Alaskan Command Arctic Senior Leader Summit 2021 (ASLS21) Report

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Forward

Distinguished professionals:

On behalf of United States Northern Command, please accept my sincere thanks and appreciation to Arctic Senior Leader Summit 2021 (ASLS21) presenters and participants. Alaskan Command greatly appreciates your thoughtful and strategically important insight and observations at this important reconvening of the community of Arctic defense and security professionals.

As evident at the Summit, the Arctic continues to advance change across multiple disciplines. This change includes an increased rate of warming that continues to diminish the persistent volume of Arctic sea ice and the Greenland ice sheet. Increased weather volatility; thawing permafrost; changing patterns of fish stocks, marine mammals, and wildlife now characterize the physical elements of the greater Arctic region. The human dimension in the Arctic accelerates change. Rising competition with Russia and China is affecting U.S. and America’s allies and partners in and across the Arctic. This competition is multifaceted, and includes Russia’s increasingly aggressive Arctic military activities as well as China’s comprehensive efforts to gain access to economic opportunity in and across the Arctic.

ASLS21 served as a valuable restart to high level Arctic dialogue, getting defense and security representatives from United States, allied, and partner government and military organizations together with Arctic Indigenous leaders, academic, and industry professionals to discuss significant Arctic regional challenges. This Summit provided a superb example of how U.S. allied and partner nations represent the best prospect for strong and durable security partnerships. These partnerships, coupled with unity of effort through government and whole of community teaming, are vital to ensure the peaceful opening of the Arctic.

I would like to thank the Arctic Domain Awareness Center at the University of Alaska, who worked closely with Alaskan Command to make ASLS21 a success. I would also like to thank the following supporting organizations:

- The Polar Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington D.C.
- The Alaska Federation of Natives, Anchorage, Alaska
- The North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario

We hope you found the Alaskan Command Arctic Senior Leader Summit 2021 insightful and useful and supportive of efforts to advance greater understanding and clarity of the many dimensions of security and defense, as we share enthusiasm for the abundant opportunities for enriched partnerships in and across the Arctic region.

(Signed)
DAVID A. KRUMM
Lieutenant General, USAF
Commander, Alaskan NORAD Region,
Alaskan Command, and Eleventh Air Force
Executive Summary

Introduction

In support of United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), Alaskan Command (ALCOM) (a subordinate unified command reporting to USNORTHCOM) hosted a virtual two-day Arctic Senior Leader Summit 2021 (ASLS21) on 10-11 March 2021. The overall goal of the event was to conduct a meaningful 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.

The ASLS21 theme was Arctic Vistas 21: Understanding challenges, assessing risks, and improving partnerships. With this guiding framework, ASLS21 advanced collaboration between participating senior leaders as they assessed challenges and opportunities emerging from a changing Arctic.

To achieve this vision, a diverse group of leaders from across the United States and the Circumpolar North convened to address issues relevant to collective security in the Arctic. Participants included representation from the Alaska Native/Arctic Indigenous community, Department of Defense (DOD), Federal scientific agencies, Alaska State and local government, academia, industry, and foreign armed forces from U.S. allied and partner nations. Participants considered individual perspectives that inform overall Arctic security including but not limited to national defense, Arctic environment, geopolitics, economics, and local community security. ALCOM ASLS 2021 content included aspects on adapting to the direct and indirect impacts of the changing dynamics of the region (thawing permafrost, rising sea level, increasing health risks, altered climatologically events, and increasing human activity) and their association (and associated impact) to United States, Canada-United States (via NORAD), and NATO allies and partners Arctic trans-Atlantic security interests.

Methodology

Due to COVID 19, ALCOM ASLS21 was held as a virtual event, with two partial-day sessions.

ASLS21 Day 1 was a series of panels addressing emerging Arctic defense and security challenges. It featured senior DOD leader keynote speakers and facilitated panel discussions with follow-on roundtable discussions.

ASLS21 Day 2 was a three-move tabletop exercise conducted as scenario-based decision making to inform senior leaders to challenges, constraints, and opportunities. This follow-on, principally military decision maker event provided participants 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. Using methodologies similar to National Defense University and the U.S. Joint Staff, three varied scenarios of Arctic region security and defense challenges were given. This exercise
provided senior military leader orientation and understanding of the complexities of assessing, characterizing, and responding to Arctic crisis.

The rest of this report provides a detailed account of important senior leader level dialogue on the Arctic. As much as possible, ASLS21 panel discussions adhered to a “Chatham House Rule” approach. This rule allows us to share the information received but avoid revealing the identity of who said it.

**Outcome**

Throughout ASLS21, a *Unity of Government* approach was frequently suggested to address multidiscipline Arctic issues. No single government entity can meet the totality of needs and services necessary to promote governance, sustainability, national defense, and community vitality. Sustaining this relationship requires persistence to maintain lines of communication and relationships between contacts. A more strategic outlook is required when determining which components of local, State, and Federal Government are required when addressing Arctic issues. A preferred approach could be to first develop ‘core of governments’ with the most basic partners required to meet a given challenge.

**Unity among Nations.** All participating nation panelists noted global security challenges are best addressed through international partnerships based on strong lines of communication working to form unity of effort. Arctic nation-states with similar democratic values need to develop strong working relationships and a respect of one another’s interest in the Arctic region. As infrastructure and emergency response capabilities are highly varied between nations and geographic regions, governments need to maintain working relations between all Arctic nations to facilitate search and rescue and environmental response. Panelists throughout the Summit emphasized the need to reopen a working dialogue with the Russian Federation to address security issues outside of the Arctic Council.

