



Chilly spook stories

'We are quite blind about what's going on in Svalbard,' Norway's counter-espionage chief claims

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Scary as last week's telecommunications blackout might have been, the underwater fiber-optic cable linking Svalbard and the mainland represents a far greater and enduring threat to the entire country when it is working, according to a top official.

A foreign spy traveled to the region to map the landing point of the cable a few years ago, one of numerous instances where Norway's cutting-edge Arctic technology is attracting agents, said Eirik Haugland, Norway's counter-espionage chief, in an interview published this week by The Associated Press.

"If you sabotage this cable, people on Svalbard are quite blind," he said. "But also we (on the mainland) are quite blind about what's going on in Svalbard."

Haugland said spies are trying to identify
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GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM

Why China worries Norway: A Chinese Coast Guard ship uses a water cannon to attack a Vietnamese Fisheries Surveillance boat in disputed waters in the South China Sea, a tactic some observers say might occur in the Arctic.

Ultra heavy metal, unplugged



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Conductor Espen Rotevatn, right, positions members of the Store Norske Mandskor during a rehearsal for the group's first-ever full-length concert this week at Taubanesentralen. The men's choir will perform a new repertoire of mining, drinking and other songs inside the abandoned coal-processing facility.

Abandoned Taubanesentralen coal building becomes a stage for Store Norske choir concert

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The most important lessons from the group's first rehearsal for their debut concert in an unusual new venue: wear warm clothes and watch your head.

The abandoned Taubanesentralen coal-processing facility will echo with the lyrics of mining, drinking and other songs when the Store Norske Mandskor performs its first-ever full-length concert at 8 p.m. Saturday. The choir will also be debuting a new range of songs by composers ranging from local music icon Liv Mari Schei to Disney.

Espen Rotevatn, who became the choir's conductor about a year ago, said he was surprised to learn the group had never put on a

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Winter is the time to thaw out?!

Ice north of Svalbard vanishes most during winter, in contrast to other Arctic areas, study finds

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

It seems like a question straight from a Science For Morons test: During which season does the ice north of Svalbard decrease most?

Most people will probably answer wrong even if they make three guesses.

The largest decrease occurs during winter,

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ALGOT KRISTOFFER / UNIS

UNIS students and researchers studying the Arctic sea ice in 2012 take refuge aboard the *Lance* as a polar bear inspects their field gear.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

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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.

Ho-hum, nothing we haven't seen before



HEINRICH EGGENFELDER

A massive chunk of ice falls from a glacier at Borebukta in Isfjorden as a female polar bear and her cub, at left, watch with more curiosity than surprise during Pentacost weekend. Heinrich Eggenfelder, a senior information technology engineer at The University Centre in Svalbard who also offers sailboat charters, told TV2 he was on a weekend voyage with family and friends to celebrate his son's 12th birthday when they dropped anchor about a kilometer away from the glacier to watch the bears. He said the ice fall occurred suddenly, but the bears did little except immediately get to their feet and look at the glacier. A video of the calving glacier is at tinyurl.com/nfdhjih, while more of Eggenfelder's work is available at www.eggenfellner.com.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Time again to revisit the "What In The World?" game inspired by a long-ago child magazine, which challenged readers to identify extreme close-ups of nature images. Hints (progressively more telling) are: 1) it's from a video camera, 2) it's of two animals and 3) since this is an Arctic publication, the fur at the bottom is obviously a polar bear. The answer is: a polar bear trying to eat a seal, as seen from the polar bear's point of view. **An excerpt from the first-ever videos captured from such a perspective has been posted online by the U.S. Geological Survey**, which tracked four female polar bears in the Beaufort Sea north of Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, for about 10 days in April. The cameras are part of a study to find out how polar bears are responding to sea ice loss due to climate change. A lot is packed into the two-minute video (available at tinyurl.com/pfvvx57), including an underwater swim, interacting with a potential male suitor and struggling to eat the seal that's too frozen even for the mighty jaws of the polar bear. The solution (take another guess first, if so inclined)? Dunking the meat into the icy water to soften it up a bit ... While fans of the scientific mainstream are enjoying the video, it should also allow **climate change deniers yet another opportunity to indulge in righteous indignation, this time out of what is surely a heartfelt interest in what's best for the species.** A column titled "Can We Finally Stop Harassing the Polar Bears?" published by The Daily Caller website points to the "scandal" we covered last week where a Norwegian Polar Institute researcher "confessed" scientists can only estimate the



U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Can't use the microwave without opposable thumbs: So this polar bear needs to find another way to heat his frozen dinner.

global polar bear population and do so "to satisfy public demand." Andy Patrizio, the column's author, argues the estimates keep getting updated because the old ones are never right and, besides, the so-called climate change threat is just more media-assisted hysteria. "So how did polar bears become a political football?" he wrote. "If you remember Knutmania, it's probably because the cubs are so cute. They become less cute when they grow up and can eat you" ... The media-assisted hysteria, by the way, is getting its crazy on in a big way this week as **National Geographic has announced the melting of sea ice in the Arctic means the magazine will be making the most dramatic update to its atlas since the breakup of the Soviet Union.** "You hear reports all the time in the media about this," said geographer Juan José Valdés in a statement posted at the magazine's website. "Until you have a hard-copy map in your hand, the message doesn't really hit home." The new atlas is scheduled to be published Sept. 15.

