

Societal Security in the Kingdom of Denmark

A brief summary in English of the Danish-language report “Robusthed i rigsfællesskabet”, written by associate professor Rasmus Dahlberg and published by the Center for Arctic Security Studies at the Royal Danish Defence College in April 2022.

This report was prepared for Ambassador Michael Zilmer-Johns for his analysis of trends and challenges in Danish security policy towards 2035. The aim was to supplement a paper written by the Center for Military Studies on societal security in Denmark with a broader focus on crisis management and preparedness planning in Greenland and the Faroe Islands as well as the relevant mechanisms within the Kingdom of Denmark, consisting of the two autonomous territories and Denmark. It describes 1) historical and existing legislation on preparedness planning and emergency and crisis management, 2) analyzes the relations between actors in the field, and 3) identifies strengths and weaknesses and presents recommendations. The report is based on a desk study supplemented with approximately 15 qualitative interviews with selected key informants.

Historical background

Since 1814, the Kingdom of Denmark has consisted of three parts: Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Denmark. The Faroe Islands has had Home Rule since 1948, while Greenland – incorporated into the Danish state as a county in 1953 – obtained Home Rule in 1979 and became a self-governing territory in 2009. Neither of the autonomous territories are members of the European Union, but both enjoy bilateral agreements with the EU. While Copenhagen is responsible for security, defence and foreign policy, many policy areas have been taken over by the Faroese and the Greenlandic governments respectively. Education, social services and health are examples of policy areas completely under the authority of the local governments as are municipal fire/rescue services. The police, however, functions in Greenland as well as the Faroe Islands as Danish institutions – just like other in police districts in Denmark.

Legislative framework

In 1993, Denmark passed the *Emergency Management Act*, which transformed the Civil Defence Authority and other authorities into the Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) tasked with providing guidance and regulations on preparedness planning and crisis management for other sectors and municipalities. Seven basic principles guide crisis management in Denmark today: 1) Sectorial responsibility, 2) Similarity, 3) Cooperation, 4) Precaution, 5) Subsidiarity, 6) Flexibility and 7) Direction. *Inatsisartut* (Greenland’s parliament) passed its own legislation on emergency management in 2010, while the Faroese parliament passed a similar law two years later. The Greenlandic and the Faroese emergency management acts both defined sector responsibility as a the key principle, entailing that whichever societal sector is responsible in everyday, non-crisis matters also plans for and manages crises within that sector. Danish legislation from 2014 concerning cybersecurity has been put into effect for Greenland, but not the Faroe Islands.

Crisis management organizations

Both Greenland and the Faroe Islands based their crisis management organizations on the Danish system developed in the early 2000s. With sectorial responsibility comes the need for crosscutting coordination, which in the Greenlandic case takes place in two for a. At the political/strategic level is the *Emergency Services Commission*, chaired by the highest-ranking civil servant from the responsible governmental department. Among the standing members of the Emergency Commission are chief of the police and the commander of the Danish Defence’s forces in the Arctic, the Joint Arctic Command (JACO). At the operational

level we find the *Greenland Emergency Management Staff* with representation from all relevant sectors, chaired by the Greenland Police. This system has been tested in several large-scale exercises and real incidents such as the 2017 Uummannaq tsunami, the 2019 wild fire near Sisimiut and the 2021 blackout in Nuuk. The report states, however, that not all sectors in Greenland exhibit an adequate ability to engage in professional crisis management, sometimes resulting in either the police or JACO taking over.

The Faroe Islands did not until recently employ a formalized crisis management organization, even though the passing of the Faroese emergency act in 2012 laid out the legislative framework for it. However, a major fire at a fish production facility on the southernmost island in 2017 accelerated the process. Quite similar to the Greenlandic system, coordination at the strategic level happens in the *Strategic Crisis Staff*, chaired by the head of the responsible government department. As in Greenland, there is also the *Faroese Emergency Management Staff*, which meets under police coordination with liaisons from all relevant sectors. The report describes the Faroese crisis management system as still somewhat immature and vulnerable to short staffing.

