



Cyber 9/12 Strategy Challenge

Intelligence Report I

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read these instructions carefully. They have changed from previous years.

Your team will take on the role of experienced policy advisers, part of a hypothetical cybersecurity task force, preparing to brief the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA). This packet contains fictional information on the background and current situation involving a major cyber incident affecting European interests. The incident notionally takes place throughout 2024. The scenario presents a fictional account of political developments and public reporting surrounding the cyber incident.

ENISA needs information on the full range of response options available regarding this incident. Your team has been tasked with developing an appropriate course of action for recommending to ENISA.

You are to consider as facts the following pages for formulating your response.

You will use the fictional scenario material presented to perform three tasks:

Written Situation Assessment and Policy Brief: Your first task is to write an analytical 'policy brief' that provides a concise assessment of the situation, addresses potential impacts and risks, and discusses the implications of the cyber incident. Describe policy considerations for different potential state and non-state actors. Be clear regarding the advantages and disadvantages of various policy options and explore the course of action you are recommending in depth. The length of the 'policy brief' is limited to **two single-sided pages**.

Written briefs are due no later than **Wednesday, March 27th at 17:00 CET (Central European Time)**. Please submit your written policy brief as a .docx or .pdf to <mailto:cyber-competition@gcsp.ch>. Please note that your **team name must** be included in the title of the submission file name, **as well as** in the subject of the email. Late submissions will be assessed a penalty.

Oral Policy Brief (Day 1): For the first day of the competition, prepare a ten-minute oral presentation outlining your impact and risk assessment, as well as your suggested course of action. You will present to a panel of judges playing the role of ENISA.

Decision Document (Day 1): Teams will also be required to submit a 'decision document' accompanying their oral presentation at the beginning of the competition round. The 'decision

document' will be a maximum of **one single-sided page** in length, outlining the team's response options, decision process, and recommendations. The teams should note that the document is not intended to summarize every detail of the recommendations, but to help the judges follow the oral presentation, and the judges will be given only 2 minutes to read it before the presentation begins. The document should be written with the goal of assisting busy senior officials to quickly grasp your team's recommendations and analysis. **Please submit your Decision Document as a .docx or .pdf to [<cyber-competition@gcsp.ch>](mailto:cyber-competition@gcsp.ch). Please note that your team name must be included in the title of the submission file name, as well as in the subject of the email. Late submissions will be assessed a penalty.** Teams who do not have a Decision Document accompanying their Oral Briefing will be assessed a penalty.

Keep these tips in mind as you are reading and considering your policy response alternatives:

- *Analyze the issues.* The goal of the competition is for competitors to grapple with complex issues and weigh the strengths and weaknesses of potentially conflicting interests. Priority should be given to analysis of the issues and not to listing all possible issues or solutions.
- *Engage the scenario.* Believe that the universe we have created is plausible and that the events that happen in it are realistic. Nevertheless, remember to think critically about the intelligence you have been provided and its provenance.
- *Think multi-dimensionally.* When analyzing the scenario, remember to consider implications for other organizations and domains (e.g. private sector, military, law enforcement, different levels of government, diplomatic) and incorporate these insights along with cybersecurity.
- *Consider who you are, and who you're briefing.* You are experienced cyber policy professionals briefing the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity. As such, you should be ready to answer questions on agency responsibility, provide justifications for your recommendations, and have potential alternatives ready.
- *Be creative.* Cyber policy is an evolving discourse, and there is no single correct course of action to the scenario information provided. There are many ideas to experiment with in responding to the crisis.
- *Don't fight the scenario.* Unless stated otherwise, assume all inter-state relations, policies, and treaties have remained the same as they were in March 2024. Explore the implications of that information, not the plausibility.

Given the unclear nature of the threat, ENISA requests that your team prepare a concise assessment of the ongoing situation and reporting. Your assessment should include:

- The relevant facts of the cybersecurity incident and its potential diplomatic and security impacts;
- An assessment of the roles and equities of different actors or potential actors related to the cybersecurity incident; and
- Responses ENISA can or should consider to address the situation, taking into account the potential risks and impacts of each path.

