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W H I T E
P A P E R

ASLS21 is supported by moderators from the following organizations:



In support of U.S. Northern Command's Arctic Security and Defense Mission

Alaskan Command hosts

Arctic Senior Leader Summit 2021 (ASLS21)

A Virtual Summit on Arctic Security and Defense

University of Alaska
10-11 March 2021



Introduction and overview.¹



In support of United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), Alaskan Command (ALCOM) (a subordinate unified command reporting to USNORTHCOM) is hosting a two-(partial) day **Arctic Senior Leader Summit 2021** (ASLS21) via a virtual event on 10-11 March 2021.

ASLS21 “Day 1” will be a half-day of keynote presentations by current Department of Defense (DOD) leaders and a focused set of panels addressing current and emerging challenges, risks, and opportunities affecting Arctic region Security and Defense interests. The purpose of ASLS21 Day 1 is to gain insights of new and existing Arctic leaders on the current and emerging defense and security policies & priorities of the Arctic region. While ASLS21 is principally a U.S. audience, U.S. Arctic Defense Allies and key regional partners are invited to participate.

ASLS21 “Day 2” will consist of a half-day tabletop exercise providing a smaller group of invited leaders with an opportunity to address decision-making encounters via plausible but fictitious crisis scenarios. The purpose of ASLS 21 Day 2 is to principally familiarize invited military leaders in the unique challenges of Arctic crisis response.

ALCOM Arctic Senior Leader Summits and associated (but broader in scope) Arctic Symposiums are oriented to the USNORTHCOM Area of Responsibility (the North American Arctic), but inclusive of the USNORTHCOM Area of Interest (the greater Pan-Arctic region). Participants include a multidisciplinary community of Canadian leaders and subject matter experts as well as other NATO allies and partners, principally from the Nordic region. These ALCOM Arctic-focused events increase Arctic region understanding and awareness by using an array of professional Arctic subject matter experts (SMEs) to increase knowledge and enhance interagency, international, and academic partnerships. To date, there have been two Arctic Symposia (the first included a specific maritime domain focus) and one Arctic Senior Leader Summit.

These events enhance cooperation between defense, public, and private sectors, strengthen ties among stakeholders, and establish a sense of “community.” These relationships may prove critical in times of crisis or contingency action.

Co-planning and participation in the Arctic Senior Leader Summits and Arctic Symposiums by leaders from Indigenous Arctic communities has been a hallmark of these events and has been essential to gaining a broader understanding of the region, its original inhabitants, and their values and interests.

Shorter in duration than ALCOM’s Arctic Symposiums, and oriented to focus and facilitate senior leader discussions, ALCOM ASLS provides participants a focused set of plenary presentations on

¹ “White Paper” Definition (IAW Webster’s: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/white%20paper>)

1: a government report on any subject especially: a British publication that is usually less extensive than a blue book
2: a detailed or authoritative report



current Arctic security and defense matters in a roundtable dialogue format to challenge assumptions and to inform efforts to developing plans, strategy and operational activities.

Complementing the plenary roundtables is a follow-on, principally military decision maker event that will provide participants with an opportunity to understand the changing dynamics of the Arctic and the complexities of associated decision-making via a tabletop exercise using fictitious, but plausible scenarios.

A principal desired outcome of ASLS's is to advance collaboration between participating senior leaders on Arctic challenges, opportunities, and associated priorities in progressing strategy and planning to mitigate risks and to orient operational and training activities with U.S. allies and partners to better secure collective interests in the region.

ALCOM ASLS is a complement to ALCOM Arctic Symposia, which are organized as 200+ participant multiple-day events which comprehensively seek to orient, educate, and engage participants from the staff through senior leaders on current and emerging aspects on the Arctic from a multidiscipline and multicultural vantage. Arctic Symposia are organized with plenary, breakout tracks and field activities.

ALCOM's ASLS21 provides an opportunity to expand and strengthen relationships between DOD senior leaders and key interagency and international leaders, oriented to Arctic security and defense matters. Additionally, ASLS21 will provide a venue to communicate upcoming USNORTHCOM and ALCOM opportunities for further engagement, training, and exercises that collectively advance U.S., allied, and key partner respective Arctic national security interests. An implied longer-term objective supported by the Arctic SLS series is senior-level discourse, which can result in increasing U.S., allied, and key partner cooperative presence and operational activities in and across the Arctic. Increasing such presence aligns with U.S. National Security Strategy to keep the common domain of the Arctic open and free.

