Norway is one of the 12 original members of the NATO alliance and was initially the only one to share a boarder directly with the Soviet Union. Turkey now shares that distinction since it joined in 1952. With a population hovering around 5 million and having a long and vulnerable coastline, Norway is dependent on NATO's collective defence assurances for its survival. Even though its economy is small, Norway routinely spends over 3% of its GDP on defence, 50% more than NATO requires.

NATO realizes the critical vulnerability of its northern flank and made provision for rapid deployment to Norway. AMF (ACE [Allied Command Europe] Mobile Force) is exercised annually sometimes in very large scale, and the US Marine Corps and Air Force have pre-positioned equipment at key locations in Norway. STANAVFORLANT (Standing Allied Naval Force Atlantic) is also routinely deployed to Norwegian waters. Regular training by British Royal Marines and US Marine Corps units on Norwegian territory familiarized many involved with the intricacies of fighting on Norway's rugged terrain. Finally, NATO E-3A AWACs aircraft were almost continually stationed in Norway at Orland Air base

Norway's military is small but highly trained and well equipped to utilize the advantage of terrain to counteract its disadvantage of geography.