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To provide this assessment and policy recommendations, you will apply your understanding of the technologies involved, cybersecurity, law, foreign policy, international relations, and security theory to synthesize useful policy measures from limited information. Your recommendation must analyze the possible strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of your proposed response.

In formulating your response, you will be expected to have considered, at a minimum:

- All stakeholders when determining an action or recommendation, including the role of the government and private sector;
- The long and short-term impacts of your recommendation;
- Which agency will be responsible for the action you have recommended;
- Appropriate recommendations for local vs. federal government;
- Whether you can, or should, attribute the threat; and
- The covert or overt nature of your response.

This message is accompanied by several documents that may assist your team in preparing the assessment and policy brief for ENISA. In an effort to deliver a realistic scenario that is still considerate of our participants' affiliations, we may have included some materials that should be treated like classified documents, despite not being formatted as such. These documents will include a disclaimer and are marked below with an asterisk. The document disclaimer will include the intended level of classification of the document for scenario purposes. Please review the documents included below:

- **Tab 1** – International News Article
- **Tab 2** – Podcast Transcript
- **Tab 3** – National News Article 1
- **Tab 4** – Tweet Thread 1
- **Tab 5** – Press Release
- **Tab 6** – Tweet Thread 2
- **Tab 7** – Internal Norwegian Diplomatic Memo
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- **Tab 9** – National News Article 2
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Tab 1 – International News Article



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Chilly relations: tensions escalate in the Arctic as Russia expands military presence amid climate change opportunities

Morgan Hayes, 09/12/2024

As the war in Ukraine approaches its second anniversary, a new front is quietly heating up in the Arctic, where Russia is significantly increasing its patrols and expanding military installations, raising concerns among Arctic powers.

Recent satellite imagery and intelligence reports indicate a marked uptick in Russian military activity across the Arctic region. Experts note the construction of new bases and the modernization of old Soviet-era facilities, alongside an increase in naval and air patrols. This military build-up comes at a time when climate change is rapidly transforming the Arctic landscape, opening up previously inaccessible shipping routes and untapped natural resources.

"The Arctic is witnessing a dual challenge," states Dr. Alexei Petrov, a geopolitical analyst specializing in Arctic affairs. "On one hand, the melting ice caps are creating new opportunities for shipping and drilling, promising economic windfalls. On the other, these opportunities are sparking intense geopolitical competition, with Russia seemingly determined to assert its dominance."

Climate change is indeed reshaping the Arctic, with the region warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world. This has led to the opening of the Northern Sea Route, which Russia views as a strategic asset that can reduce shipping times between Europe and Asia by up to two weeks compared to traditional routes through the Suez Canal.

However, this emerging "shortcut" is not the only treasure unlocked by the receding ice. The Arctic is believed to hold vast untapped reserves of oil and gas, making it a hotspot for nations and corporations eager to exploit these resources. Russia's aggressive posture in the region can be seen as an attempt to secure its stake in these lucrative opportunities.

The situation is further complicated by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has severely strained Russia's relations with Western powers. The Arctic Council, a high-level intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation among Arctic States, has found its work hindered by the geopolitical tensions stemming from the war.

"The Arctic should be a zone of peace and cooperation, but the current trajectory is worrisome," says Petrov. "The militarization of the region, coupled with the contentious geopolitics of energy resources, poses a significant challenge to managing relationships between Arctic powers."

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Countries like the United States, Canada, Norway, and Denmark (through Greenland) are also key stakeholders in the Arctic and have expressed concerns over Russia's military activities. Additionally, China is setting its sights on becoming a significant Arctic player, despite not having any Arctic territory. Beijing has declared itself a "near-Arctic state" and is investing heavily in Arctic research and development, eyeing the strategic and economic opportunities the melting ice presents. NATO has called for "vigilance and readiness" in the face of Russia's moves, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that ensures security without escalating tensions further.

