



# 'Concerns are growing'

*Reports: Russian jets buzzing Norway's coast; may feel need to 'protect' Barentsburg like Crimea*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

As Russia takes its final steps this week to absorb Crimea, "concerns are growing" the

Russian mining community of Barentsburg might be among the locations targeted for similar action as military tensions with Norway heat up, according to news reports.

"*Aftenposten* ominously noted that Russia has never fully accepted Svalbard as belonging to Norway, for example," an article posted this week at [newsinenglish.no](http://newsinenglish.no) states. "Russia main-

tains a population of around 400 mineworkers at Barentsburg on Svalbard – 100 Russians and, ironically, 300 Ukrainians. Concerns are growing that Russia suddenly may feel a need to 'protect' them like they 'protected' Russians in Crimea, and simply take over."

Articles in those and other publications  
**See TENSIONS, page 4**

# Doctor bails on Russians

*Barentsburg's only physician says leaders are endangering patients and he isn't being paid*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Barentsburg's only doctor fled the Russian mining community this week, claiming he hasn't been paid for two months and administrators are overruling his treatment recommendations with possibly fatal results.

The accuracy of the claims is being questioned by Trust Arktikugol, the state-owned company that oversees the settlement, whose chief administrator is demanding the doctor provide evidence for his claims.

Ibrahim Pliev, 50, said recommendations to send patients to the mainland for treatment are being overruled by administrators who insist they remain at the hospital in Barentsburg,

**See HOSPITAL, page 4**



SIDSEL SVARSTAD / SYSSELMANNEN

A snowmobile rests at the bottom of a cliff at Hollendarbukta after being driven off the ledge Tuesday by a man lacking a guide or GPS device. Two drivers in a group of 11 went off the cliff.

# Free to be stupid?

*Snowmobilers drive off cliff, sparking debate about GPS mandate*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

If tourists want to go snowmobiling with inadequate navigation equipment and end up driving off a cliff – as two people did Tuesday

– they should be free to do so without oppressive government regulations.

That's one side of an online debate taking place after the incident that resulted in one

**See MANDATE, page 2**

## Inside

**Sea Monsters of the North are back**  
Page 2

**Headlines from *Svalbardposten***  
- UNIS workers eye lawsuit over higher rents  
- Fire chief: Increasing density of homes a risk  
- Two rescued from *Svea* in separate incidents  
Page 3

**Weather forecast**  
Page 3

**Events calendar**  
Page 4

# At this Iditarod, finishing is a victory

*Tommy Jordbrudal completes one of the harshest courses ever in Alaskan dogsled race*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Someday Tommy Jordbrudal can tell his grandkids how, as a rookie, he overtook the guy who had a seemingly insurmountable lead in the famous 1,560-kilometer Iditarod race a mere 40 miles from the finish line.

The story might lose a bit of luster when the details are revealed, but the Longyearbyen

**See MUSHERS, page 3**



IDITAROD TRAIL COMMITTEE

Tommy Jordbrudal waves to spectators along the trail of the 2014 Iditarod. The bib he wore for the first stretch fetched \$185 at the post-race auction.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

### Editor

Mark Sabbatini

### Principal of principles

Kristan Hutchison

### Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

### Accomplice

Jeff Newsom

### Mailing address

*Icepeople*  
Vei 210 -2- 13  
Longyearbyen, Svalbard  
9170  
Norway

### Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38  
U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

### E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

### Web site

www.icepeople.net

*Icepeople* is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

## Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

## Corrections policy

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.

## Cutting corners on the cleaning



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen School students perform an abridged version of "Annie" on Thursday at Kulturhuset. The performance also featured highlights from "The Lion King" and "Mamma Mia!"

## More rules for 'ignorant' snowmobilers?

### MANDATE, from page 1

man being hospitalized with chest injuries. Rescuers had difficulty locating the tour group of 11 people at Hollendarbukta because they lacked a GPS and couldn't provide an accurate location when they called for help, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The group also lacked a satellite phone, a danger because most of Svalbard has no mobile phone coverage.