**Relevance of Great Power Politics.** As noted by many panelists, Great Power competition is increasingly relevant within the Arctic region. While perspectives may differ on whether geopolitical competition in the Arctic ever stopped or if the newfound relevance is a legitimate lens for viewing a relatively stable and peaceful region, there is mutual recognition that geopolitical competition between NATO, the People’s Republic of China, and the Russian Federation is a reality that defines Arctic politics moving forward. Russia and China have developed a quasi-alliance consisting of a respect for mutual Arctic region interests. However, this partnership may prove unsustainable in the long term as China will seek to militarize based on its growing commercial and scientific capabilities within the Arctic region, and the two nations’ long-term interest in the Arctic will likely diverge. As many participants observed, the United States has a regional advantage based on its strong partnerships and alliances with other Arctic nation-states. Of the eight Arctic nations on the Arctic Council, five are members of NATO. As noted by ASLS21 participants, Finland and Sweden maintain a strong partnership with the United States in addressing regional national security issues and growing militarism of the Russian Federation. The U.S. should therefore ensure that strong lines of communication are maintained and an understanding exists of any potential future fissures within the U.S. and allied/partner nations as the Russian Federation may seek to exploit this when it takes chairmanship of the Arctic Council.
Plenary Session Summary

Day One: 10 March 2021

Welcome Remarks – Lt Gen Krumm

Lt Gen David Krumm, USAF, Commander Alaskan NORAD Region (ANR), Alaskan Command (ALCOM), and 11th Air Force (11 AF), Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK

ASLS21 opened with welcoming remarks from Lt Gen David A. Krumm, USAF, Commander ANR, ALCOM, and 11 AF. While the Arctic is often discussed in terms of future change, Lt Gen Krumm reminded the audience that Arctic region challenges to homeland defense and regional security the U.S. faces are not based on a hypothetical future but are present today.

![Figure 1 – Lt Gen Krumm](image)

The region is growing in significance not only to the eight Arctic States, but also to powers from other regions of the globe like the People’s Republic of China. This is due in part to the increasing accessibility of abundant natural resources vital to the global economy like oil, gas, rare earth minerals, and fisheries, but also the opening of new shipping lanes that provide shorter routes for global commerce. Competitors within the region are not only other nation-states; weather and the harsh environment are in themselves challenges to overcome. For these reasons, Lt Gen Krumm remarked it is vital for policymakers and leadership to identify the tools and infrastructure needed to improve U.S. capabilities to detect, defend, and deter any threats within the region. By enhancing capabilities within the region, the U.S. will be able to ensure Arctic common domains remain open to both civilian and military purposes. Lt Gen Krumm concluded with a reminder... we can collectively meet the environmental and defense challenges in the Arctic only through strong partnerships with international allies and especially Indigenous Arctic communities.


The opening keynote address was provided by General Glen VanHerck, who serves as the U.S. Commander of NORAD and USNORTHCOM. As the commander of NORAD and USNORTHCOM and the senior U.S. leader among the NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOIC) Tri-Command framework, General VanHerck is responsible as the DOD lead for U.S. Arctic advocacy and leads a Bi-national and U.S. unified command for the defense of North America.
General VanHerck provided a broad table setting of the overall emerging security environment faced by United States within the context of the North American Arctic. International competition is back, but the nature of geopolitical competition has changed since the late 20th century. Instead of peer-to-peer competition focused on a single adversary, as was the case with the Soviet Union, the U.S. now faces multiple competitors.

While the geopolitical landscape has changed, so has the environment. The warming Arctic, with less sea ice and eroding and degrading permafrost, is exposing vulnerabilities to North American domestic security, and such degradation may impact important U.S. security infrastructure across the region.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is seeking to take advantage of emerging Arctic economic opportunities as a part of their strategy to increase China’s share of the global economic market. General VanHerck explained that the emergence of an Arctic “Polar Silk Road” is a crucial component of the PRC’s overarching Belt and Road Initiative, which intends to place China at the heart of international trade and commerce. The Polar Silk Road through new Arctic shipping lanes would allow China closer access to the European market in particular. With this strategy, China seeks to expand global influence and ultimately challenge the international norms-based system that has governed since the end of World War II. In the future, the PRC could present a greater threat to North American domestic security based on improvements to Arctic military capabilities. Specifically, Gen. VanHerck cited that the PRC could deploy submarines to the Arctic with either conventional or nuclear capabilities in order to present a deterrence threat or if required, an offensive threat to Canada and the United States.

The Russian Federation also serves as a main competitor to the U.S. and its allies; however, their interest in the region is different given Russia’s reliance on the Arctic for natural resources. Nearly a quarter of Russia’s GDP comes from Russian resources extracted above the Arctic Circle. Like the PRC, Russia is actively improving its capabilities within the region to create new rules and international norms beneficial to the Russian economy. The Russian Federation has improved about a dozen bases within the north, dramatically expanding Russian military Arctic offensive and defensive capabilities.

In order to explore the position of the United States, General VanHerck used the metaphor of the equipment and strategy needed to win a football game. The U.S. is currently in ‘preseason,’ and needs to determine what capabilities are needed to remain competitive and ultimately deter threats before they escalate into a crisis. To address this, each U.S. military branch has developed or is developing their ‘game plan,’ with both classified and unclassified strategies for Arctic. Gen VanHerck also focused on the need to expand infrastructure within the region, or the kneepads and helmets of the football metaphor. To maintain day-to-day competition, Gen VanHerck highlighted the need for naval fueling facilities north of Dutch Harbor as well as the need for greater communication capabilities above 65 degrees north latitude.

However, there are things that NORAD is doing today to actively address these gaps. The most recent National Defense Authorization Act passed by Congress provides $46 million in funding for Arctic satellite communications. As a result, the U.S. will go from 10 to 120 low-Earth orbit and medium-Earth orbit satellites to provide coverage north of 65 degrees latitude. Improved satellite
communications will benefit not only the U.S. military but will also serve civilian populations in the region. In addition, General VanHerck is encouraged by recent cooperation agreements signed by President Joe Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to modernize NORAD and coordinate joint defense within the Arctic.