SAR and marine pollution control

Patrol vessels from the Royal Danish Navy operate at all times in both Greenlandic and Faroese waters. The larger vessels have organic helicopters, and JACO also commands a patrol aircraft stationed in West Greenland as well as a civilian SAR-helicopter on contract. Marine pollution control outside of the 3 NM zone is the Danish Defence's responsibility, while environmental incidents inside Greenlandic territorial waters falls under the responsibility of Naalakkersuisut (Greenland's government). However, an agreement between Denmark and Greenland stipulates that JACO will assume the responsibility for managing marine pollution incidents inside the 3 NM zone if Naalakkersuisut should request it. The responsibility for SAR and marine pollution control has been taken over by the Faroese government, and today JACO only rarely assists assets from the Faroese coast guard in the Faroese maritime zone apart from fishery inspection.

The Arctic Response Force

Through the 2010s, Danish Ministry of Defence developed a concept now known as the Arctic Response Force (ARF) to enhance its ability to provide disaster response support to local authorities in Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Today, the ARF consists of a detailed contingency plan (CONPLAN) for swift deployment of assets from the Defence Command and DEMA. In case of a major incident in Greenland, the Joint Operations Center (JOC) will assemble the available and needed units and equipment and quickly airlift them to the affected area. The ARF is *not* a standing force, nor are its assigned units bound by any specific readiness obligations. Deployment of the ARF is being tested in both live and table top-exercises – most recently *Arctic Light* in late 2021. Since its conception, the ARF has primarily been focused on Greenland, but the CONPLAN stipulates that it can be used in JACO's entire area of operations, which includes the Faroe Islands.

Digital Critical Infrastructure

Tele communications in Greenland and the Faroe Islands is the responsibility of the respective local governments. Recently, however, the Danish government has defined this area as security policy, thereby making it a matter to be handled by the Kingdom of Denmark. Neither Greenland nor the Faroe Islands comply to the EU NIS-directive about digital security. The Center for Cyber Security (a part of the Danish Defence Intelligence Service) advises local authorities in both autonomous territories, but only has legal basis for installing sensors in Greenland. Cyber security is expected to become a priority in future societal security policy.

Volunteer involvement

Especially the Faroe Islands have a strong tradition for including volunteer organizations in emergency management and disaster response. Such organizations possess local knowledge and great competence that authorities can utilize in land and sea SAR. In 2021, the Danish Defence launched “Grønlandsvogterne”, an initiative inspired by similar concepts in other Arctic regions that empower citizens to participate in activities that contribute to societal security. Local fishermen and hunters can get a free GPS-device with subscription, and Greenlanders now use a smartphone app to report sightings and emergencies in areas with cellular net coverage.

Risk analyses

DEMA regularly publishes a Danish national risk assessment, but no specific analyses exist for the autonomous territories within the Kingdom. Only a very brief discussion of local societal risks can be found in the Faroese version of the Danish guidelines for incident management from 2020. The report states that the increased activity in the Arctic due to climate change underlines the need for area-specific risk assessments.

Exercises and evaluations

Although a number of both large and smaller live- and table top-exercise have been held in Greenland over the last decade, the report concludes that it is important to keep rehearsing local crisis management capabilities as well as deployment of resources from the Danish Defence and DEMA. A recurring point of friction, however, is the fundamentally different logics of the police, health authorities and other busy local resources on the one side and the military with its immense planning capability on the other. With regard to evaluation and learning processes at the local government level following exercises and real incidents, the report identifies some room for improvement in Greenland as well as the Faroe Islands.

Recommendations

The report presents three major recommendations:

- Specific Greenlandic and Faroese national risk analyses should be developed with support from Danish authorities
- Danish authorities should assist Greenland and the Faroe Islands with planning and executing crisis management exercises
- Evaluation and learning processes following exercises and major incidents in Greenland and the Faroe Islands should be strengthened with support from Danish authorities