A *Svalbardposten* article about the accident provoked a debate among readers about how much training and navigation equipment, if any, should be required for those on snowmobiling excursions, especially for tour guides leading a group of inexperienced tourists.

"This is a scary trend that we are going to see much more of in the coming years, unless 'someone' does something," wrote Andreas

Lidin Malm, adding there is a collective responsibility to impose reasonable regulations to reduce the danger for "ignorant" tourists.

Jonathan Matthiasson, in response, stated he is "absolutely terrified when I read 'doing something.'"

"Should we really allow everything in life that is fun and worth living for being over-regulated and made impossible because there will always be individuals who are not adult enough to handle the responsibility that included with your life?" he wrote. "I'd rather pay more taxes so the helicopter can take a few extra rounds for some idiots than suddenly find myself trapped because I will soon need a permit from the governor to go to the store."

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Just when you thought they'd gone away... it's The Return of the Sea Monsters of the North. **Jørn Hurum, the paleontologist famous for discovering a number of new species during nearly a decade of dinosaur digs in Svalbard that ended in 2012, is saying I'll Be Back for another fossil excavation this summer.** In an Explorer's Journal entry at *National Geographic's* website – with a characteristically quirky headline of "A new season for superglue in the Sea Monster Lab" – Hurum wrote he has received funding for the magazine to search for marine reptiles from the Triassic era, which predates the period for the plesiosaurs and other species discovered during earlier digs. In the meantime, he and other researchers will be working in the Sea Monster Lab in the basement of the Oslo Geological Museum assembling, analyzing and preserving the fossils already extracted. The journal entry



COURTESY OF JØRN HURUM

**You can't get this in a box of Crackerjacks:** Student Aubrey Roberts checks out her "PhD in a box," containing fossils from Svalbard dino digs. detailing their work is available at [tinyurl.com/p9z8h78](http://tinyurl.com/p9z8h78) ... And since actual news kept us from running our tacky in-house ad, here's a **bold-type reminder to cast your ballots for The Best of Svalbard 2014 special issue ([www.icepeople.net/bestofsvabard](http://www.icepeople.net/bestofsvabard)).**



COURTESY OF SIBERIAN SLEDDOGS



COURTESY OF ESPEN PRESTBAKMO

Yvonne Dåbakk, 31, left, attends to her sleddogs at the Nikolai checkpoint during the 2014 Iditarod. Above, Tommy Jordbrudal, left, signs autographs at the end of the race in Nome.

## Jordbrudal finishes brutal Iditarod

### MUSHERS, from page 1

resident will nonetheless always have the distinction of being among the mushers who managed to complete one of the worst courses in the 41-year history of the dogsledding race in Alaska. He completed the journey from Anchorage to Nome in 12 days, 11 hours and 24 minutes, finishing 44th out of 49 racers with an average speed of 5.15 km/h.

He'll also be able to put an unusual twist on the story by noting he finished seven minutes ahead of Yvonne Dåbakk, a former Longyearbyen resident now living in Alaska. Her 45th-place finish was close enough behind Jordbrudal's that her official average speed was exactly the same as his.

"Tommy claims he just needs a 36-hour rest before he is ready to turn around and mush back to Anchorage. Yvonne did not disagree," wrote Ralph Johannessen, another rookie racer from Norway who finished 22nd, on his Facebook page. He and other friends and family members greeted the two racers when they crossed the finish line at about 2:20 a.m. March 15, and a video by Johannessen of Dåbakk's finish is posted at his page ([tinyurl.com/pbpwnbt](http://tinyurl.com/pbpwnbt)).

A total of 69 racers began the race in Anchorage, but a lack of snow due to warm weather resulted in hazardous and difficult-to-navigate conditions that forced many to drop out in the early stages.