Following his presentation, General VanHerck answered several audience questions. The general first acknowledged points of concern most worrying from his perspective. The general identified Russia’s upcoming Arctic Council Chairmanship as a particular concern, given that Russia could use the position to exploit points of difference between the U.S. and its allies in an effort drive a wedge between democratic states on the Council. He remarked the U.S. should prepare by having open and frank diplomatic discussions with its allies before Russia attempts to air these issues in front of the world. Next, General VanHerck responded to a question on whether the DOD is actively putting resources behind implementing the strategies recently published by branches of the U.S. military. The General reflected Arctic strategy implementation investment will be dependent on the 2022 and 2023 DOD budgets, now under development. However, he understands the new DOD leadership appreciates the strategic importance of the Arctic and he is optimistic more investment will be placed to fund future exercises and capabilities within the region. Finally, General VanHerck addressed the question of what industry can do to better support the vision and priorities of the U.S. Northern Command. He remarked that industry should focus on technology that enables better intelligence gathering and therefore greater decision space for senior leadership. While U.S. industry has focused on providing new kinetic weapons systems in the past, domestic security would be better enhanced through furthering domain awareness and information dominance capabilities, to include sensors, intelligence, networks, and information sharing.

General VanHerck concluded by centering on the importance of persistent domain awareness in land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace for the U.S. and its allies to remain competitive in the new geopolitical environment of the Arctic. Through NORAD modernization, the U.S. and like-minded nations will leverage artificial intelligence to develop a timely and accurate picture of all aspects of the Arctic domain. By developing the greater information space, the U.S. creates options for deterrence outside of traditional kinetic means that ultimately create doubt by its adversaries enough to reduce the overall risk of conflict.

**Canadian Keynote Address – LGen Coates – Canadian Reflections of the Changing Arctic Security Situation**

Lieutenant General (LGen) Christopher Coates, RCAF, Commander, Canadian Joint Operations Command, Ottawa, Ontario

As the commander of Canada’s sole unified/combatant command, LGen Coates provided reflections on Canadian Arctic strategy from the perspective of his overall global mission.

LGen Coates began by remarking on the geographic and strategic complexity of the Canadian High North. Comprising over 40% of Canada’s territory, the Arctic has always been fundamental to Canada’s national heritage and future. While a harsh climate and relative remoteness have made Arctic operations cost-prohibitive in the past, the Arctic is rising as a microcosm of the larger great power competition emerging around the world. This is changing the historical defense priorities within the Arctic, which traditionally focused on building the defense capacity to counter air threats before they can reach population centers. While that threat has not disappeared, the Arctic itself no longer provides the same degree of protection it once did. Canada now faces a far broader range of threats from multiple adversaries that test domestic and international security.
In order to meet these emerging challenges, the Canadian government released the Defense policy: *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, which lays out a vision for a Canada that is strong at home, secure in North America, and engaged around the world. Within this framework, Canada placed key commitments to developing Canadian defense capabilities within the region including:

- Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships
- Naval facilities
- Space-based communications
- Runway upgrades.
- Remotely piloted aircraft systems
- Fighters and tanker support aircraft
- New surveillance technology developed jointly with the United States

As LGen Coates noted, Arctic security is not limited to a pure defense standpoint and must include the vitality of northern and Indigenous communities. Specifically, Canada – like the United States – must meet the civilian and economic infrastructure gap between the North and South. Not meeting these needs will create opportunities for regional competitors to fill the void and erode the relationship between Canada and its northern communities.

Overall, Canada remains focused on meeting the direct challenges of the Arctic through bilateral cooperation with its allies and through multilateral forums like the Arctic Council. As the Council does not address matters of military security, LGen Coates noted there is no existing multilateral forum dedicated for Arctic militaries to engage with one another. The Northern Chiefs of Defense (CHOD) Forum was halted in 2014 following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR) likewise does not include Russia (although Russia was included in the original design, they initially participated only via observers through their embassy in Norway, and then ceased to participate at all in 2014). At the same time, growing military presence in the region for exercises,
coupled with a lack of dialogue, is increasing opportunities for misunderstanding and potential military confrontation.

As the Arctic serves as the northwest flank of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) treaty members, Canada supports the strengthening of NATO’s situational awareness and its participation in Arctic exercises in order to strengthen the Alliance’s ability to defend this crucial region considered foreign to most of our NATO Allies. The world is increasingly finding itself in a ‘new’ strategic environment, which is often referred to as “Great Power Competition” – an environment within which the Western world, led by the United States, is pitted against China and Russia for economic dominance and military supremacy. This new iteration is increasingly in the technological (increasingly cyber and space), political, and ideological spheres.

Russia and the PRC have already deployed several assets and operations aimed at improving their global position and achieving their strategic goals. China is particularly aggressive in using economic tools not only for commercial gain but to achieve diplomatic goals. Examples include Chinese government efforts to force countries to end recognition of Taiwan in exchange for funding through the Belt and Road Initiative. LGen Coates observed given Chinese state-owned corporations’ role in intelligence collection and military awareness, Chinese investments in Arctic infrastructure may be a prelude to a greater military presence within the region. Similarly, the Russian Federation has been more actively engaged in promoting propaganda to disparage NATO and its allies and to interfere with the affairs of former Soviet states like Latvia and Ukraine. Both countries have actively deployed similar multi-faceted informational warfare in the Arctic and will continue to invade the information space with false narratives and misinformation.

LGen Coates explained that while Russia and China are engaged in similar tactics in the region, their strategic intentions may not align completely. As the geopolitical tensions between China and the United States rise, Russia will prove to be a major swing state and its relationship with China will influence the geopolitics of the Arctic. As a relatively new player within the region, PRC strategic intentions could run counter to the Russia’s vital economic and political interest in the Arctic. Under the PRC Arctic Policy issued in January 2018, China declared itself a ‘near-Arctic state’ and positioned itself as a major stakeholder in the future of the Arctic and its resources. Accordingly, this proclamation is like the information warfare tactics used to justify Chinese claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea. At the same time, Russia has continued to advance its strategic ambition within the region, developing offensive and defensive military investment and expanded territorial claims under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to include the North Pole. As a result, Canada must remain vigilant of the rapid changes within the region as competitors seek to control sensitive sites, infrastructure, and strategic resources under the guise of peaceful commercial or research activities.

Accordingly, the government must ensure that the vast Canadian Arctic is not an easy target for malign actors and must strengthen its infrastructure, surveillance, and rapid deployment capabilities to avoid putting the entire North American continent at risk. A key component will be to strengthen relationships between all levels of Canadian government, First Nations, and rural communities who have the best ability to observe and understand changes in the region. Nothing will counter potential below threshold threats to the Canadian Arctic as well as a strong whole-of-government presence and activity in the Arctic. A vibrant, strong presence of indigenous, Territorial, and Federal activities in the Arctic will serve as a counter to malign influence in the region.

