

USMC Rotational Arctic Presence Bolsters US and Allied Training



U.S. Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 2, Combat Logistics Regiment 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, set up camouflage netting to conceal vehicles during Exercise Joint Viking near Bardufoss, Norway, March 9, 2023. Marines are deployed to Norway as part of Marine Rotational Forces Europe 23.1 which focuses on regional engagements throughout Europe by conducting various exercises, arctic cold-weather and mountain warfare training, and military-to-military engagements, which enhance overall interoperability of the U.S. Marine Corps with allies and partners. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Christian M. Garcia)

By Dr. Lee Willett

LONDON – The U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) has been increasing its permanent presence in the Arctic in recent years, using rotational deployments. The impact of this rotational presence is being demonstrated again in the multinational exercise ‘Joint Viking,’ which is taking place in March ashore and at sea in and around Norway’s northern fjords.

For ‘Joint Viking’ and the parallel U.K.-led ‘Joint Warrior’ exercise, 20,000 allied aircrew, sailors, soldiers, marines, and supporting personnel are present, including USMC forces. Participating USMC forces are drawn from a pool of more than 1300 marines, from Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, II Marine Expeditionary Force, that are supporting rotational activities and exercises as the Marine Rotational Force – Europe 2023 (MRF-E 23) deployment.

As ‘Joint Viking’ and other exercises are joint and combined activities, USMC forces are training alongside U.S. Air Force, Army, and Navy personnel, as well as NATO allies and other

partners, Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Knowles USMC, Battalion Commander 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, told [Seapower](#).

“The rotational training has been beneficial for both US Marines and service members from allied and partner countries,” said Knowles. “The Marines are receiving world-class training, which improves overall Marine Corps readiness, and sends Marines back to their units better trained to fight and win in any environment.”

While noting that exercises like ‘Joint Viking’ are long-planned activities that are not conducted in response to any specific threat from any specific adversary, such exercises still enable US, allied, and partner forces to “continue to enhance readiness, capability, and flexibility in response to changing security environments”, said Knowles. In particular, he added, “We are focused on strengthening the development of joint leaders and teams who understand the synergy of air, sea, and land power in a joint, multi-domain environment.”

The MRF-E 23 rotation and associated exercise series will conclude in September, and the USMC units deployed on this rotation will return to base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.