The struggles continued throughout the

**Clarification:** An article in last week's *Icepeople* stated Tommy Jordbrudal was 47th out of 48 remaining racers at the Iditarod's White Mountain checkpoint. The results posted at the race's website were incomplete at the time (hence our mentioning it here instead of on the front page as is our policy when we screw up). He is now listed as the 47th of out 50 racers to depart the checkpoint. Alas, that also means he wasn't in serious contention for the prestigious last-place Red Lantern Award.

race, resulting in one of most bizarre finishes ever. Jeff King – who "appeared to be cruising to a record-tying fifth win" in a record-shattering time, according to The Associated Press – dropped out only 40 kilometers from the end when he was caught in freak wind and ice storm that damaged his sled and exhausted his dogs.

Dåbakk, in a series of journals and remarks posted at her Siberian Sleddogs Facebook page ([tinyurl.com/no7a56h](http://tinyurl.com/no7a56h)), said she endured numerous struggles from a damaged sled on the treacherous course to suffering from bronchitis in the bitter cold weather. But, after after being among those earning an Iditarod finisher's belt buckle, she called it "a fantastic journey with our furry friends."

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### UNIS employees eye lawsuit to fight housing rent increase

Employees at The University Centre in Svalbard have hired an attorney to pursue the possibility of a lawsuit against the university for an alleged illegal increase in housing rents. "We have attempted to go calmly in the doors of this matter, but now it's become so inflamed that we must try to get it resolved in the proper manner," said Steve Coulson, head union steward for the Norwegian Association of Researchers at UNIS. Before 2010, all employees had a subsidized rent of 20 kroner per square meter, which was increased to 67 kroner for those hired subsequently. Coulson said the inequality caused tensions, but the situation worsened last year when UNIS said the higher rent would apply to all employees. Coulson said the rate is considerably higher than what other government employees – and even those at Store Norske – pay and UNIS workers are trying to negotiate a rate of less than 40 kroner per square meter.

### Increasing density of homes pose risk, fire chief says

The increasing density of residences in Longyearbyen is concerning Fire Department Chief Jan Olav Sæter, who said the city's Municipal Council needs to stop approving new projects in vacant spaces between existing buildings. A minimum of 16 meters between buildings was required 2002 but Sæter he now sees buildings only five meters apart. That makes access harder for firefighters, and allows fires to spread much more quickly in what are frequently dry and windy conditions.

### Helicopter rescues two hurt at Svea in separate incidents

Two people were brought by helicopter from Svea to Longyearbyen in separate incidents during the past weekend. A worker at the mine was injured Saturday when the fork of the construction vehicle he was driving hooked onto an unspecified object, bringing it to a sudden stop, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The extent of his injuries was not disclosed. Another rescue occurred at midday Sunday when a foreign man in his 60s was injured while snowmobiling.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. Variable winds to 29 km/h. High -11C (-17C wind chill), low -15C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 6:00a; sunset 6:14p	Cloudy. S winds to 25 km/h. High -8C (-13C wind chill), low -14C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 5:52a; sunset 6:21p	Cloudy. S winds to 22 km/h. High -10C (-14C wind chill), low -11C (-15C wind chill). Sunrise 5:45a; sunset 6:28p	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 22 km/h. High -10C (-14C wind chill), low -12C (-17C wind chill). Sunrise 5:37a; sunset 6:36p
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, p. cloudy, -12C (-17C), -13C (-18C), light 13:14h; Monday, cloudy, -11C (-16C), -14C (-19C), light 13:30h; Tuesday, cloudy, -11C (-16C), -13C (-18C), light 13:45h; Wednesday, cloudy, -11C (-17C), -14C (-20C), light 14:01h			
<b>Data provided by <a href="http://storm.no">storm.no</a></b>			



SONDRE RYPE PAULSEN / NORWEGIAN ARMED FORCES

Soldiers stand at attention this week as part of Operation Cold Response, an annual winter training exercise in Troms and Finnmark. A total of 16,000 soldiers from 16 countries are participating this year.

