



Operation Polar Dagger: U.S. Special Forces Strengthen Arctic Presence at the Russian Border

Published on 22/08/2026

The **U.S. Special Forces** are strengthening their capacity to operate in the most **remote regions of Alaska**, where reliable communications and long-distance links represent a fundamental element for both defense and emergency management.

As part of **Operation Polar Dagger 2026**, personnel from the **U.S. Special Operations Command North (SOCNORTH)** were deployed to **Gambell, on St. Lawrence Island**, in the Bering Strait, to establish and test a high-frequency radio network capable of connecting western Alaska outposts with Anchorage. Official images of the activities were released on August 21 by the U.S. Department of Defense.

Long-Distance Communications in Western Alaska

The operation was conducted by the **Signal Detachment of SOCNORTH**, which worked together with the **Alaska National Guard**, the **Alaska State Defense Force**, and local native community authorities.

The military personnel installed and tested **Barrett 4050** radio systems, HF devices designed to ensure communications over large distances even when normal telecommunications infrastructure is unavailable or compromised.

According to SOCNORTH, the new capability enables the creation of a communication link between remote locations in western Alaska and **Anchorage**, increasing the ability for local forces to coordinate rapidly in case of emergency.

It was not merely an installation of equipment. SOCNORTH personnel also conducted **training activities on radio procedures**, transferring expertise to Alaska State Defense Force personnel assigned to use the systems in the field.

Polar Dagger and the Growing Importance of the Arctic

The communications activity represents only one component of **Operation Polar Dagger**, an exercise through which U.S. Special Forces have been developing for several years the capability to operate under the particularly difficult Arctic conditions.

In previous editions, **Green Berets from the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)** were also employed, along with **MC-130J Commando II** aircraft, Alaska Army National Guard helicopters, and off-road vehicles, testing infiltration, mobility, and logistical support in areas with limited infrastructure.

The Arctic environment indeed presents problems very different from normal operational theaters: enormous distances, extreme weather conditions, limited infrastructure, and difficulties in maintaining continuous communications.

For this reason, the ability to rapidly create an autonomous and resilient network becomes a true **operational capability**.

St. Lawrence Island, Just Kilometers from Russia

Also particularly significant is the location chosen for the activities.

St. Lawrence Island is located in the Bering Strait, in the far western Alaska. The western part of the island is just tens of kilometers from the coast of Russian Siberia and thus represents one of the most advanced points of U.S. territory toward Russia.

In this context, the ability to maintain reliable communications between remote communities, forces present in the territory, and Alaska command centers assumes a value that goes beyond simple emergency management.

The same material distributed by the Department of Defense associates the activity with the concepts of **Arctic Defense**, **Homeland Defense**, and regional security.

Operation Polar Dagger thus confirms the growing attention of the United States toward the Arctic, an area in which **mobility, communications, the ability to operate from isolated bases, and the presence of Special Forces** are assuming ever greater importance.

Source

U.S. Department of Defense - DVIDS / U.S. Special Operations Command North, “SOCNORTH and Local Leaders Partner to Boost Western Alaska Radio Communications during Operation Polar Dagger”, images and information released on August 21, 2026. [Official source and DVIDS photo gallery](#)

Photo: U.S. Army / Sgt. Mya Smith – U.S. Special Operations Command North. Images in **Public Domain** distributed via DVIDS.

#SpecialForces #SOCNORTH #PolarDagger