As the Arctic continues to warm and its ice melts away, the region stands at a crossroads. The choices made by Arctic nations in the coming years will determine whether this fragile and vital part of our planet becomes a theatre of conflict or a beacon of international cooperation. With the world watching, the hope remains that diplomacy will prevail over displays of military might, ensuring the Arctic remains a space shared peacefully by all.

Tab 2 - Podcast Transcript

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT - November 19, 2024

Brett: Hi everyone. Welcome to another episode of **Geopolitics on the Rocks**. My name is Brett Lohr and, as always, I am your host.

Brett: On today's episode we're going to be discussing the energy sector. The energy sector has seen some pretty drastic shifts in recent years for a variety of reasons. The pandemic, increasing movement towards alternative greener sources of energy, and perhaps most importantly, conflict, have all played roles in the changes happening. So today we're going to be talking about Russia, with Kristina Wrobel, a leading researcher on Russian Geopolitical Strategy, joining me.

Brett: Kristina, welcome to the podcast.

Kristina: Thanks for having me Brett, excited to be here.

Brett: Awesome, so let's dive right in. The big headline this week is that Russian oil company Rosgaz is rumored to be in talks with the Russian government to reopen its once-scrapped plan to drill for oil in the Barents Sea in a location known as Schtokman. This deal, which would have been an ambitious and expensive undertaking, was originally killed in 2012 amidst decreasing prices and demand for Russian oil. The plan was also highly controversial, with environmentalist groups fiercely opposing it because it would disturb an otherwise pristine natural environment. So Kristina, why is Russia considering this plan again, and why now?

Kristina: The first thing to understand is that Russia is in an incredibly different position today than it was in 2012. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has had massive impacts on the country's energy strategy. Prior to its invasion of Ukraine, Russia was the EU's leading supplier of oil, natural gas and solid fossil fuels. As countries in the West slapped Russia with sanctions and largely shifted away from buying Russian oil, other countries, particularly in Asia, stepped up and bought the Russian oil for a cheaper price. The West assumed that the sanctions would cripple Russian oil and the Russian economy; however, Russian oil production has barely dropped since the start of the invasion. In addition, the decline in access to Russian oil has only increased global demand, pushing the oil price up further. So in today's energy market, it actually makes a lot of sense for Russia to be considering expanding its oil production, and the reopened deal in Schtokman is just one avenue.

Brett: From an economic standpoint that makes a lot of sense. Russia right now needs ways to keep its economy running even while facing serious sanctions from much of the West. More oil and gas also give it more bargaining chips to use to strengthen its other relationships, including in Asia, that are so essential to it now. So, in a way it is also a strategic political move.

Kristina: That's right Brett. Another reason driving this reopened deal in Schtokman might be the environmental factor. Other Arctic countries, if relations were better, might object to this plan – the Barents Sea is home to many endangered species, many of which now reside only in those waters because they are one of the last examples of pristine waters on Earth. But now, most of the other big,

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environmentally conscious Arctic players have already used their “chits”, so to speak, on sanctioning Russia related to its war in Ukraine. So, there’s not much anyone can do to stop this on environmental grounds.

Brett: Well, it sounds like this plan makes sense for Russia – if maybe not for the rest of the world. Thanks so much Kristina.

Kristina: Thanks Brett.

Tab 3 – National News Article 1



NEWS UKRAINE WAR CLIMATE REGIONS BUSINESS OPINION ARTS AND LIFE PODCASTS ARCHIVE

NORWEGIAN HELICOPTERS RESCUE RUSSIAN SCIENCE SHIP CREW NEAR THE NORTH POLE

DEC 7, 2024

Norway evacuated 22 crew members from a Russian scientific vessel stuck in ice near the North Pole in a series of daring helicopter operations, its rescue services said on Saturday.

The crew members were aboard the vessel Severny Polyus, a Russian scientific research platform. After performing geological mapping in the Barents Sea, the ship was intentionally frozen into the ice above Norway's Svalbard archipelago, some 250 nautical miles from the North Pole, to conduct its over-winter Arctic research.

