



Again: friend or foe?

Russia's presence in Svalbard enters discussion as Norway ponders options in Ukraine crisis

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The contrarian relationship of cooperation and conflict between Norway and Russia in the Arctic is taking on a new element this week, as leaders of both countries are emphasizing the importance of working together despite the crisis in the Ukraine.

"Our experience of bilateral relations shows that both Norway and Russia always seek to strengthen cooperation in high latitudes," said Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg in an interview with NRK. She said Norway won't take unilateral action against Russia, but will follow European and NATO policies.

"We must take into account the fact that Russia broke a number of rules of international law," she said. "The government of Norway may have to make a tough choice in the near future."

The crisis comes shortly after Solberg and other Norwegian leaders met with top Russian officials to discuss Arctic-related issues including fishing, environmental protection and

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Kindergartners play in the snow on the hill across from The University Centre in Svalbard on Tuesday as the sunlight in the far distance continues creeping toward Longyearbyen. The first rays of sunlight to "officially" shine on the city are scheduled to arrive at about 12:50 p.m. Saturday during a ceremony on the old hospital steps at Skjæringa as part of this year's Solfestuka festival.

20/10 vision for Solfest

Festival and hallmark show celebrate big anniversaries with changes to deal with challenges

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Making impromptu arrangements to celebrate a big anniversary isn't usually highly advisable, but two of Longyearbyen's most popular events are doing so this week to preserve their light-spirited traditions.

The 10th annual Solfestuka festival, which began last Sunday, reaches its literal highlight

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Performers prepare costumes this week for the "Musical Pearls From Coal" show spoofing local events scheduled Friday and Saturday at Huset.

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Hind sight rules at the Iditarod

Rookie from Longyearbyen may be a contender for cherished last-place Red Lantern Award

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Tommy Jordbrudal isn't going to win the Iditarod, but in a year where just finishing the famous dogsled race is far more challenging than usual the first-time participant may claim one of its most revered prizes.

The Longyearbyen resident is among the last group of racers reaching checkpoints for

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COURTESY OF TOMMY JORDBRUDAL

Tommy Jordbrudal gives a high-five to spectator as he and a team of 16 sleddogs begin the 2014 Iditarod race in Willow, Alaska, on Sunday.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Hey! Do we come over to your home to ogle?



TERJE WEISETH / SVALBARD REISELIV

Two polar bear cubs cuddle up with their mother last weekend at Mohnbukta, on the east coast of Spitsbergen. The trio, along with at least five other bears, was spotted by a group of snowmobilers that included Tourism Svalbard Director Ronny Brunvoll. He told *Svalbardposten* the mother and her cubs were well concealed by the surrounding ice and spotting them was a coincidence. "In addition to the female bear with two cubs, there seemed to be a little drama going out on the ice between two males who were interested in one and the same female bear," he said. A video of the bears is available at <http://tinyurl.com/ocf38l9>.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

He's easily Svalbard's most famous person, at least this week, but for a few days there was no proof of his existence beyond an impressive list of charitable financial transactions. We scoured the internet and public records, interrogated locals who "know everybody," and made (bigger) fools of ourselves by putting up "wanted" posters on community bulletin boards. As it turns out, the world was paying tribute to a typographical error. **The very-much-real Espen Arntzen of Longyearbyen is one of four people being honored by Kickstarter as it surpasses \$1 billion in crowd-sourcing pledges.** Arntzen was proclaimed the "Most Arctic" donor, backing 74 projects ranging from albums to books to video games. But, he emphasized in an e-mail interview published on Kickstarter's blog, "I also back projects that aren't so much about making a product, but rather helping out a community, or calling attention to issues that aren't that well known, which feels more like donating to a good cause." He reassures readers Longyearbyen isn't all that different than towns further south and "the physical distance to the project



KICKSTARTER

Want a reward for this wanted man? Try getting one on Kickstarter – maybe he'll chip in.

creators isn't something I think about, except that shipping of rewards can be tricky." The full interview is at tinyurl.com/n4xlty. Kickstarter notes that "remarkably, there are three other Kickstarter backers in Longyearbyen, but Espen has outbacked them all." Considering the misery the entity put us through trying to find one backer, we're not even going to try to find out who the other charitably minded locals are ... Another local man who's potential material for wanted posters of a more traditional sort is finding himself in Nord-Troms District Court on charges of **stealing a van and joyriding until he finally parked it outside his home, according to Nordlys.** Police say he was under the influence of alcohol and didn't have a valid driver's license. It's his second such incident, as three months later he tried stealing another vehicle, but was unable to start it. Both incidents occurred in mid-2013, but are just getting to the court now ... Finally, **for those hoping to make a last-minute trip to the North Pole next month, check out this list of exotic options (and prices)** like champagne honeymoons at tinyurl.com/phghcx5.