Following his presentation, LGen Coates answered several audience questions. Questions addressed the importance of NORAD and northern transportation corridors such as roads, railroads, air routes,
and the Northwest Passage for Canadian Arctic security priorities. In response, LGen Coates remarked that NORAD modernization was the leading edge of investments required to meet future security needs of the North American Arctic. He then identified three major deficiencies for operations within the Arctic:

1. Logistics/sustainment
2. Communications
3. Transportation

As a result, Canada is increasing investment into northern operational hubs that leverage expanded air linkages within the area. In addition, the advancement of the Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS) project will help monitor maritime activity and transportation lanes within the region. However, the most significant investments are in improving the communications lines, which Canada is expanding through greater deployment of low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellites. Additionally, Canada seeks to reduce the reliability of Arctic communities and military operations on diesel fuel power generation by developing renewable energy options.

**Address – Lt Gen Krumm – The “Western Arctic” Emerging Security Environment**

Lt Gen David Krumm, USAF, Commander Alaskan NORAD Region, Alaskan Command, and 11th Air Force, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK.

From his perspective as the senior U.S. military commander stationed in Alaska, Lt Gen Krumm provided his insights into better understanding great power competition within the Arctic from the standpoint of a current theater commander.

Lt Gen Krumm started his remarks with a reminder of the vast size of Alaska and its limited infrastructure. These two realities are equally true in the Arctic, where the U.S. military also faces an extreme environment as a further obstacle. However, U.S. forces are tasked with not only learning how to survive within these conditions, but ultimately how to thrive and to be able to meet the same operational needs as those in other less taxing environments. The general further iterated that today’s security threats look different from the Alaskan perspective. Not only must Alaskan Command contend with a changing geopolitical landscape, but also a changing physical environment, which drives the need for extensive domain awareness. Given the remoteness of rural Alaska communities, domain awareness does not just apply to military applications but also to public safety, law enforcement, and the projection of sovereignty.

As in other areas of the globe, the United States must contend with the expanding Russian and Chinese military presence and influence in the Arctic. While challenges may exist in their bilateral relationship, the PRC and Russian Federation are expanding military cooperation and have conducted joint military drills. Senior officials in both countries have stated their dedication to working together as they both see potential for future prosperity in the Arctic. While the other Eight Arctic nations are following international rules and norms, the Russian Federation is imposing challenges to this system especially in its policy toward the Northern Sea Route. Lt Gen Krumm remains concerned that Russia may eventually adopt the same
tactics and approach to the sovereignty of other nations employed in Crimea and Ukraine to the Arctic. China’s interests are more focused on long-term economic considerations, which can be observed in their interest in rare earth mineral mining in Greenland and shipping routes. Similarly, the general remarked the PRC will likely repeat the same types of predatory economic behavior in the Arctic that it has employed in the South China Sea.

From a traditional security lens, the U.S. views the Arctic as the cornerstone of North American defense. The U.S. Air Force serves as the leading edge of providing security within the Arctic as 80% of the region’s military assets are from the USAF. Lt Gen Krumm reiterated that the Arctic is different in almost every aspect from other deployment theaters. As basic equipment and vehicles break down in the sub-zero temperatures of Northern Alaska, the U.S. military needs an established process to ensure Arctic units have the equipment and training to effectively operate in the northern environment.

When considering the Western Arctic, the Eastern Arctic must not be neglected. Instead of conceptualizing the Arctic as it is displayed on a two-dimensional map, where Alaska appears to be on the other side of the world from Norway, one should consider the Arctic from a ‘top-down’ three-dimensional approach. From this perspective, the general remarked on the need to better understand the eight Arctic states’ proximity and connections.

For the United States, the desired end state of the Arctic is a secure and stable region where the interest of the United States and its allies are safeguarded, and their respective homelands are protected. Additionally, the U.S. seeks an Arctic where mutual challenges are dealt with cooperatively. Lt Gen Krumm added competition could be non-adversarial and ultimately cooperative. To achieve this, the United States must enhance domain awareness and maintain international cooperation with partners and allies. These allies are not limited to nation-states and include the Indigenous peoples who have thrived in the region for thousands of years.

The general reiterated the importance of the cooperative approach in the Arctic. As essential services are limited, cooperation among nations and communities is needed to perform search and rescue in response to transit flights and tourism. It is also vital to improve weather forecasting as the Arctic changes and seasonal variation and storms become more unpredictable. Ultimately, the general believes that through cooperation with our allies, the U.S. will ultimately not cede leadership to other actors within the region.

In the audience question section, Lt Gen Krumm first addressed Chinese and Russian military activity and cooperation within the region. He observed if not outright collaboration, then at least an
acknowledgment between Russian and Chinese authorities of each other’s activities and strategic intentions within the Arctic. The PRC recognizes the commercial opportunity of a new Polar Silk Road enabled by the Northern Sea Route; PRC leadership has sought greater military cooperation with Russia. This military cooperation has been expressed through joint naval and air exercises near the Korean peninsula and the South China Sea, and the general anticipates this will translate to future Arctic exercises.

Next, the general addressed expansion of the ballistic missile defense umbrella in Alaska. As technological developments have advanced cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles, Lt Gen Krumm acknowledged the problem set has expanded from just ballistic missile defense to a more general ‘missile defense.’ The U.S. must advance understanding of these technologies and maintain missile response parity.

The next question addressed the issue of outreach to the Indigenous Gwich’in people regarding U.S. plans to use an airfield in Inuvik, NWT, Canada. The general assured that outreach is always a priority, and the USAF is cognizant that any of their activities cannot disrupt the traditional subsistence lifestyles of Indigenous people in Alaska or Canada.