Sometime late Friday night, an unknown incident rendered the ship's HVAC systems non-operational. At the request of Russian authorities, Norway dispatched a set of Super Puma helicopters from Longyearbyen, the main town on Svalbard some 500 nautical miles away, to evacuate the crew.

"It was pushing the range limit of what the helicopters can do", a spokesman for Norway's Bodo rescue center told the Moscow Times, "But we had no choice. The conditions of the Arctic are unforgiving."

The operation was carried out in accordance with Norwegian-Russian bilateral accords on Arctic search and rescues, and despite a cooling of relations between the two countries since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The evacuated Russian crew members arrived in Longyearbyen and were transferred to medical plane headed for the Norwegian mainland. Details of their condition, and of the causes of the failure of systems aboard the vessel, were not known.

Tab 4 - Tweet Thread 1

RO\$\$ @RossOnCyber · Dec 12

Did anyone see that story last week about how Norway had to helicopter a bunch of crew members out of a Russian science ship in the Arctic? Turns out there may be a cyber angle to this story... 📺🔗

RO\$\$ @RossOnCyber · Dec 12

So, what we know from the Norwegian rescue crew is that HVAC system on the ship, the Severny Polyus, totally shut down. The ship literally freezes into the ice to conduct its research, so the crew was basically just stuck there as it got colder and colder.

RO\$\$ @RossOnCyber · Dec 12

Between the time the HVAC went offline (sometime Friday) and when the Norwegians showed up Saturday afternoon, the crew members had all begun to suffer hypothermia. One of them, we later learned, tragically died from the exposure.

RO\$\$ @RossOnCyber · Dec 12

Sometime last week, rumors started flying around Discord that this wasn't a mechanical failure, but instead a cyber attack. I have seen screenshots alleging to be from a user who was involved with the mission to retrieve the ship.

RO\$\$ @RossOnCyber · Dec 12

I'm not going to post the screenshots since I'm worried about protecting this person's identity, but basically – they are alleging that someone took the all ship's computer systems down, breaking the HVAC AND destroying the scientific data the ship had collected.

RO\$\$ @RossOnCyber · Dec 12

Usually bricking the systems on a ship like this would cause a lot of headaches but not loss of life... But in hostile environments like the Arctic, things are different. Computer-controlled systems are literally the difference between life and death.

RO\$\$ @RossOnCyber · Dec 12

Anyway, a lot of this is based on rumor and hearsay right now – we'll know more if Russia decides to speak on it. There are a few actors I could imagine being behind this, but I don't want to speculate until we know more, especially given the current geopolitical climate.

Plain Text of Tab 4 – Tweet Thread 1

December 12 Tweet Thread, posted by user @RossOnSecurity

Did anyone see that story last week about how Norway had to helicopter a bunch of crew members out of a Russian science ship in the Arctic? Turns out there may be a cyber angle to this story... 🧵➡️

So, what we know from the Norwegian rescue crew is that HVAC system on the ship, the Severny Polyus, totally shut down. The ship literally freezes into the ice, so the crew was basically just stuck there as it got colder and colder.

Between the time the HVAC went offline (sometime Friday) and when the Norwegians showed up Saturday afternoon, the crew members had all begun to suffer hypothermia. One of them, we later learned, tragically died from the exposure.

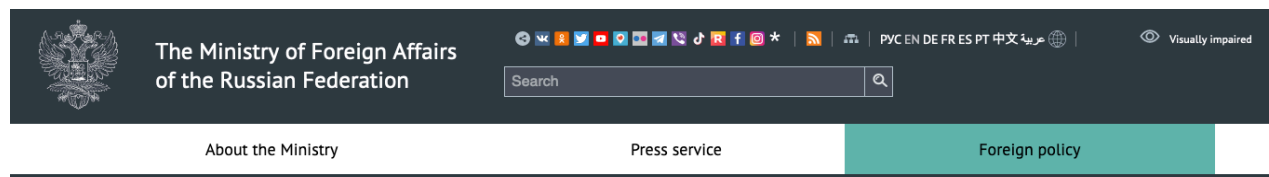
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Tab 5 - Press release

