

Cold Weather Ops 2026: 46ª Brigata Aerea trains beyond the Arctic Circle

At Bardufoss, C-27J aircrews and specialists operated from November 9 to 13 in extreme cold conditions.

Published on 20/11/2026

From November 9 to 13, 2026, an Aeronautica Militare C-27J operated above the Arctic Circle to enhance flight and maintenance capabilities in extreme weather conditions, preparing aircrews and specialists for winter and Antarctic missions.

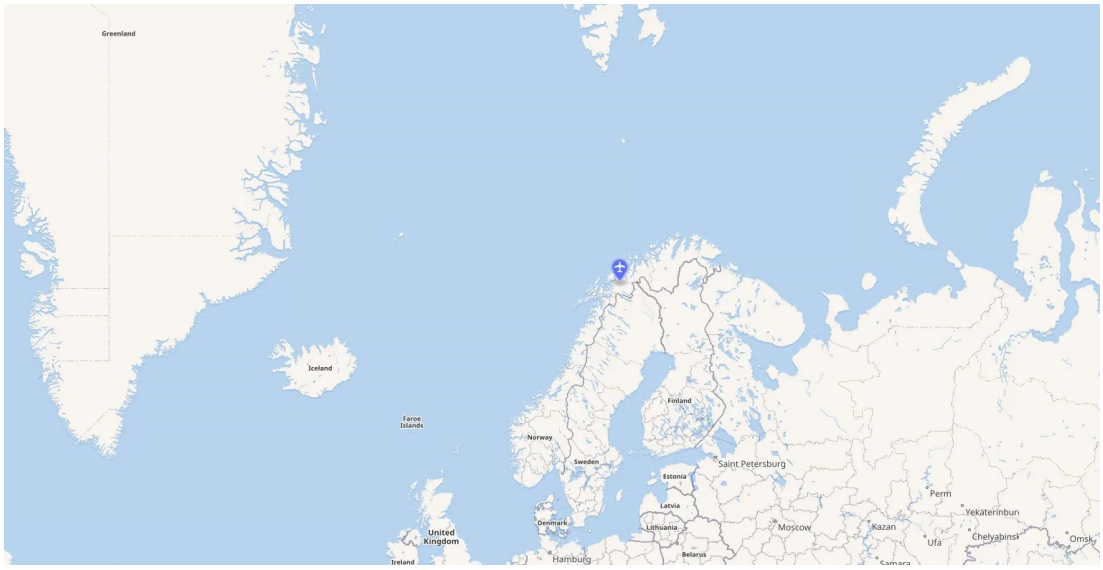
Operating in freezing temperatures, on icy runways, and with daylight reduced to a minimum: this was the challenge faced by the **46ª Brigata Aerea** of Pisa during the **Cold Weather Ops 2026** training activity, held from November 9 to 13 at **Bardufoss** Air Base in northern Norway.

The training was primarily aimed at consolidating operational and maintenance procedures in Arctic environments. Aircrews focused particularly on critical **takeoff and landing maneuvers on icy or slippery runways**, where reduced traction and adverse weather demand extremely precise aircraft handling.

A team effort between air and ground

To meet the challenges of the polar climate, the Aeronautica Militare deployed an integrated force centered on a **C-27J Spartan** tactical transport aircraft. The flight crew, composed of personnel from the **98° Gruppo** and the **International Training Centre (ITC)**, worked side by side with specialists from the **Gruppo Efficienza Velivoli (GEV)** and personnel from the Brigade's **Reparto Logistico**.

Extreme cold and ice do not only test pilots; they also have a major impact on the performance of onboard systems and ground support operations. The synergy between aircrews, technicians, and logisticians made it possible to test the entire operational chain in the field, ensuring mission continuity in every scenario.



An ideal bridge between the Arctic and Antarctica

The skills acquired in Norwegian skies represent a strategic asset for the Air Force.As emphasized by the Aeronautica Militare, this training ensures operational readiness for both domestic operations — during the harshest winter months — and international missions.

In particular, the experience gained at Bardufoss is essential to ensuring the success of the delicate **transport and logistics support missions in Antarctica**, which see the C-27Js of the 46ª Brigata Aerea deployed each year as part of the National Antarctic Research Program (PNRA).

Bardufoss base: a strategic outpost beyond the Arctic Circle

Located in Troms County, more than 300 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle (69°03′N), **Bardufoss Air Station** (*Bardufoss flystasjon*) is one of the most important and historic military installations on NATO's northern flank.

- **Norway's oldest operational base:** Inaugurated on March 26, 1938, with the landing of a *de Havilland Tiger Moth* biplane, Bardufoss holds the distinction of being the country's longest-serving air base still in operation.
- **Role in World War II:** During the 1940 Norwegian Campaign, British RAF fighters (*Gloster Gladiator* and *Hawker Hurricane*) took off from here to counter the *Luftwaffe* on the Narvik front. Later occupied by the Germans, it became a key base for attacks on Arctic convoys bound for Murmansk and for the defense of the battleship *Tirpitz*.
- **Hub for international Arctic training:** Thanks to its geographic location and a paved runway more than 2,400 meters long (co-located with Bardufoss civilian airport), the base hosts the Royal Norwegian Air Force Flight School (RNoAF) and several helicopter units. For decades, it has also served as the main center for winter training for Allied forces — including the British Royal Marines and Dutch marines — and since 2024 has reactivated its historic rock-hewn underground hangars to accommodate fifth-generation **F-35** fighters.

News link: https://www.aeronautica.difesa.it/news/cold-weather-ops-2026-la-46-brigata-aerea-si-addestra-in-norvegia-per-operare-in-climi-rigidi-e-su-piste-ghiacciate/