

## Intelligence brief | 4 October 2012

### Russia forward deploys advanced MiG-31BM "Foxhound" interceptors to Arctic base on Novaya Zemlya Island

Russia has forward deployed a squadron of **MiG-31BM "Foxhounds"** to **Rogachevo Arctic Airbase** (71°36'33"N 052°28'37"E) on **Novaya Zemlya Island** off the northern coast of Russia.

The Foxhound is a two-seat, long-range, supersonic (Mach 2.8/3,000kph/1,860mph), all weather interceptor aircraft with advanced digital avionics – a substantially improved derivative of the MiG-25 "Foxbat." Unlike earlier versions of the aircraft, this new variant MiG-31BM is capable of engaging both air and ground targets and carries the very latest air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles. Moreover, the MiG-31BM is now the world's fastest aircraft.

The newly upgraded MiG-31BM is fitted with a powerful onboard computer system and a phased array radar allows the pilot (or weapon's officer) to simultaneously activate the air-to-air and air-to-surface missile fire modes, allowing the MiG-31BM to intercept up to 24 targets simultaneously.

The MiG-31BM can carry an array of different weapons. However, what has attracted NATO's attention is the newest variant of a missile known as the **R-37 "Vypel" (Pennant)**, designated as the AA-13 "Arrow" by NATO. The R-37/AA-13 is an extremely long-range air-to-air missile, specifically designed to shoot down AWACS and other C4ISTAR command and control aircraft. A 1994 test of the missile showed it capable of successfully engaging targets out to 300km (160nm). In 2006, as part of the MiG-31BM developments, a newer, more sophisticated version of the missile, the R-37M (NATO AA-X-13) began testing. Deployed now with the MiG-31BM, the new missile has an extended range of 300-400km (160-220nm) through the use of a jettisonable rocket booster.

According to a Russian military source on 25 September 2012:

"The MiG-31[BM] squadron will be the main element of Russia's developing anti-missile defence system – the MiG-31 is capable of intercepting not only strike aircraft, but also cruise missiles with nuclear warheads from the Barents Sea to the shores of the Laptev Sea."

The Russian Air Force has had a squadron of Su-27 "Flanker" fighters (close in comparison to the US F-15 "Eagle") based at Rogachevo since at least 1993. Doubtless, this recent Russian move is intended to counteract US/NATO developments of anti-ballistic missile sites in the region.



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## Discussion

Russia's deployment of such a potent fighter-interceptor to this northern region comes as NATO and Russia become more deeply divided than ever over a joint approach to US-led plans to erect a missile defence shield over the alliance's territory.

Despite years of consultations between NATO headquarters, Washington and Moscow, they are far apart on the basic elements for cooperation. Russian officials have also indicated that there is no agreement on the implications of missile defence undermining Russia's strategic deterrent – a path leading to possible confrontation if not corrected.

Unless (and until) these differences are reconciled, further deployments of Russian defence assets are likely to occur in response to US/NATO advances in this domain.

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