**15 December, 2024****Press release on attack on Arctic research vessel Severny Polyus**

An unwarranted and malicious cyber-attack against the Arctic research vessel Severny Polyus violated principles of Arctic cooperation and led to an unacceptable loss of Russian life. The attack, which compromised the vessel's operational controls, including its autonomous navigation system and temperature control systems, left the vessel's crew and researchers stranded in treacherous Arctic conditions, and destroyed significant portions of vital scientific data, undermining years of dedicated research and cooperation in the Arctic region.

The Russian Federation condemns this attack in the strongest possible terms. Such reckless actions not only endanger lives but also the invaluable scientific research critical to understanding our changing world. We are initiating a thorough investigation to identify and bring to justice those responsible for this act of sabotage.

It is imperative to note the unfortunate history of attacks on Russian scientific endeavors by hackers affiliated with the Ukrainian armed forces. Whether or not such a link is substantiated, the Russian Federation calls upon the international community, in particular those members of the Arctic Council, to join us in condemning this attack, its perpetrators, and any other collaborators who may have supported and participated in this act. Without strong international unity, it will be impossible to cooperate in ensuring the safety and security of scientific research missions in the Arctic and worldwide.

Tab 6 – Twitter thread 2



Arctic Liberation Front Retweeted

**Green Earth** ✓
@GreenEarth

Whether or not it was Ukraine who was responsible for the attack last week on the Russian science ship, we strongly support the attack. Regardless of the specific reasons for the attack, the result is a win for the environment.

3:32 PM · Dec 18, 2024

2.4K Retweets 511 Quote Tweets 18.7K Likes

**Green Earth** ✓ @GreenEarth · Dec 18, 2024

The ship, and Russia's entire Schtokman oil plan, is another example of the scientific – capitalist paradigm.

6.2K

6.8K

54.8K

**Green Earth** ✓ @GreenEarth · Dec 18, 2024

Under the scientific – capitalist paradigm, the extraction of natural resources, destruction of the balanced ecosystems, and degradation of the climate are all "justifiable" in the name of scientific exploration.

415

148

935

**Green Earth** ✓ @GreenEarth · Dec 18, 2024

Shtokman is one of the last environments undisturbed by humans, one of the last places where animals who have been endangered by years of destruction we have caused, have a fighting chance at survival.

160

895

4.9K

**Green Earth** ✓ @GreenEarth · Dec 18, 2024

If Russia succeeds in building its oil drilling sites in Shtokman, it will have the blood of the last frontier on its hands.

429

157

585

**Green Earth** ✓ @GreenEarth · Dec 18, 2024

Shtokman and the Barents Sea are worth protecting and preserving. Join us in standing against the destruction of the Arctic! [#savethearctic](#)

353

5.3K

23K



Plain Text of Tab 6 – Tweet Thread 2

December 18, 2024 tweet thread, posted by user @GreenEarth and retweeted by user @ArcticLiberationFront

Whether or not it was Ukraine who was responsible for the attack last week on the Russian science ship, we strongly support the attack. Regardless of the specific reasons for the attack, the result is a win for the environment.

The ship, and Russia's entire Schtokman oil plan, is another example of the scientific – capitalist paradigm.

Under the scientific – capitalist paradigm, the extraction of natural resources, destruction of the balanced ecosystems, and degradation of the climate are all "justifiable" in the name of scientific exploration.

Schtokman is one of the last environments undisturbed by humans, one of the last places where animals who have been endangered by years of destruction we have caused, have a fighting chance at survival.

If Russia succeeds in building its oil drilling sites in Schtokman, it will have the blood of the last frontier on its hands.