An ASLS21 principal goal is to support the USNORTHCOM Arctic mission and to support Commander, Alaskan Command's "USNORTHCOM Lead for Arctic Affairs" responsibilities as designated by Commander, USNORTHCOM. This will be accomplished by conducting a focused exchange of insights and associated discussion via a select and multidisciplined set of leaders, oriented on the Arctic. This includes senior DOD leaders and participating leaders from the U.S. interagency, Alaskan Congressional Delegation members, State of Alaska senior leaders, national policy institutions (such as the Woodrow Wilson Polar Institute), and Arctic Indigenous leaders (to include Alaska Federation of Natives leaders). Arctic industry, academics (with a focus on the University of Alaska), Canadian security and defense leaders, as well as Arctic experts, NATO allies, and partners are also included.

ASLS21 is planned for approximately 100 participants. It is purposely timed to allow facilitate participation from any new (as well as continuing) DOD and other U.S. Government appointed leaders following the scheduled January 2021 Presidential Inauguration to have an interchange opportunity with continuing leaders vested with responsibility for securing and defending U.S. National interests in the Arctic region. This exchange is enhanced by integrating the discussions with a multidiscipline community of leaders steeped with considerable Arctic knowledge and



insights. Accordingly, ASLS21 provides an opportunity to integrate discussions on current and developing Arctic dynamics, (including geostrategic challenges facing U.S. and allied defense posture) with emerging Arctic national security and defense trajectories in strategy and policy.

ALCOM will conduct ASLS21 as a virtual event. Pending successful implementation of a COVID19 vaccine, future Arctic Symposiums and Arctic Senior Leader Summits will once again be planned and conducted as in-person events. Subsequent to ASLS21, the next planned event will be Arctic Symposium 2021, tentatively planned for late summer/early fall 2021 as an in-person event hosted in Alaska.

Background

ALCOM AS and ASLS provide a comprehensively planned and conducted convergence event...with dedicated follow-through series of events to share information and insights, provide engagement, and facilitate onward collaboration and partnership among the Arctic security and defense community.

The beginning: ALCOM AMS 2018. ALCOM conducted an inaugural Arctic Maritime Symposium (AMS-2018) at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson 14-16 August 2018. Aligned with Strategic U.S. National Defense and Security Strategies, and DOD Arctic Strategy, AMS 2018 included U.S. Congressional, Federal, State of Alaska, Tribal, and international leaders, along with Arctic subject matter experts from across academia and institutions. With approximately 120 participants, AMS 2018 was oriented as a series of comprehensive panels and engagement activities, which included a ship visit aboard USS MOMSEN (DDG 92).

The principal outcomes of AMS 2018 were to inform participants on a wide range of defense and security concerns, while establishing a new network of thought leaders to Arctic security and defense matters. Such a network serves to bridge Arctic-minded professionals across government, public, and private organizations and academia to the defense community on matters of mutual interest in better securing U.S. and like-minded nations' interests in the Arctic.

ALCOM ASLS 2019. The inaugural ALCOM Arctic Senior Summit was conducted on 18 January 2019 at Cerjan Hall, National Defense University at Ft McNair, Washington, D.C. This follow-up meeting from the initial AMS 2018 comprised 85 participants and provided an important exchange between a select group of senior DOD and interagency leaders, with key Canadian and NATO Nordic allies and partner representatives who affect U.S. efforts in the Arctic to shape and determine policy, apportion and allocate resources, decide preparedness and response activities, and make operational decisions that affect U.S. interests in the Arctic. ASLS19 provided a venue to communicate USNORTHCOM and ALCOM upcoming opportunities for further engagement, training, and exercises that collectively advance U.S., allied, and key partner respective national interest in the Arctic. ASLS19 participants gained strategic insights on the Arctic contrasted against the global security environment from the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Assistant U.S. Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Posture. ASLS19 continued momentum from AMS 18 with specific presentations which identified the overall Arctic security environment, specific state and non-state threat, Service and unified command Arctic capabilities, and a focused look on great power competition within the circumpolar North.