PHOTO BY DAVE HANCHETTE

Good luck crowdsourcing this: Paying up to \$180,000 to play in the snow probably isn't going to inspire a lot of charitable feelings.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Bendik Adamiak-Husby, left, plays the violin, trumpet and a keyboard duet with Elise Strømseng during the "Stars in Sight" youth talent competition Monday at Kulturhuset as part of this year's Solfestuka.

Show revisiting 20 years of spoofs

BRIGHT, from page 1

at 12:50 p.m. Saturday when sun will shine on the main part of the city for the first time in four months. At least in theory, since a weather forecast of heavy snow is likely to make the welcoming ceremony on the old hospital steps at Skjæringa a wet one.

But the white stuff will offer warm relief to the organizers of an afternoon of snow games and activities at 2 p.m. Saturday. The event, already relocated once from last year due to lack of snow, was moved again this week to the ski hill across from Longyearbyen School due to a lingering lack of coverage.

The biggest on-the-fly arrangements are being made by performers in the "Musical Pearls From Coal" variety show Friday and Saturday at Huset, which typically spoofs major local events from the past year. The show is celebrating its 20-year anniversary and Anne Lise Sandvik, the lead organizer, said they were planning to delay it until the May 17 national holiday so Birgithe Røed Jonsrud, the show's founder, could return and participate.

But she said the overwhelming reaction was "it won't be a proper sun festival without it." So an ensemble of ten performers is putting in long hours in a handful of days to create a show of the past 20 years' highlights.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Solfestuka schedule

Thursday

- 10 a.m.: Solar activities for youths ages 3-6. Longyearbyen Library.
- 11 p.m.: Concert by Taliban Airways. Kroa.

Friday

- 6 p.m.: Solfest carnival for juniors. Longyearbyen youth club.
- 7:30 p.m.: Variety show spoofing the past year's events in Svalbard. Huset.
- 9 p.m.: Solfest carnival for seniors. Longyearbyen youth club.
- 10 p.m.: Concert by the Dum Dum Boys. Kulturhuset. SOLD OUT.
- 10 p.m.: Concert by the Bjørn Tyldum Trio. Huset.

Saturday

- 11:30 a.m.: 10-year anniversary celebration of Solfest w/ founder Louise Rigozzi. At the old hospital steps at Skjæringa, next to Svalbard Church.
- 12:30 p.m.: Ceremony welcoming the return of the sun, projected at 12:50 p.m. Skjæringa.
- 1 p.m.: Solfest social. Svalbard Church.
- 2 p.m.: Solfest games and other snow activities on the plain below Vei 238
- 4 p.m.: Culture cafe featuring performances by local youths. Kulturhuset.
- 7:30 p.m.: Variety show spoofing the past year's events in Svalbard. Huset.
- 10 p.m.: Concert by the Bjørn Tyldum Trio. Huset.

Sunday

- Noon: Outdoor Mass. Below the television antenna at Hiorthfjellet.

Full details of all events available at solfest.no.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Foundation trouble delays new Museumsveien bridge

Completion of a new bridge on Museumsveien will be delayed due to a misplaced foundation, according to a Longyearbyen city official. "As the foundations are placed incorrectly, they must be modified," said Thomas Skogvold, chief engineer for Bydrift. "That means a new design and strength assessment." The error was due to consultancy work, he said. The scheduled completion date of February or March will likely be delayed by about a month. Foundation problems also are what resulted in the bridge's closure last summer, when it sustained damage from meltwater. The new bridge is a narrower, one-lane crossing that costs less than replacing the original's design, but can also be moved to other locations if necessary.

Snowscooter driver dies of heart attack during day tour

A snowscooter driver who was part of a twelve-person tour died of a heart attack Saturday while the group was returning to Longyearbyen from Isfjord Radio, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The man, whose name was not released, is from Rogaland and was born in 1957. A rescue helicopter was sent to the site east of Grønfjorden, but the patient was dead on arrival. "Despite immediate resuscitation attempts, it became clear that his life was not possible to save," said Arild Lyssand, a police lieutenant for the governor's office. A memorial service for the man was held Sunday at Svalbard Church.