**Address – ADM Foggo (Ret) – The “Eastern Arctic” Reflections on Arctic Security from a Recent Naval Forces Europe Vantage**

James Foggo, Admiral, USN, (Ret) former commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR)

Recently retired NAVEUR Commander, Admiral Foggo, championed strong maritime defense of U.S. and NATO security interests in the Norwegian and Barents Seas. This included several exercises and training in the European theater that bolstered readiness and defense capability for the NATO Alliance. His remarks provided context on the developing Arctic environment in the European theater. As a former submariner, he has experienced the Arctic from unique vantage points, both under the ice and through the Norwegian Fjords. A naturalized American citizen, Admiral Foggo was born in Canada and lived in the High North as a child while his father served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Admiral Foggo remarked upon the history of Arctic exploration, from the first successful visit to the North Pole by Robert Peary in 1909 to Robert Byrd, who reached the pole by airplane. Admiral Foggo remarked about his first visit to the North Pole early in his career, when he participated in an ice pilot training program led by UCLA physicist Waldo Lyon of the USN Arctic Submarine Laboratory. Through this program, Admiral Foggo had the opportunity to surface at the North Pole from under the ice in the USS Sea Devil in 1985. Admiral Foggo again had the opportunity to surface in a polynya north of the Arctic Circle as commander of...
the USS Oklahoma City during Ice Exercise (ICEX) 2001. He noticed an incredible difference in the environment from the intervening decades, observing plastic pollution much further north and significantly less ice coverage than what the crew saw before.

The Arctic has changed further since Admiral Foggo’s time under the ice. According to a National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) report, the Arctic is warming at twice the rate of other parts of the globe, making seasonal ice coverage thinner and less extensive. As a result, Admiral Foggo remarked that an era of Arctic militarization has already arrived. Despite these changes, the U.S. lacks a significant naval presence in the Arctic compared to other theaters. Until recently, the U.S. had not deployed a carrier group to the Arctic since 1991. This prompted then Secretary of Defense James Mattis to deploy the U.S.S. Harry S. Truman above the Arctic Circle in 2018. The deployment coincided with extensive land-based exercises in Norway that moved over seven brigades in one month. The DOD purposefully chose the worst months possible, October and November, to learn how to acclimate to weather conditions. As ADM Foggo noted, you must train like you are going to fight. Ultimately, the deployment allowed the U.S. Navy to learn valuable lessons about logistics that helped to inform follow-on exercises that have occurred since Admiral Foggo’s retirement. Overall, the admiral recognizes the Navy as an extended arm of diplomacy and theses exercises are important for sending a message of continued U.S. presence to the Russian Federation and U.S. Arctic allies.

The Naval War College Arctic Study Group has proposed several goals and objectives for the United States moving forward, which include resuming direct conversations regarding the Arctic with the Russian Federation outside of the Arctic Council. Admiral Foggo remarked resuming dialogue does not denigrate the importance of other lingering issues like the annexation of Crimea, Russian involvement in Georgia, or the treatment of dissidents like Alexei Navalny. Instead, it will help to ensure a secure and stable Arctic and where mistakes and miscalculations are avoided. For this reason, the admiral sees the great value for all NATO nations to sign onto the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) to maintain a dialogue with Russian and Chinese officials.

As the North Atlantic serves as the enduring geographic link for NATO, Admiral Foggo views the Arctic as a common geographic ‘bridge’ that could help link issues and interest between the Atlantic and Indo-Pacific. With this parallel ADM Foggo envisions establishment of a multilateral structure that encourages common ground between allies and moves forward in addressing challenging environmental and defense issues.
Following the presentation, the admiral reflected on several audience questions, the first of which addressed the potential for miscalculation around Svalbard. Admiral Foggo remarked there is a legitimate concern regarding the potential of Russia to seek to move beyond the Treaty of Svalbard and make some sort of territorial claim or a military presence around the archipelago. However, ADM Foggo reiterated the use of the Navy as an arm of diplomacy, as a strong and persistent naval presence can play an important role in deterring Russian aggression and expansionism. ADM Foggo also believes the same approach of strength should be advanced in dealing with Chinese aggression and illegal territorial claims. Next ADM Foggo addressed whether he found Chinese policy in the Arctic, which is more economic in nature, more or less concerning than Russian military policy in the region. Admiral Foggo stated while Chinese may be more commercially motivated, they have created a pseudo-alliance with the Russians given their military capabilities within the Arctic. However, Admiral Foggo surmised this bilateral cooperation may be fragile at best. He believes that by opening a dialogue with Russia, the U.S. and its allies will be better equipped to exploit fissures in Sino-Russian relationship.

Panel #1: U.S. Arctic Intergovernmental Leaders

The dynamic Arctic, insights on the changing conditions of the Arctic from the physical environment to the human terrain.

Following the initial presentations, panel discussions started, with the first on consisting of a multidisciplinary group of experts who shape policy, strategy and/or direct activities that influence U.S. national interests emanating within or through the Arctic region. Panelists were asked to describe from their current position and/or recent experience, near- and medium-term view of challenges, needs, and opportunities as relates to U.S. national interests emerging in and across the Arctic region.

Moderator: Dr. Mike Sfraga, Director, Polar Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington D.C.

Panelists:

- Mr. James DeHart, U.S. Department of State Arctic Coordinator, Washington D.C.
- Mr. John Murphy, Chief of Operations, National Weather Service Washington D.C.
- Mr. Jon Harrison, Chairman, U.S. Arctic Research Commission Washington D.C.
- Dr. Larry Hinzman, Assistant Director of Polar Sciences, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and Executive Director of the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee, Washington D.C.

Panelists initiated the conversation by addressing changes in U.S. foreign policy in the new U.S. Presidential Administration, which occurred just two months prior to ASLS21. As appointments are confirmed and the leadership team takes shape, there is an expectation that the Biden Administration will focus on the following themes:

1. Preserving international multilateral institutions that serve U.S. interests.
3. Connecting foreign policy priorities to domestic benefits for the American citizen.
Next, these themes were applied to the Arctic context. To the first point, as the Arctic is relatively ‘ungoverned space,’ the U.S. is expected to rely on international law and multilateral agreements like the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) to uphold freedom of navigation and the responsible management of resources. Additionally, the Biden Administration is expected to make greater use of the Arctic Council to develop cooperation and lower regional tensions. As five of the eight nations on the Arctic Council are NATO members, the United States has an advantage within this forum to press Russian and Chinese officials on their challenges to international law and norms in the region.