ALCOM AAS19. The second ALCOM-hosted Arctic Symposium (AAS19) was conducted on 13-15 November at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). An advance Arctic Defense and Security Orientation Executive Session (ADSO-ES) course of instruction conducted by the UAF School of Management was conducted on 12 November as well as an invitational dinner in honor of Alaska Native Leader contributions to security and defense leader Arctic understandings. AAS19 provided ALCOM an opportunity to conduct a series of discussions in support of future engagements and exercises to advance Arctic joint interoperability across the military Services, to include the U.S. Coast Guard, while also increasing whole of government collaboration to better secure U.S. Arctic interests. Additional AAS19 outcomes included advanced discussions to support multinational cooperation among like-minded Arctic nations, and to increased awareness of the unique challenges faced on the “western Arctic” (oriented to and North of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas) contrasted against the “eastern Arctic,” (oriented to and North of the Greenland, Norwegian and Barents Seas). Additionally, AAS19 broadened discussions (from the original “maritime” focus of AMS 2018) to strengthen a comprehensive approach to land, sea, and air domains of the Arctic. USNORTHCOM’s Arctic missions and associated tasks and requirements established in the U.S. Presidentially approved Unified Command Plan, ALCOM’s AAS19 was used as the backdrop and orientation to organize as a composite and complex event consisting of 235 registered participants. AAS19 included multiple plenary sessions, breakout (two separate tracks) of electives and follow-on field activities, principally focused to advance greater understanding, improved networks, and more effective approaches in discerning and developing solutions to address current and emerging concerns to U.S. national interests in the Arctic region. Field activities included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL) Permafrost Tunnel, and the UAF Poker Flat Rocket Range. AAS19 provided ALCOM’s senior command, USNORTHCOM, an opportunity to gain convergence in shared understanding and improved unity of effort from across policy and practices via a new and developing network of defense and security-minded professionals. Such convergence came via a cross agency and multidisciplinary approach to advance measures to deter and dissuade potential adversaries, while also protecting, securing, and defending America’s citizens, supporting allies and partners, protecting U.S. Sovereign Territory and U.S. National interests. Importantly, AAS19 gained key insights on mutual interests oriented to respective national interests of participating allies and partners. Specifically, ALCOM’s AAS19 advanced the following objectives (and these serve as a useful template to orient future Arctic Symposiums):

- Convened more than 200 senior leaders and subject matter experts oriented to the security and defense challenges associated with the opening Arctic.
- Described the current strategic environment of the Arctic region.
- Advanced understanding of the physical attributes of the Arctic based on the array of dynamic environmental elements.
- Sketched the current and emerging human terrain of the Arctic.
- Outlined insights from leaders from the Alaska Native community.
- Discerned new dynamics in great power competition affecting Arctic peace and stability.
- Updated on the economic drivers affecting communities across the circumpolar North.
- Outlined new opportunities for exercises and activities to improve cooperation between



within the U.S. Federal government, with State, local, and Tribal leadership and with like-minded Arctic nations.

- Presented and discussed policy matters which may advance improved cooperation between leaders across the U.S. Federal, State, local, Tribal, multinational, industry, and academia oriented toward U.S. and like-minded nation's Arctic security interests.
- Provided an opportunity for discovery in the participating security and defense community of understandings developed from other disciplines.
- Explored potential areas of public and private partnerships and other cooperative efforts which would enhance DOD homeland defense (HD) and by extension the defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) mission areas – supporting the citizens of our U.S., allied, and partner countries.

ALCOM and the Arctic Domain Awareness Center, a DHS Science and Technology Center of Excellence in Maritime Research, hosted at the University of Alaska, maintain copies of the reports from AMS18 ASLS19 and AAS19. These reports are located at www.arcticdomainawarenesscenter.org.

ALCOM ASLS21 Theme, Goal, and Objectives.

Theme: Arctic Vistas 21: Understanding challenges, assessing risks, and improving partnerships

Goal: Despite the challenges of COVID19, conduct a meaningful (albeit virtual) seminar to support senior defense and security discussions on the changing dynamic of the evolving Arctic from a geostrategic, defense, environmental, and economic security vantage.

Objectives: Due to COVID 19, ALCOM ASLS21 is planned for 10-11 March 2021 as a virtual event, via two approximately half day sessions.

- ASLS21 Day 1 is planned as a series of panels addressing emerging Arctic defense and security challenges.
- ASLS21 Day 2 is a planned three-move tabletop exercise conducted as scenario-based decision-making to inform senior leaders to challenges, constraints, and opportunities.

Note: The dates are purpose-made for incoming (and continuing) U.S. Defense and interagency senior leaders to orient them with emerging challenges of the Arctic.

ALCOM ASLS21 content includes aspects on adapting to the direct and indirect impacts of the changing conditions of the region (thawing permafrost, rising sea level, increasing health risks, altered climatologically events, increasing human activity) and their association (and associated impact) to U.S., Canada-U.S. (via NORAD), and also NATO allies and partners Arctic security interests in Europe. Gaining insights into competitors and adversaries in not only the risks imposed to U.S. and Allied/partner interests, but also how a changing Arctic is affecting their calculus and their activities is an important aspect to advance.

ALCOM ASLS21 planners are developing an agenda that structures ASLS21 via a series of



approximately two senior DOD leader keynote speakers and facilitated panel discussions with follow-on roundtable discussions for Day 1. Day 2 is oriented as a tabletop “invitation only” (a subset of the prior days’ participants)- exercise using methodologies similar to National Defense University and the U.S. Joint Staff. Via three varied scenarios of Arctic region security and defense challenges, the ASLS21 tabletop exercise will support senior military leader orientation and understanding of the complexities of assessing, characterizing, and responding to Arctic crises.

