



War and peace, Arctic style

Much-hyped summit agreement followed by more muscle-flexing from nations claiming polar areas

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Say nice things when you get together. Battle for supremacy when you return home. Repeat as necessary.

If this is how the next World War is to be fought, at least there's no need to worry about the annihilation of humanity. There's too much

Toxic environment: Russia planning massive cleanup of Franz Josefs Land

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money to be made, even by those defeated.

The eight-nation Arctic Council signed a highly publicized agreement to coordinate search-and-rescue efforts at a summit in Nuuk,

Greenland earlier this month. A statement from the group describes it as "the first legally-binding instrument negotiated under the auspices of the council."

The council also announced Tromsø will be where a permanent secretariat facilitates the organization's work.

But more hostile feelings quickly returned
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ANOTHER PAIN IN THE ASH

Major gatherings in Ny-Ålesund, other Svalbard operations halt as Iceland volcano erupts again

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A volcano eruption in Iceland for the second year in a row is disrupting activities throughout Svalbard, including major events in Ny-Ålesund, despite halting commercial flights here for only a single day.

An international climate symposium scheduled to start Wednesday in Ny-Ålesund has been cancelled and a weekend gathering to celebrate the refurbishing of a villa used by Roald Amundsen in the 1920s is in danger.

Store Norske also halted mining operations at Svea, commercial flights were cancelled Tuesday, and mail and air ambulance flights remained grounded Wednesday (dates reflect a delayed press time of Thursday).

The Grimsvotn volcano began spewing ash Saturday, resulting in hundreds of European

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Arlid Thrane Sandnes, center, checks in Wednesday at Svalbard Airport for a flight to Tromsø. He said "it's chaos at work" after his flight Tuesday was cancelled, but he had a relaxing day here.

Painkillers bring ill tidings to Arctic



NORWEGIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL
Roland Kallenborn, left, an adjunct professor at The University Centre in Svalbard, conducts lab analysis in a documentary about area pollutants.

Residuals much higher than on mainland, UNIS study claims

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Caffeine and ibuprofen can vastly improve your quality of life in the right situations, but their residuals are causing disproportionately high pollution in Svalbard's waters.

The pollution findings were revealed earlier this month by Roland Kallenborn, an adjunct professor at The University Centre In Svalbard, at an international conference on

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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.

Planking in Pyramiden



ANONYMOUS

Eivind Halsnes "rests" on the welcome sign at abandoned Russian town of Pyramiden in what he says he believes is the world's northernmost instance of planking. The practice of laying face-down on planks in unusual areas and taking a picture to capture the moment is a fad causing concern for officials worldwide as people put themselves in potentially fatal situations. Halsnes, a sailor on the *Jan Mayen* research vessel, told NRK "I have heard of dangerous planking and it's not funny when it is so. However, this is completely innocent and just fun." He said his effort "must be" the northernmost, "but if it is not we will be further north in the days to come. Maybe we should do a little planking there as well."

Pills making Arctic waters ill

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Arctic climate change and pollution in Copenhagen. He said in some Arctic seawater samples the presence of ibuprofen was two to five times higher than in Oslo, while caffeine was up to 80 times higher.

"These results confirm findings from an earlier study performed in Tromsø in 2002," a synopsis of his study notes. Even so, the extent of the problem in the Arctic is generally underestimated.

The problem, according to Kallenborn, is sewage systems in the Arctic are less effective at filtering micro-pollutants, which take longer to break down in the frigid waters and soil. Pills are designed to be resistant to breakdown because of their need to travel through the digestive tract.

While cold water temperatures significantly slow down the breakdown process, more

analysis is needed to determine the extent to which climate is responsible relative to treatment facilities, he notes.

The toxins can harm wildlife even when consumed in small doses, Kallenborn said in an interview with *Nunatsiaq News*. Furthermore, people exposed to repeated doses of antibiotics can develop a resistance to them.

Kallenborn's study focused on a sewage treatment plant serving about 100,000 people in Oslo, another for 65,000 people in Tromsø and a third for Longyearbyen.

The presence of drug residues in the Arctic will increase as communities grow and diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure increase, Kallenborn told the *Nunatsiaq News*. Climate change will also open up areas of the region to more people and commercial traffic.