This in part addresses the second theme of revitalizing multilateral alliances like NATO and strengthening bilateral alliances with European partners on the Arctic Council, like Sweden and Finland. Cooperation with these allies and partners will be necessary to counter Chinese commercial and diplomatic influence within the region. Military cooperation with Canada and Norway specifically would also take advantage of their combined Arctic expertise and capabilities, serving as an important check to militarization.

The final theme of connecting foreign policy to domestic benefits is a more delicate issue for the new administration. The Biden Administration is now faced with addressing climate change as a part of its promised economic agenda while balancing the economic benefit of Arctic oil and gas development to local communities and the State of Alaska. While this tension exists, closing off the entirety of the Arctic to resource development is not a realistic option. A preferable alternative would be for the Administration to tether U.S. Arctic foreign policy priorities to local Arctic community interests. This would place a priority on holding economic activity to higher levels of environmental responsibility than U.S. competitors like China and Russia while allowing local communities to reap the benefits of resource development while maintaining a livable Arctic. The administration could also promote alternative sources of renewable energy for rural Alaskan communities to reduce local reliance on expensive diesel fuel. Panelists emphasized the nature of Arctic competition is not a rush for resources, rather it is a marathon, and the overall competition will play out in the following decades. Therefore, the U.S. must make advances now to develop infrastructure to support shipping and commerce in Alaska to benefit both commercial and national security interests.

Panelists also covered the activities of Federal agencies addressing Arctic science. Panelists reiterated that as the challenges are far greater than any one Federal agency to handle alone, a whole of government approach is needed in the Arctic. Therefore, a greater ‘cooperative federalism’ has developed in Alaska as Tribal organizations, local government, State, and Federal agencies work together to meet the common challenges and risks of the High North.

One such agency is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which works to predict changes in climate, weather, water, and oceans. NOAA’s National Weather Service (NWS) is tasked with developing accurate environmental models for Alaska and the Arctic. However, given the limits of satellite coverage and infrastructure, developing accurate environmental models for the High North is more challenging than at lower latitudes. As accurate environmental modelling is needed...
both for military operations and to protect lives, the NWS plays an important security role in Alaska. To overcome Arctic challenges, the NWS Alaska Region has developed a unique regional footprint with a broad range of stakeholder partnerships across rural Alaska and 11 service offices across the State. Given Alaska’s unique geography, NOAA maintains the Volcanic Ash Advisory Center, the National Tsunami Warning Center, the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit, and the Alaska Pacific River Forecast Unit. NOAA also has an important role in developing understanding of climate change and its impacts from reduced sea ice to unusual storm activity.

Given this context, panelists highlighted the need for better sea ice monitoring by the NWS to meet the needs of expanding maritime activities like shipping and fisheries. As vessel activity increases, the NWS will receive more observations from individual vessels, which will in turn enhance overall domain awareness. Lastly, the NOAA Arctic Region Test and Proving Ground in Anchorage, Alaska is an important NOAA investment in Arctic research and available partner for organizations engaged in domain awareness research in Alaska.

The U.S. Arctic Research Commission (USARC) is another vital Federal agency that addresses Arctic research needs. The presidentially appointed Federal body was established in 1984 to direct national priorities and goals for Federal research in the Arctic. Ultimately, the commission serves to develop knowledge to inform policymakers and regulations as they make decisions related to the Arctic. The USARC issues an annual Goals and Objectives for Arctic Research report, which serves as an important guiding document for U.S. Federal investment in the Arctic. Some of these priorities include addressing deficiencies in environmental domain awareness, including greater mapping of the Arctic sea floor, and expanding monitoring of environmental pollution like black carbon as maritime activity increases. The USARC is also playing an important role in developing cooperation between the United States and Greenland by fostering a new education alliance and investments. These efforts are intended to counter the influence of the China and ensure Greenland does not fall into the trap of debt-diplomacy.

The panel next addressed aspects of how the scientific community can support the defense community. As the defense community must make investments and develop strategies that will be relevant in 20, 40, even 100 years, the scientific community must improve understanding of the trajectory of Arctic climate change. While the scientific community has observed the climate is changing, the speed and severity of the change is still an open question. Therefore, the DOD must consider investments in technology and infrastructure that is functional under a variety of climatic scenarios. Therefore, the DOD would be best equipped in addressing future needs by including climate change as a component of all engineering designs. Panelists reiterated the DOD should rely on not only scientists, but also local communities within the Arctic whose population have a far greater understanding of the existing climate.

As an interdisciplinary panel, speakers sought to broaden the perspective on Arctic security beyond traditional defense applications and were quick to emphasize how the scientific community can engage to further key priorities of domain awareness and sustainable development in the region.

Panel #2: Arctic Congressional Leaders

Summary Reflections on Arctic Security from Capitol Hill

Next, ASLS21 included reflections from Alaska’s Congressional Delegation and Senator Angus King of Maine who provided an update on the Arctic security and defense priorities of the 117th Congress. This series of quick remarks informed ASLS participants the current priorities under consideration by the new Congress.
As the Arctic advances in strategic importance for the globe, U.S. States other than Alaska have begun to recognize the significance of future Arctic shipping. Panelists noted the inherent challenges of bringing attention to Arctic issues on Capitol Hill given a deep-seated lack of interest from officials in the Pentagon and colleagues in Congress. However, other States like Maine have steadily recognized the strategic value of the Arctic. Maine hosts the first U.S. ports of call along the Northwest Passage and has received investment from other Arctic nations like Canada and Iceland.

In order to advance a greater focus on the Arctic in the U.S. Senate, the Senate Arctic Caucus was formed in 2015. Since then, the Federal Government has made progress towards addressing critical Arctic issues. This included new mandates from the Senate Armed Services Committee for each branch of the military to develop Arctic strategies and investigate requirements for infrastructure in the High North. As a result, every military Service has produced or is in the process of releasing an Arctic strategy. While this is a step forward, this merely marks the beginning of the Department of Defense’s more serious engagement in Arctic issues that will result in concrete investments in infrastructure and military capacity within the region.

