



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of
Russian Government Actions and U.S. Policy

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Related Categories: Arms Control and Proliferation; Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Resource Security; Global Health; Europe; India; Russia

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The Republic of Sakha in northern Siberia is home to some of Russia's coldest locales. For instance, the villages of Oymyakon and Verkhoyansk have each recorded winters of -67.7 degrees Celsius (-90 degrees Fahrenheit). However, recent summer temperatures have left climate scientists worried about the region's future. On June 20th, temperatures reached 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit) in Verkhoyansk - the hottest conditions ever recorded north of the Arctic Circle.

Data, moreover, shows that warming trends are not confined to the Arctic. On average, the first five months of 2020 saw temperatures that were 5.3 degrees hotter than normal across Russia. Rising temperatures have also resulted in related consequences, such as a surge in forest fires in Siberia's densely forested territories. And the melting of permafrost in previously-colder environments has resulted in the softening of ground supporting infrastructure, causing destruction such as the Norilsk diesel fuel spill last month. (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*; July 11, 2020)

RUSSIA FUEL SPILL DEVASTATES ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

Around 45 metric tons of aviation fuel has reportedly leaked from a pipeline operated by Russian mining giant NORILSKTRANSRAZ. According to the company, the leak near the village of Tukhard lasted some 15 minutes. That village is located near the tributary to the Yenisei River, which flows into the Arctic Ocean. Local officials declared a state of emergency and regional investigators opened a criminal case into environmental violations. The accident happened weeks after another subsidiary of the company, the Norilsk-Taymyr Energy Company, saw more than 20,000 metric tons of diesel leak into local soil and waters. Melting permafrost caused by climate change is believed to be the underlying reason for the catastrophe. Russian authorities claim to have contained the massive spill in Norilsk, but a whistleblower and an environmentalist say that the damage is much worse than has so far been disclosed and poses a threat to the ecosystem of the Arctic Ocean. (*The Moscow Times*; July 14, 2020; *CNN*, July 14, 2020)

INDIA'S INFATUATION WITH RUSSIAN ARMS

In early July, the Indian government approved a proposal to acquire 33 new Russian warplanes for a sum of \$2.4 billion, as well as to upgrade 59 more. The deal comes on top of an earlier \$5.43 billion Indian purchase of Russia's advanced S-400 air defense missile systems. New Delhi is a top international arms buyer, logging billions of dollars in imports every year, and Russia has served as a main source of arms for India since the Soviet era. Since 2000, Russia has sold India about \$35 billion worth of weapons; by comparison, India's arms deals with the U.S. have totaled just \$3.9 billion over the past two decades.

America, however, has been catching up since 2010, and - as a result of its new Indo-Pacific strategy - now ranks as India's number two arms vendor. Earlier this year, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged to buy \$3 billion worth of U.S. equipment. Through a series of strategic military pacts in recent years, Modi's government has gradually forged closer military ties with the US. Meanwhile, India's border clashes with China last month have added urgency to its arms shopping. (*South China Morning Post*, July 11, 2020)

A LOPSIDED INTEL SHARING ARRANGEMENT

According to unnamed Western intelligence sources, Russian authorities are abusing an existing system of intelligence exchange in order to target Chechen dissidents for assassination in Europe. The Trump administration previously ordered American intelligence agencies to share information with their Russian counterparts upon request - a move that Washington hoped would improve badly-frayed bilateral ties with Moscow. But sources within European and U.S. intelligence agencies say that many of the Russian requests for information are made with the intent of tracking down Chechen expatriates who have run afoul of Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov. Meanwhile, Russia has failed to meaningfully reciprocate; according to those intelligence officials, the Russian side has offered little information in return on requests coming from the West, particularly on issues concerning Syria, where thousands of Russians are fighting in both official and unofficial capacities. (*Business Insider*, July 14, 2020)