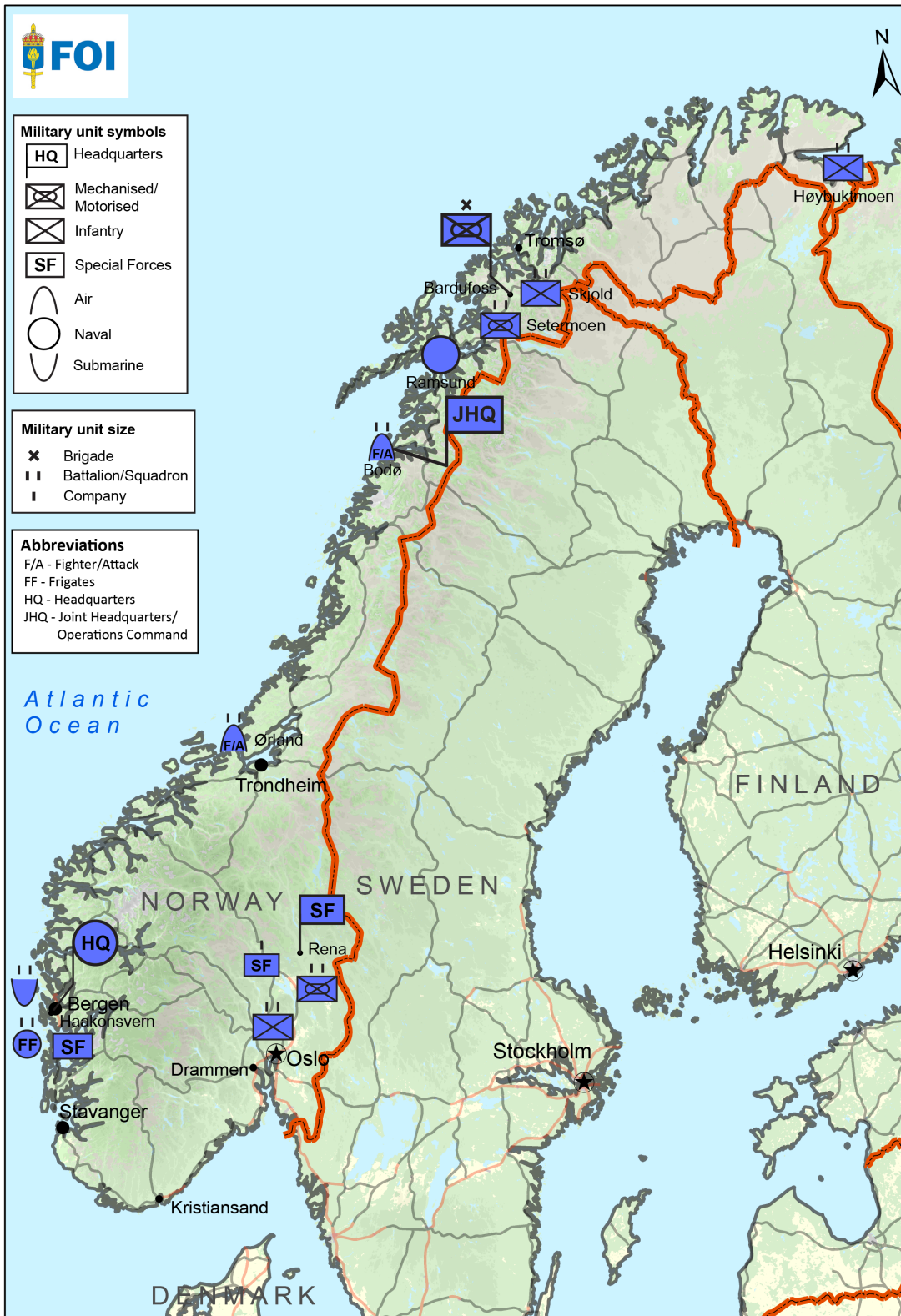
37 Eide, Ole Kåre and Førland Olsen, Øyvind, 'Et voldsomt løft', *Forsvarets Forum*, 24 October 2017.

38 It is furthermore unclear to what extent such a mobilisation has been prepared and exercised.

Table: Force structure of the Norwegian Armed Forces

	Organisation 2020 ^a	Planned reforms towards 2025	Assessment of forces available at short notice
Joint	Joint operational headquarters Cyber defence force Special forces Command (1 naval special forces unit, 1 army special forces unit)		Around half of the special forces units
Army	1 mechanised brigade (2 mechanised battalions, 1 light infantry battalion, support units) 1 light infantry battalion (King's Guard) 1 intelligence battalion 1 light infantry (Border Guard) battalion 11 Home Guard districts Joint units ^b	Light infantry battalion, to be mechanised. Short-range air defence battery by 2023. ^c Mechanised battalion being established in Porsanger.	Up to 1 mechanised battalion with support units attached. Parts of border guard battalion and King's Guard battalion.
Navy	1 frigate squadron 1 corvette squadron 1 mine-counter measures squadron ^d Coastal Rangers (1 ISR company)		1–2 frigates 2–3 corvettes 1–2 submarines
Air Force	1 fighter squadron (F16AM/BM) 1 fighter squadron (F-35A (forming)) 1 electronic warfare squadron 1 transport squadron 1 search-and-rescue squadron 1 maritime patrol squadron 3 transport helicopter squadrons (1 forming) 1 air defence battalion	Additional air defence battalion. ^e	1 squadron F-16s and half a squadron of F-35s.

NB: **a.** Numbers, if not otherwise stated, are from IISS, *The military balance 2020*, p. 131–133, **b.** The army's joint resources consist of an engineer battalion, a logistics battalion, a transport battalion, a CBRN company and military police, **c.** Kasbergesen, Morten, 'Overtok bataljon med kampluftvern', *Nye Troms*, 18 June 2018, **d.** Kasbergesen, Morten, 'Overtok bataljon med kampluftvern', *Nye Troms*, 18 June 2018, **e.** Dalløken, Per Erlén, 'Luftforsvaret gjør seg klare til et nytt Nato-oppdrag med F-35', *Teknisk Ukeblad*, 7 September 2020.



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