Another step forward was the authorization for the creation of a Ted Stevens Center of Arctic Studies within the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act. The Center will become the sixth DOD Regional Center, joining the likes of the George C. Marshall Center of European Studies and the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, and will be dedicated to investigating Arctic Security studies. Significantly, the Center will be based in Alaska and within proximity to Alaskan Command. While performing the traditional soft and hard power role of a Regional Center, the Ted Stevens Center could provide education opportunities to help professionalize Arctic service within the DOD and other Federal agencies. The Center could be focused on broadening the regional security focus of the Department of Defense to include not only Alaska and the North American Arctic, but the Eurasian Arctic as well.

Beyond strategy and research, the DOD is making more investments in Alaskan military capabilities given the State’s strategic position. Congress has authorized the construction of new U.S. Coast Guard
icebreakers and is investigating port infrastructure investments for Arctic shipping in Nome and other locations along the coast of Alaska. Fifth Generation fighters have been deployed to Alaska and are capable of being deployed to “hotspots” across the globe from the Strait of Taiwan to the High Arctic. These assets will be used to address long-term challenges to U.S. interests posed by the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation. Panelists noted that there is now overwhelming bipartisan support for challenging the Chinese government on issues of strategic importance like trading practices, the status of Taiwan, and the Arctic.

**Panel #3: U.S. Arctic Security and Defense Leaders**

Understanding the risks, assessing context, and advancing efforts to secure U.S. Arctic interests.

The following panel featured U.S. defense leaders who assess risks of the Arctic in context of global challenges, develop regional defense policy, advance security cooperation, and address the very real challenges of supporting crisis response in the Arctic. Panelists were asked to describe, from their current position, a near- and medium-term view of challenges, concerns, and opportunities as relates to U.S. and associated allied and partner security risks now emerging across the Arctic. Panelists considered views of policy priorities to address U.S. national interests in the Arctic in light of demands, concerns, and corresponding interests from other regions.

**Moderator:** Randy “Church” Kee, Maj Gen, USAF (Ret) Arctic Domain Awareness Center, University of Alaska, and U.S. Arctic Research Commissioner.

**Panelists:**

- Mr. James Baker, Director Office of Net Assessment, Office of Secretary of Defense, Pentagon, Washington D.C.
- Mr. Spencer Boyer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, for European and NATO Policy, Pentagon, Washington D.C.
- James (Jim) Ballas, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Cooperation, Pentagon, Washington D.C.
- MajGen David Maxwell, USMC, Vice Director, Logistics, (J4) Joint Staff, Pentagon, Washington D.C.
- VADM Linda Fagan, USCG, Commander, USCG Pacific Area, Alameda CA.

The context of maritime security was addressed first. As most of the surface of the Arctic and the world is ocean, the marine environment serves the main arena for economic and security competition. Within the Arctic maritime domain, the U.S. Coast Guard is tasked with securing safe navigation for shipping and promoting overall maritime governance within U.S. territorial waters. As Russia increasingly militarizes their presence on the Northern Sea Route and China expands its presence within the Arctic, freedom of navigation and U.S. interests within the Arctic are imperiled. The U.S. currently falls far behind Russia in its ability to project influence through Arctic presence. The Russian Federation maintains 55 icebreakers for national security, with an additional ten under construction. The United States has two, the Polar Star and the Healy. While it will not close the icebreaker gap, the new Polar Security Cutter program approved by Congress will advance the ability of the USCG to generate a year-round Arctic presence. Construction of a Polar Security Cutter will begin in 2021, with delivery expected in 2024. The FY 2021 budget includes funding for a second cutter. The USCG is also seeking additional longer-term investments in high latitude communications to improve Arctic domain awareness and logistics.
In the U.S. interest of strengthening the maritime rules-based order, the USCG is uniquely positioned to work towards achieving the objective of “Great Power Peace.” Given the USCG multifaceted mission and international agreements with partner nations, the USCG serves as an appropriate bridge between diplomacy and defense. This extends to nations that are more adversarial to U.S. interests, as the USCG must maintain regular communication and cooperation with the Russian Border Guard to address the protection of people and natural resources along the Russian-United States border and the Arctic.

The USCG third line of effort in the Arctic is to innovate and adapt to promote resiliency and prosperity. 2019 served as a record year for the Northern Sea Route along Russia’s northern coast, moving a total of 29 million tons of goods. This was an 81% increase from the year prior. As greater human activity within the Arctic raises the likelihood of search and rescue or environmental incidents like oil spills, the limited infrastructure and resources available to the USCG in the Arctic is increasingly strained.

As such, the USCG has turned to forming greater partnerships with local Alaska Natives within the region to expand domain awareness and overall regional capabilities. In this environment, the USCG relies upon a coalition of local, State, and Federal partners in a unity effort to address High North security challenges.

Next, the panel addressed Russian strategy and behavior across the globe, how this unique ‘problem set’ manifests in the Arctic, and the broader overall implications of the Russian defense posture. First, to the point of Russian strategy, Russian leadership and policymakers maintain the self-perception that Russia is an indispensable nation that without its permission or contribution no issue of global significance can be addressed. This view has persisted despite the fall of the Soviet Union, and under the leadership of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia views competition with the U.S. as a zero-sum game. Moscow has continued to engage in aggressive and disruptive activities under the threshold of armed conflict that have steadily eroded United States-Russian relations. The greatest expression of this strategy can be viewed in Russia’s involvement in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.
and Russia’s eventual annexation of Crimea in 2014. It has violated international treaties including the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty. It appears evident that Russia’s ultimate goal is to undermine the rules-based international order upheld by the U.S. and its allies. While advancing activities below the threshold of armed conflict, Russia is improving their military capabilities, particularly in nuclear and cyberspace. Ultimately, these efforts are a part of the Russian Federation’s stated goal to emerge as a leading force within a multipolar global system.

Within this global context, Russia considers the Arctic key to its current national interest and future. Russia controls more than 50% of the Arctic coastline and half of all Arctic inhabitants live there. Russia is now actively maximizing its territorial advantage within the region as climate change opens resources and seas to human activity and economic exploitation. This includes the refurbishment of former Soviet Arctic bases for the military, with a new network of air and coastal defense missile systems to strengthen anti-access, anti-denial capabilities in key portions of the Arctic. Russia has also upgraded its Northern Fleet based on the Kola Peninsula. Overall, these efforts to militarize the Arctic are foundational to Russian policies to advance economic opportunities and regime prestige across the world.