Schtokman and the Barents Sea are worth protecting and preserving. Join us in standing against the destruction of the Arctic! #savethearctic

Tab 7 - Internal Norwegian Diplomatic Memo

Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

Subject: Russian Diplomatic Pressure Regarding Severny Polyus Cyber-Attack

Date: January 3, 2025

Russian diplomats have begun to put pressure on Norway, as the head of the Arctic Council, to condemn the attacks against the Russian Arctic research vessel Severny Polyus. Although Russia has not expressly demanded that Norway attribute the assaults to Ukraine, its public statements heavily imply Ukraine's responsibility and raise the possibility of Ukraine's western allies being involved.

In light of the delicate nature of the issue and Norway's role as chair of the Arctic Council, extreme caution and diplomacy must be used in handling this matter. Rushing to make accusations or denunciations without concrete evidence could escalate tensions unnecessarily. Our proposed diplomatic response includes:

1. **Maintain Neutrality:** In light of the attacks on the Severny Polyus, Norway should abstain from passing judgment upon the attacks except to express regret that they resulted in loss of life. Norway should avoid assigning blame and reiterate the need for a thorough investigation.
2. **Continue Engaging in Dialogue:** It is advisable to use diplomatic channels to continue conversations with Russian peers. In addressing such occurrences, Norway should maintain its neutral stance, expressing concerns about the loss of life associated with the attack while highlighting the need for evidence-based assessments and ongoing international cooperation.
3. **Reaffirm Commitment to Arctic Collaboration:** Through the Arctic Council, Norway should reiterate its commitment to advancing stability and collaboration in the Arctic region. Stressing the Council's function as a venue for communication and cooperation between Arctic governments can aid in reducing hostilities and promoting understanding amongst them.
4. **Coordinate with Allies:** Norway should seek to backchannel with other allies and partners to gather more intelligence about these attacks in order to shape its response. It should also seek to establish a plan for coordinated diplomatic response with other Arctic states.

Please let me know if further clarification is required on this matter.

Cyber 9/12 Strategy Challenge | Intelligence Report I

Håvard Ostlund

Norwegian Ambassador for Arctic Affairs

Tab 8 – Twitter Thread 3



Eastern Europe Cyber Guy 
@EEuropeCyberGuy

...

A lot of discussion happening right now around the attack on Russia's Severny Polyus ship last week, and a lot of speculation that the attack was performed by Ukraine's IT Army. Here's my take on the incident:

10:44 AM · Dec 17, 2024

491 Retweets 66 Quote Tweets 1.9K Likes



Eastern Europe Cyber  @EEuropeCyberGuy · Dec 17, 2024 ...

This attack doesn't really fit the MO of Ukraine's IT Army. This group tends to go after more immediate, military-linked targets – the Severny Polyus was a scientific ship with few ties to the military or the ongoing war.



37



409



4K



Eastern Europe Cyber  @EEuropeCyberGuy · Dec 17, 2024 ...

It's true that the Severny Polyus was conducting geological surveys to help clear the way for potential drilling in the Barents Sea. Drilling in the Barents sea = more energy & cash flow for Russia. So, that could be a motivation for Ukraine, but it would be a long strategic play



415



148



935



Eastern Europe Cyber  @EEuropeCyberGuy · Dec 17, 2024 ...

Just my 2c – do with it what you will. I'm not sure I have a better theory.



429



157



585



Plain Text of Tab 8 – Twitter Thread 3

Tweet Thread December 17, 2024 from @EEuropeCyberGuy

A lot of discussion happening right now around the attack on Russia's Severny Polyus ship last week, and a lot of speculation that the attack was performed by Ukraine's IT Army. Here's my take on the incident:

This attack doesn't really fit the MO of Ukraine's IT Army. This group tends to go after more immediate, military-linked targets – the Severny Polyus was a scientific ship with few ties to the military or the ongoing war.

It's true that the Severny Polyus was conducting geological surveys to help clear the way for potential drilling in the Barents Sea. Drilling in the Barents sea = more energy & cash flow for Russia. So, that could be a motivation for Ukraine, but it would be a long strategic play

Just my 2c – do with it what you will. I'm not sure I have a better theory.