Taking a tumble for the town



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Young gymnasts perform a tumbling routine Tuesday at Kulturhuset as part of a series of cultural activities celebrating Longyearbyen Day, commemorating the anniversary of the founding of the city in 1906. Other activities included a narrated historical walking tour of the town, plus free admission to Svalbard Museum and Gallery Svalbard.

Arctic spy game is hot news again

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critical points in Norway's Arctic infrastructure "just in case" of a future conflict.

The assertion was part of a new round of everyone's-spying-on-everyone articles as nations compete for future riches and strategic advantages in the Arctic. China's increasingly aggressive effort to establish a foothold was a primary focus, but virtually every nation with northern ambitions is accused of activities ranging from satellite hacking to deceptive friendliness.

A reminder about Norway's spying, some of which was revealed last last year in documents leaked by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, was featured in the AP article. It notes Norway helped the U.S. access details about "Russian targets in the Kola Peninsula" and reports on Russian energy policy.

Russia, for its part, deployed "a mysterious ship the size of a large passenger ferry" from Romania toward Scandinavia in March.

"About a month later, at the fenced-in headquarters of Norway's military intelligence service, the country's spy chief disclosed its identity," the AP reported. "It was a \$250 million spy ship, tentatively named *Marjata*, that will be equipped with sensors and other technology to snoop on Russia's activities in the

Arctic beginning in 2016."

China, the primary non-Arctic nation trying to establish a presence, has aggressively courted and invested in Nordic countries, especially Iceland and Greenland, an article in *Diplomatic Courier* magazine noted this week. But while China is ostensibly doing so to advance industrial activities and international relations, the sizable presence they have established through investments in private entities has some officials worried.

"We see Chinese delegations everywhere and even the parliament does not know who they are," said Aleqa Hammond, Greenland's opposition leader, in a 2012 interview, according to the magazine. "We seen [sic] them in our hotels, in our fjords and on our streets."

Among the concerns is China's supposedly friendly interest could quickly turn hostile in a conflict. Wendell Minnick, in a column for the U.S. newspaper *Defense News*, notes Chinese and Vietnamese ships recently exchanged water cannon blasts when the former put an oil rig inside the latter's exclusive economic zone.

"As China consolidates control over oil and fishing reserves in the South China Sea, it is not difficult to imagine China using the same strategies in Arctic waters," he wrote.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Spitsbergen Travel planning major expansion of facilities

A major expansion of hotel and other visitor facilities, including a year-round northern lights viewing center in Adventdalen, is being planned by Spitsbergen Travel, according to Administrative Director Knut Harald Holst-Hansen. Hotel expansions include about 50 additional rooms, a new pub and an outdoor deck with a whirlpool at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel, refurbishing the Polar Center next to the Radisson, and a spa facility at Spitsbergen Hotel. Plans for the northern lights center, featuring a restaurant and partial glass roof for viewing, are less definitive at the moment. "We have a number of challenges, including that we must have a closed system with respect to electricity, water, sewage and so on," Holst-Hansen said. He said he made the possibility of expansion a priority when he became the company's director last fall, noting other companies' plans to expand due an expected increase in visitors.

Kindergarten bans youths after-hours due to vandalism

Litter and vandalism at Kullungen kindergarten is forcing officials to close the outside play area to youths during afternoons and evenings unless they're accompanied by an adult. Lene Høgnnes Jørgensen, the kindergarten's leader, said employees have to clean trash daily and youths are engaging in damaging activities such as climbing onto the roof.