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

From the "how did we miss something this awesome" file: A news item titled "Music From the Bones of Antarctica" is about a collaboration featuring Cheryl Leonard, who is also the composer of The Adfreeze Project, described as "a series of artworks combining sound and form to explore the Spitsbergen region of the Arctic." The music consists of natural sounds, such as water running under holes of different sizes in the snow, with video clips accompanying many of them. A large number of recordings can be found or linked to free at www.adfreeze.blogspot.com ... Is there such a

thing as Apocalypse Lite? The Rapture didn't happen Saturday due to Harold Camping's errant calculation (quick – send him more money during the five months you have to live before the *real* date). But that volcano eruption in Iceland did happen at roughly the predicted time of Doom, so maybe it was one of those times humanity got off with just a warning shot. If so, it seems we have a higher ratio of sinners than most (we're, ahem, talking about you, Ny-Ålesund) since a single day of cancelled flights wreaked havoc for people around the world planning to come here for a climate summit and the much-hyped Amundsen's villa thing.



U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT

Members of the eight-nation Arctic Council gather for a summit earlier this month in Nuuk, Greenland, where an agreement to coordinate search-and-rescue operations was signed.

Icy feelings return after summit

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in actions and media coverage, including documents from WikiLeaks describing a battle to "carve up" the Arctic.

Cooperation for operations such as search-and-rescue missions and environmental disasters are vital, agree leaders of the nations even when discussing them on their home turf. A dramatic 15-hour rescue by Svalbard personnel making an unprecedented trip to researchers stranded at the north tip of Greenland is a prototypical example.

But the Arctic also is potentially home to a quarter of the world's remaining oil. It's also seen as the primary route for faster and less expensive commercial shipping for the northern hemisphere in the decades to come as the sea ice vanishes due to climate change. Longtime battles over territory, regulations and other matters have been fierce – including stunts such as Russia planting a flag in the seabed under the North Pole in 2007 – and show little sign of resolution any time soon.

Consider some of the headlines following the immediate "leaders pledge cooperation" articles after the summit:

• "Annals of the Great Not-So-White North: The coming Nuuk-lear arms race," by *Foreign Policy*.

• "Denmark to lay claim to North Pole," by

CNN.

• "Russia says Canada's Arctic criticisms show lack of understanding of 'reality,'" by *The Canadian Press*.

• "Fears in Arctic over rigged energy choices," by BBC News.

WikiLeaks has strained international relations worldwide since releasing a massive number of documents in 2010. The Arctic entered the fray earlier this month as secret embassy cables from the United States suggested all Arctic states are pushing to stake claims because the opportunity to exploit resources is ideal due to ice melt.

"If you stay out, then the rest of us will have more to carve up in the Arctic," one cable quotes Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller stating, jokingly, in a conversation with U.S. officials.

Most of the material is more somber and substantial.

"The twenty-first century will see a fight for resources," Russian Ambassador to NATO Dmitry Rogozin is quoted as saying in 2010. "Russia should not be defeated in this fight."

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper told NATO to keep out of the Arctic, according to another cable.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

All sailings of the Polar Star cancelled for this summer

All sailings of the *Polar Star* cruise ship to Svalbard this summer have been cancelled by Spitsbergen Travel because financial struggles by the ship's owner has left the vessel stuck in Spain. A total of 857 passengers made bookings on 11 cruises, who will receive refunds and a 50 percent discount on a Hurtigruten trip. "We have worked to find a solution until now and thought that we should do it," said Trygve Steen, administrative director for Spitsbergen Travel. "Now we realize we cannot." He said finding a replacement for the *Polar Star* was difficult because there are few ships with capacity for about 100 passengers and those that do exist in that class tend to be aging. The *Polar Star* is owned by Karlsten Shipping in Halifax, Canada.

Governor denies request for early Noorderlicht breakout

Basecamp Spitsbergen has been denied permission to break the *Noorderlicht* out of the ice in Tempelfjorden earlier than the permit date. The permit Svalbard governor's office stated the earliest removal date would be the first business day after the Norwegian Constitution Day weekend. Basecamp hoped to break the ship out May 10, arguing there are relatively few excursions the weekend preceding May 17 holiday. The governor cited considerations about wildlife and the safety of people on expeditions in rejecting the request. The *Noorderlicht* serves as a tourist lodge while frozen into Tempelfjorden each winter.