Planning and organizing team

- ADAC at University of Alaska Anchorage: Overall planner and coordinator for ALCOM ASLS21

Day 1 Supporting partners:

- Polar Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Washington D.C.
- Alaska Federation of Natives, Anchorage, Alaska
- North American and Arctic Defense and Security Network, Trent University, Peterborough Ontario

Day 2 Supporting partners:

- NORAD and USNORTHCOM Joint Exercise Division (N&NC/J7), Peterson AFB, Colorado

Administrative details

Conference structure: ALCOM Arctic Senior Leader Summit 2021 is planned for 10-11 March 2021 using virtual conferencing.

ASLS21 “event hub” ...accessible via ADAC’s website to support ASLS21. In order to support ASLS21 as a virtual activity, ASLS21 planners are providing an “Event Hub” to contained videos, documents and other resources useful to inform participants as comprehensively as possible. The Event Hub will be located under the below banner at <https://arcticdomainawarenesscenter.org/Events>.



Symposium registration



Arctic SLS...advancing strategic discourse on the High North

Upon approval at ALCOM, participants will be permitted register at the following link on the Arctic Domain Awareness Center (ADAC) website at the University of Alaska, (active since 20 October 2020): <https://arcticdomainawarenesscenter.org/Events>.

ALCOM ASLS21 registration is free

Participant welcome packages. ASLS21 planners will provide participants welcome packages via electronic communications. Welcome packages will include agenda, connecting instructions, Literature Review, Orienting Paper, Exercise Workbook, and biographies of participants. These materials will be pushed to participants with links to the ASLS21 Event Hub.

Moderation/facilitation and recording: ASLS21 planners will provide moderation of all sessions, recorded by dedicated personnel. Note, permissions are included in the registration, and any/all reports will be used via Chatham House protocols.

Post Summit Executive Summary and Report: ASLS21 planners will provide a timely report summarizing key presentations, discussions, and conclusions. The scope of the summary will at minimum include: the date and location of the event, event agenda, major themes and messages, and scope of participants.

ASLS21 Tabletop Exercise information: ADAC's approach to tabletop exercises is organized as an adaptation of three specific "wargaming" and exercise constructs used within the U.S. military. These include:

1. Command post exercise (CPX) organized to exercise specific crisis response plans to train target audiences to meet military required readiness and proficiency standards.
2. Tabletop exercises based on scenarios driven by an exercise set of informercials designed to draw participants into specific activities to understand the problems and form crisis response (usually emerging events...not corresponding to a specific existing crisis response plans). These tabletop exercises are generally open to a wider audience, to include other Federal agencies, international guests, academia, think tanks, and industry. These are generally oriented to a "single team" construct. These tabletop exercises are governed by an exercise control cell who role-play outside agencies, opposing views, etc.

The role for simulation. Simulation can readily support each exercise method. Simulation and associated gaming require imagining the scenario at each stage of the play, creating as lifelike set of visualizations, conducive to the requested training and exercise objectives. Simulation for large-scale events can be highly expensive, as it invests programmers/game code developers and simulated decision support tools/mock-ups. Investing virtual reality (VR) can add yet more complexity and realism. Simulation allows exercise controllers the opportunity to intervene to show consequences of actions of the targeted participants by modeling decisions and extending the models over simulated months, years, and decades.



The role of scenario setting infomercials. Resource constrained organizations such as academia normally do not have the resources to invest in simulation simply due to cost. While simulation can readily get exercise participants fully engaged and create truly dynamic play, the costs and timelines to develop full simulation can simply exceed available timeline and available resources. As such, creating “scene setter” scenarios via several step infomercials, presented to the exercise participants, provide exercise controllers an alternative to more costly and timely simulations. Such infomercials to scene set are adaptable to as many sequences/steps as desired by the exercise control group. Most “infomercials” are organized and conducted as fictitious television news broadcasts, supported by willing newscasters and reporters, supported by motion graphic/historic clips, adapted via computer graphic manipulation to create a scene to draw in the exercise participants to the nature of the crisis.

Conclusion

ASLS21 will improve participants’ understanding of the challenges in the complicated risk environment that describes the new circumpolar north. This will be accomplished via a series of thoughtful discussions and activities to gain insights for needed solutions to address and potentially reduce the associated defense and security risks. ASLS21 will continue the momentum started with AMS18 and advanced through ASLS19 and AAS19, setting the stage for the next Arctic Symposium later in 2021.

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