Training flight on sacred holiday called disrespectful

Some Longyearbyen residents are complaining about a decision by the Svalbard governor's office to conduct a helicopter rescue training exercise the morning of Pentecost Monday, calling it a disrespectful and disruptive intrusion on the sacred holiday. "It's not so nice to be awakened by a helicopter hovering in the air for a long time," said Ranveig Skogly, who said she was awaked at about 10:30 a.m. by the flight. Norwegian law prohibits disruptive activities during the holiday, but it is not applicable to Svalbard. Lt. Christian Svarstad, in charge of helicopter operations for the governor, said the exercise was necessary to recertify a rescuer scheduled to fly that same day.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. Variable winds to 25 km/h. High 3C (-1C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).	Clear. NW winds to 18 km/h. High 2C (-1C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 32 km/h. High 2C (-3C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NW winds to 39 km/h. High 3C (-3C wind chill), low 2C (-3C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, 3C (-1C), 2C (-2C), light 24:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, 3C (0C), 2C (-2C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, clear, 3C (0C), 2C (-1C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, clear, 3C (0C), 2C (-1C), light 24:00h

Data provided by storm.no

Dominant from the start



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Knut Harald Semb, wearing number 11, dashes out to a quick lead at the start of the 20th annual Spitsbergen Marathon on Saturday. The Gjerpen resident kept the lead throughout the race and finished with a winning time of two hours, 49 minutes and 32 seconds, although Poland's Max Sjalın narrowed a gap of several minutes during the last part of the race and finished a relatively close second at 2:50:33. Therese Falk was the top finisher among women with a time of 3:34:49. Fifty-six people participated in the marathon, consisting of two laps of a course through many of the city's streets, while about 130 other runners participated in half-marathon and one-mile races.

For ice, winter is the weird season

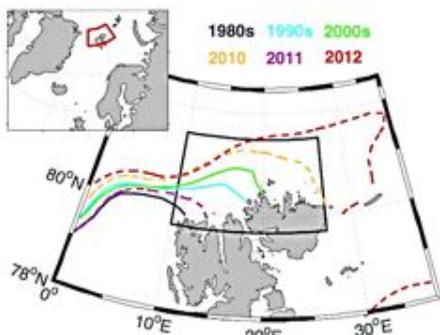
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according to a study published in the current issue of *Tellus*, a journal published by The International Meteorological Institute in Stockholm. The ice cover is diminishing during all months, but the pattern is at odds with the rest of the Arctic.

"Sea ice loss in the Arctic Ocean has up to now been strongest during summer," wrote Ingrid H. Onarheim, a former master's student at The University Centre in Svalbard who is the lead author of the study. "In contrast, the sea ice concentration north of Svalbard has experienced a larger decline during winter since 1979."

Winter ice area loss is averaging nearly 10 percent per decade, concurrent with a per-decade warming of 0.38 degrees Celsius of the Atlantic waters entering the Arctic Ocean in the region, she wrote. The mean surface air winter temperature is also rising about two degrees Celsius per decade.

Atlantic water temperatures have decreased in recent years, which could allow the



COURTESY OF UNIS

A series of colored lines show the limit for 40 percent sea ice concentration by decade. Dotted lines show individual years (yellow - 2010, purple - 2011). The black line shows the study area.

ice cover to increase, but the current reduced thickness means less oceanic heat is needed to melt the ice, the study notes.

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

Choir brings new songs to ancient stage

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full-length concert, although short performances are common during special events and shows featuring a variety of local musicians. He said doing so became a priority and the suggestion of Taubanesentralen as the venue "was just the most natural idea in the world."

Sveinung Thesen, among the Store Norske employees who came up with the idea, said Taubanesentralen is probably the most unusual place the choir has performed, but acoustically it's ideal since the unamplified vocals resound clearly throughout the building.

"It's great for unplugged vocal music," he said. "It's terrible for rock 'n roll music."

Choir members had to put a few boards over holes in the floor while setting up the stage, but otherwise the building still appears study. The biggest hazard during the rehearsal was the possibility of hitting one's head on low-hanging metal contraptions.

Members also quickly learned a jacket – and maybe a hat and gloves – are a good idea to cope with the chill.

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

What's up

June 11

6 p.m.: Movie: "Edge of Tomorrow" (3D), U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

June 13

7 p.m.: Blues cruise to Barentsburg, featuring the Markus Løvdal Band and tour of Russian settlement. Details at svalbardblues.com.

June 14

8 p.m.: Concert in Taubanesentralen, featuring new drinking and mining songs by the Store Norske Mandskor. Tickets available at Mix kiosk.

10 p.m.: Concert by the Marcus Løvdal Band. Barents Pub.

June 15

5 p.m.: Movie: "A Million Ways To Die In The West," U.S. comedy/western, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Transcendence," U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

June 17

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

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

June 18

11 a.m.: Ceremonial laying of foundational stone for new flue gas treatment plant at Longyearbyen's power station by Mayor Christin Kristoffersen.

June 21

6 p.m.: Midsummer party, featuring bonfire, barbecue and music. Svalbard Sailing Club.

June 22

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

June 23

6 p.m.: Polar "Summer Boot Camp," offering "very tough and fun training activities." Begins at Svalbardhallen. Contact polarpuls.lyb@gmail.com for details.

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:

- *Oil spending in Norway expected to drop*
- *Rising seas expose dead WWII soldiers*
- *Arctic Fox origins traced to Tibet*
- *Antarctica to get cell phone coverage*