Man tries sleeping in shed, may be kicked off the island

The financial means of a man in his 30s are being investigated by the Svalbard governor's office after he tried to seek shelter in a storage shed Wednesday night. "The person wanted to find a free place to sleep and lay down in a shed," said Thomas Ulvestad, a police lieutenant for the governor. "The owners of the shed called us and asked us to remove him." Officials are investigating whether the man is without money or merely being miserly. He has a return plane ticket to his home country, but an earlier flight will be arranged if he is without means.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 32 km/h. High -2C (-8C wind chill), low -5C (-10C wind chill).	Rain/snow. E winds to 52 km/h. High 4C (-2C wind chill), low -5C (-11C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 42 km/h. High 1C (-5C wind chill), low -1C (-6C wind chill).	Snow. S winds to 45 km/h. High 0C (-6C wind chill), low -1C (-6C wind chill).
Sunrise 7:46a; sunset 4:31p	Sunrise 7:38a; sunset 4:39p	Sunrise 7:29a; sunset 4:46p	Sunrise 7:21a; sunset 4:54p
Extended forecast: Sunday, snow, 0C (-7C), -6C (-13C), light 9:48h; Monday, cloudy, -4C (-10C), -6C (-12C), light 10:04h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -5C (-9C), -10C (-15C), light 10:20h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -10C (-16C), -13C (-18C), light 10:35h			
Data provided by storm.no			



IDITAROD TRAIL COMMITTEE

A television reporter interviews Tommy Jordbrudal before the ceremonial start of the 2014 Iditarod in downtown Anchorage. Jordbrudal and four other racers from Norway are getting extensive media coverage due to their close personal ties and potential dominance. Among the others are Robert Sorlie, 56, a two-time winner in four races; Joar Leifseth Ulson, 27, the 2013 rookie of the year; and Ralph Johannessen, 54, who observers say is "considered a shoo-in for rookie of the year" in this race.

Last place no disgrace at race

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the 1,560-kilometer race from Anchorage to Nome in Alaska. But he's among the shrinking group managing to reach those checkpoints on what's considered one of the worst trails ever due to warm weather and little snow cover.

"I have no doubt that I'll get to Nome," he told *Svalbardposten* before the race. "The question is just how long it takes."

Jordbrudal, 44, is in 54th place out of 58 remaining racers after about one-third of the race that began Sunday. If his pace slows or the few behind him drop out, reaching Nome would earn him the most-notorious prize besides the winner's trophy: the Red Lantern Award.

"The Red Lantern Award started as a joke in 1953 during the Fur Rendezvous Race,"

wrote Donna Finner, an Iditarod historian, at the race's website. "It then was passed over to the Iditarod. Today, it is a symbol of perseverance and mushers feel a sense of pride and accomplishment when receiving it."

Jordbrudal is living with his family in Fairbanks for eight months because his wife, Janne, got a job at the university there. He brought seven dogs from Norway and bought 12 more in Alaska so he could participate in the race.

He's been mushing since 1990 and, as with many Iditarod rookies, said he hopes to use this year's experience to be more competitive in future races.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Ukraine crisis revives issues in Arctic

DILEMMA, from page 1

"Russia's business and scientific activities in Spitsbergen," according to The Voice of Russia, the country's state-owned radio network.

"Now more than ever it is important to continue to cooperate" from person to person across borders, said Norwegian Barents Secretariat Rune Rafaelsen in an interview with the *Barents Observer*.

Tensions about many issues have existed

for years, including coastal boundaries and frequent seizures of Russian trawlers accused of violating Svalbard's fishing laws.

The crisis may result in the cancellation of a biannual naval exercise between Russia, Norway and the United States in the waters bordering Svalbard, as the U.S. announced this week it does not intend to participate.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Balloting is underway! Suggest categories and pick your winners for

The Best of Svalbard 2014

www.icepeople.net/bestofsvabard

(By the way, we're selling ads for this one so the winners can gloat and the losers can explain why we have our heads completely up our asses.)

What's up

March 2-9

Solfestuka 2014, celebrating the return of sunlight to Longyearbyen. See schedule on this page.

March 8

10:30 a.m. "Out and Running" youth snowmobile safety/navigation course. Outdoor day in Fardalen for participants in previous sessions.

March 9

5 p.m.: Movie: "Peabody and Sherman," U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "300: Rise of an Empire" (3D), U.S. action/drama, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

March 10

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

March 13

6 p.m.: "Musical Highlights" performance by Longyearbyen School students, featuring works from "Annie," "The Lion King" and "Mamma Mia." Kulturhuset.

March 14-16

Winter Camp Svalbard for youths. Contact ingeborg.runde@lokalstyre.no for registration and details.

March 16

5 p.m.: Movie: "Peabody and Sherman" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 17

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

March 18

7 p.m.: Municipal Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Discussion by author Helene Uri focusing on her newest novel "Rydde ut." Longyearbyen Library.

March 19

6 p.m.: Movie: "Meg Eier Ingen," Swedish drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Ascending' Greens eye oil-free Norway?*
- *Tougher laws for polar-area ships coming*
- *Warming threatens World Heritage sites*
- *Reviving a 30,000-year-old Siberian virus*