## Norway giving Russia cold shoulder

### TENSIONS, from page 1

during the past week detail a series of military developments suggesting tensions are increasing between Norway and Russia, despite comments from top leaders they remain committed to peace and cooperation in the region:

- Russian fighter jets are buzzing Norway's northwest coast on a weekly basis to give its pilots training and "show both Norway and NATO that they are a power to be reckoned with," according to *Aftenposten*. The newspaper noted the increased frequency actually began in 2009, but Russia has significantly improved its Arctic fleet since. Norway is sending F16 jets to "greet" each flight and "we fly so close to each other that we can wave at them," said Arvid Halvorsen, chief of an air surveillance station at Mågerø outside Tønsberg. "We fly right up to the Russian jets, show the flag and look them in the eyes."

- Environmental cooperation between the two countries is "in jeopardy" after Tine

Sundtoft, Norway's Minister of Climate and Environment, cancelled a first-ever meeting with her Russia counterpart in Moscow next week, according to the *Barents Observer*. Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg told *VG* the cancellation is due to Russia's actions in the Ukraine.

- A joint military exercise in Arctic waters that normally occurs every two years is also likely to be cancelled. The United States has already dropped out and a spokesman for Norway's Defense Ministry told the *Barents Observer* last week the exercise and a planning conference in April likely won't take place.

- The first photos of the "most important military intelligence vessel for NATO in the Barents and Arctic seas" were released this week by the Norwegian Military Intelligence Service. The giant spy ship is scheduled to begin patrolling in 2016.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Doctor flees Barentsburg, cites abuses

### HOSPITAL, from page 1

according to *Svalbardposten*. In one instance, a man with a heart attack who was eventually sent to Tromsø died there.

"Had it been up to my medical assessment, he had been sent straight to Tromsø," Pliev said. "He was very ill."

Trust Arktikugol received a bill for 1.3 million kroner from the Tromsø hospital for treating the patient. Pliev told *Svalbardposten* the company the cost, due to not being in Norway's national insurance system, is why company officials insist serious patients be treated locally or wait for the monthly plane that brings workers to and from Moscow.

The hospital's other employees – two nurses and a dentist – also haven't been paid for the past two months, he said. In addition, he said he hasn't been paid his full salary during other months.

The nurses can administer first aid, but other patients will need to be transported to

Longyearbyen Hospital. Svalbard Gov. Odd told NRK Odd Olsen Ingerø said he's upset Barentsburg lacks a doctor and is determining if the dispute merits official supervision.

Trust Arktikugol General Director Aleksander P. Veselov, in an e-mail to *Svalbardposten*, stated there was a delay in paying workers for January due to a billing error, but all workers including Pliev have received the salaries they were promised. The director also stated a Russian court deducted some of Pliev's salary to cover child support payments.

Pliev's desire to leave was so great he considered making the 60-kilometer journey to Longyearbyen on foot despite the considerable danger of doing so in temperatures of minus 15 degrees Celsius and having no rifle to defend against polar bears, according to NRK. He managed to get two friends from Longyearbyen to pick him up by snowmobile.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## What's up

### March 19

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

### March 23

11 a.m.: Mass by Bishop Oskar Kjølås. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Doktor Proktors Prompepulver," Norwegian comedy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: "Of Horses and Men," Icelandic/Norwegian/German drama/comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 24

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

### March 25

7 p.m.: Interview of Longyearbyen Mayor Christin Kristoffersen by Priest Leif Magne Helgesen. Svalbard Church.

### March 26

5 p.m.: Movie: "Doktor Proktors Prompepulver," Norwegian comedy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 29

1 p.m.: Outdoor Mass and open day at Fredheim.

### March 30

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ performances by Polarknøttene and Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "The Pirate Fairy" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Permafrost," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 31

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

### April 1

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### April 2

6 p.m.: Movie: "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" (3D), U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 15 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:

- *South Pole experiment proves Big Bang?*
- *Greenland's ice loss triples in a decade*
- *Russia puts 3K spies at Finnish border*
- *1,500-year-old Antarctic moss revived*