Tab 9 – National News Article 2

The Barents Observer

Fight Censorship!

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Russian Military Exercises in the Northern Sea Increase Tensions After Science Ship Cyber-Attack

Tomas Seniel*7 January, 2025*

Russia conducted a series of large-scale military exercise in disputed Northern Sea waters, perhaps to convey its displeasure with recent developments in Arctic diplomacy.

After a cyber-attack crippled Russian science ship Severny Polyus and caused the death of a crew member, Russia demanded international condemnation of the attack. Other members of the Arctic Council have thus far maintained a frosty silence on the subject, and watchers of Arctic policy see these exercises as Russia's way of expressing its disapproval.

Though the attacker's identity is still unknown, there is much conjecture about the possible actors and motivations behind the attack, including Russia's less-and-less subtle suggestions that the attack may be linked to Ukraine's IT Army, which has conducted attacks against Russian scientific outposts in the past.

The subdued reaction from Arctic Council members, a forum tasked with fostering coordination and collaboration in the region, may be driven in part by this uncertainty. However, the building frustration runs the risk of eroding Russia's willingness to participate in the body, which has maintained a fragile peace and functional forum for multi-lateralism in the face of a general degradation of relations between Russia and the West after the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

The Northern Sea has historically been a source of conflict as different countries have competed for dominance over its vital routes and plentiful resources. Russia's move to demonstrate its military might in reaction to this incident highlights the seriousness of the issue and sends a strong message to Arctic Council members, in particular those that also belong to NATO. Will these NATO Arctic players opt to use freedom of navigation operations to make a statement about their presence in the area? Depending on Russia's response, such measures could soothe tensions – or make the situation worse.

Tab 10 – National News Article 3

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THE KYIV INDEPENDENT
Wednesday, February 28, 2024

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Ukraine denies involvement in Arctic vessel cyber-attack, calls for international cooperation

Kateryna Carter | 01/10/2025

In an exclusive interview with The Kyiv Independent, Deputy Foreign Minister Oleksiy Makeyev, addressed the recent cyber-attack on the Russian arctic research vessel Severny Polyus, categorically denying any involvement by Ukraine or associated volunteer entities such as the Ukraine IT Army.

"The accusations leveled against Ukraine in relation to the unfortunate incident involving the Severny Polyus are completely baseless," Makeyev stated. "Ukraine has always been transparent about its actions, especially in the digital arena. We have claimed responsibility for our initiatives in the past, making it clear that we engage in cyber operations strictly in defense of our sovereignty and in full compliance with international law."

The cyber-attack, which resulted in the tragic death of a crew member and left others suffering from frostbite and hypothermia, has sparked international concern and raised tensions in the already volatile region. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement condemning the attack and alluding to potential involvement by Ukrainian hackers, though without direct accusation.

Makeyev suggested that Russia's insinuations are part of a broader strategy to discredit Ukraine and undermine its relationships with international allies. "It's no secret that Russia has consistently sought to isolate Ukraine on the global stage," he explained. "By casting aspersions on Ukraine without evidence, they aim to create mistrust and sow division between us and our partners."

The Deputy Foreign Minister also highlighted Ukraine's commitment to peaceful cooperation and its adherence to international norms, especially in matters of cybersecurity. "Ukraine is a responsible member of the international community. We have suffered immensely from cyber aggression and understand the importance of stability in cyberspace," he added.

In conclusion, Makeyev called for a thorough and unbiased investigation into the incident, expressing hope that it would clear Ukraine's name and emphasize the necessity for cooperation in addressing cybersecurity threats. "We stand ready to cooperate with international partners to ensure the security and stability of cyberspace, a frontier that no nation can safeguard alone," he affirmed.

The Kyiv Independent's interview with Deputy Foreign Minister Oleksiy Makeyev offers a clear insight into Ukraine's stance on the cyber-attack incident, underlining

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the nation's dedication to transparency, international law, and the pursuit of constructive dialogue amidst ongoing challenges.