Camp Svalbard moving to abandoned Russian area

Camp Svalbard is moving to the abandoned Russian settlement of Colesbukta this fall, which will allow youths from Barentsburg to participate, according to Kristine Lidin Hansen, the camp's coordinator. The camp for youths ages 13 to 18, scheduled Aug. 26 to 28, offers nature and culture experiences, plus an opportunity for clubs to showcase their work. Inquires for enrollment, limited to 40 participants on a first-come basis, can be sent to campsvalbard@lokalstyre.no.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mostly sunny. E winds at 18 km/h. High -3C (-9C wind chill), low -5C (-11C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 7 km/h. High -2C (-5C wind chill), low -4C (-7C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 11 km/h. High -1C (-5C wind chill), low -2C (-6C wind chill).	Mostly cloudy. SE winds to 11 km/h. High -1C (-5C wind chill), low -3C (-3C wind chill).
Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -2C (-5C), -3C (-9C), light 24:00h; Monday, cloudy, -1C (-5C), -2C (-5C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, snow, 0C (-4C), -1C (-5C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, rain/snow, 1C (-3C), 0C (-4C), light 24:00h.			

Data provided by yr.no



KINGS BAY AS

The runway at Ny-Ålesund stands desolate in this webcam picture Thursday afternoon, a day the tiny research community was scheduled to be busy hosting international events that were cancelled.

Volcano halts Ny-Ålesund events

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flights being cancelled this week.

The disruption was considerably less severe than when the eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano last spring resulted in one of the largest shutdowns of airspace ever. All air traffic affected by the current eruption is expected to return to normal Thursday.

Passenger flights were halted only Tuesday in Svalbard, but dignitaries worldwide were unable to rely on being able to reach here due to longer-term disruptions throughout Europe and the volcano's unpredictability.

The climate symposium, held annually in Ny-Ålesund since 2006, was to feature the head of the United Nations climate change panel, India's trade minister and Norwegian Minister of Trade and Industry Trond Giske among this year's participants. Roger Jakobsen, director of Kings Bay, which operates the research community, said the decision to cancel

the event was made Tuesday.

"The reason is there were very uncertain weather and ash forecasts for Svalbard, Norway and Southern Europe," he wrote in an e-mail interview. "Many of the speakers and participants came from the U.S., Europe and Asia, and were dependent on a decision before they started their journey."

Giske was also scheduled to participate in an international gathering of shipping ministers and the villa celebration in Ny-Ålesund this week, and a 100th anniversary gala for Telenor Svalbard in Longyearbyen on Sunday. The shipping meeting was cancelled. The villa opening and gala may proceed, but with an absence of attendees including Giske.

Store Norske halted its Svea operations while medical emergency flights were unavailable, according to company officials.

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

Russia removing toxins from Arctic park

Pollutants and equipment can be gone from Franz Josef Land in 10 to 15 years, leader says

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A massive cleanup of Soviet-era toxins resulting from military operations is planned in Franz Josef Land national park, officials said last week.

The waste material on four of the 191 islands comprising the park east of Svalbard includes 250,000 barrels of oil products, about one million empty barrels, and old equipment such as cars, aircrafts and radar installations.

A local service base, icebreakers, helicopters, aircrafts and modern re-cultivation technology will be used for the cleanup, expected to cost nearly 150 million kroner in 2012 alone.

"I would really like the Arctic to be clean,"



RUSSIAN POLAR FOUNDATION

A worker inspects a rusting waste-oil barrel in Franz Josef Land.

said Gennady Danilov, the park's leader, at a press conference May 19, according to *RIA Novosti*.

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

What's up

May 26

6 p.m.: Lecture on upcoming solar eclipses in Svalbard, including a partial June 1 and total in 2015, by Knut Jørgen Rød Ødegaard. Sales of solar eclipse glasses, and books and movies about space. Svalbard Museum.

May 27

6 p.m.: Lecture "The Eternal Snow: Nansen Norway and Amundsen," by Tor Bomann-Larsen. Svalbard Museum.

May 29

3:30: Gala performance to celebrate Telenor Svalbard's 100th anniversary. Tickets 100 kr., available at Kulturhuset cafe and online at www.lokalstyre.no. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Pirates of the Caribbean – One Stranger Tides" (3D), U.S. action/fantasy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

May 30

10:15 a.m.: Environmental and Economic Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

May 31

10 a.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

June 1

8 p.m.: Movie: "Route Irish," U.S. action/war, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 4

10 a.m.: Spitsbergen Marathon. Full, half and 10K courses. Starts and finishes at Svalbardhallen. Register at www.svalbardturn.no.

6 p.m.: Cultural exchange from Barentsburg. Show featuring Russian musicians, dancers and others. Tickets 100 kr. adults, 50 kr. youths and seniors. Kulturhuset.

June 9

2 p.m.: Board of Culture and Leisure Business Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

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:

- Arctic hunters boost safety w/ Facebook
- Norway sees emissions rising 5 percent
- High prices putting polar bears at risk
- U.S. Rep: Blame trees for global warming