In response to these complex challenges, the United States has come to rely on its network of alliances with other Arctic nations. In October 2020, the United States reached an agreement with the Kingdom of Denmark on the criteria for the maintenance of military facilities in Greenland, spurring Danish defense investment in a historically underfunded region of the Danish Realm. Iceland is continuing to host U.S. antisubmarine, reconnaissance, and fighter aircraft on a rotational basis. Norway continues training exercises with the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps. Sweden has increased its military cooperation with the United States and the country’s most recent legislation on Defense spending represented a 40% increase over the previous funding cycle. Finland has also increased cooperation with Norway and Sweden on air surveillance, signing a trilateral agreement in September 2020. Ultimately, the panel emphasized that the United States or any other Arctic nation is not equipped to meet these challenges alone and only through collective strength can the U.S. uphold international norms within the Arctic and across the globe.

The panel then considered logistics aspects for the United States military in the Arctic. During the Second World War, the U.S. established 13 army bases and four naval bases in Greenland to block enemy access to North America and to serve a point of force projection into Europe. At the same time, United States and Canadian logistics were stretched thin while attempting to dislodge a Japanese invasion force from Alaska’s Aleutian Islands. Decisions made at the time reflected a strategy of calculated risk, as the U.S. attempted to manage limited resources to achieve an effect. This strategy of calculated risk serves as the basis for logistical decisions for the U.S. military in all domains. Despite a warmer Arctic due to climate change, establishing logistical support in the severe cold of the Arctic is not any easier now than it has
been historically. Arctic operations must abide by the ‘Rules of Four’ that any effort will cost four times the effort and take four times as long to accomplish. This rule extends to all aspects of transportation, medical support, and construction, as equipment must be purposefully built to operate in cold weather conditions. As this raises financial costs of any investment into Arctic defense capacity, projects focused on the Arctic face a disadvantage when decisions are made regarding resource allocation across multiple theaters. Therefore, special consideration must be given to designing a joint force that is operationally flexible and capable of performing with limited resources and logistical support.

Within the context of the higher cost of investment into the Arctic, the panel addressed how the United States might allocate resources and develop a durable strategy that is sustainable in the long term. Given that the U.S. is already limited in its ability to project sovereign influence within the Arctic, a possible strategy could be to invest enough resources in the region to encourage a reciprocal response from the Russian Federation and China. As the U.S. has a greater ability to spend resources in multiple theaters, encouraging Russian investment in a high-cost region could deter investments in areas of greater strategic interest to the U.S. and its allies. While this strategy would cede some strategic interest in the Arctic, it could limit the capacity of the Russian Federation to respond to wider U.S. interest across the globe. This would also hedge the United States against investing in a region that could never reach the same economic productivity of other regions, despite a warming climate. Therefore, panelists advised the DOD should not consider how to advocate for more Arctic resources but should instead consider how to do more with less.

Panel #4: U.S. Arctic Indigenous Leaders

Reflections on Arctic Security Challenges from a Millennia of Arctic Insights.

This panel featured Alaska Native leaders from across the State who shared their unique and authoritative insights on security in a changing Arctic. They relayed their informed perspectives of changing Arctic security, from changes in the Arctic corresponding to emerging dynamics of economic, environmental, and geostrategic security.

Moderator: Dr. Liza Mack, Executive Director, Aleut International Association, Anchorage AK

Panelists:

- Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, International Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Senior Scholar and Special Advisor on Arctic Indigenous People, Anchorage AK.
- Dr. Rosita Worl, President Sealaska Heritage Institute, Juneau AK.
- Eugene “Gene” Peltola, Jr. Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Region, U.S. Department of Interior, Alaska, Anchorage AK.
- Julie Kitka, President, Alaska Federation of Natives, Anchorage AK.

As Alaska Native peoples have lived within the North American Arctic for at least 15,000 years, Alaska Native people have a communal identity that shares a fundamental spiritual connection with the Arctic environment. The Indigenous people of the Arctic have lived through previous climate change events, pandemics, and threats to food security. In the 21st century, the increase in human activity from a wide range of actors from across the world disproportionately impacts the Alaska Native people, their cultures, and economic livelihoods. Indigenous people are on the frontline of climate change, as rising sea levels and melting permafrost threaten Arctic coastlines. The COVID-19 pandemic not only impacted the health of Indigenous people but threatened their economic survival with the loss of jobs coupled with higher food and transportation costs. Therefore, the Indigenous people of the Arctic must
consider security within the region from a holistic perspective, not simply in terms of the politics of nation-states, but cultural security, environmental security, economic security, food security, and the basic security of the individual. Indigenous groups like the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Aleut International Association, and Alaska Federation of Natives engage with the high politics of the Arctic from this holistic perspective of collective security for Native peoples.

As the Inuit people primarily live within four different nation-states, Inuit leaders navigated the geopolitical conflict between the Soviet Union and NATO member states to form the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) in 1977. The ICC works to ensure that the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic are uniformly respected across the Arctic. The ICC now represents collective Inuit interest on the Arctic Council. As the Inuit have traditionally occupied over 40% of the coastal areas of the Arctic Ocean, the ICC plays a significant role in Arctic affairs. In particular, the ICC has focused on upholding the human rights of Indigenous people as a part of the international rules and norms that govern a rule-based global system. These rights, including the right of self-determination, were affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly with its adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. These rights continue to provoke important debate regarding land claims and management in the United States and Canada and play an important role as Greenland seeks greater self-governance and possible independence.

The ICC has made declarations of its own regarding the use of traditional Inuit land in the Arctic and placed a moratorium on the placement of nuclear weapons in traditional Inuit lands in 1983. Concerns over nuclear and industrial waste have expanded with the exploitation of uranium, thorium, lithium, and other rare earth minerals across the Arctic. These concerns amount to a complex web of issues the Inuit Circumpolar Council must navigate and ultimately elevate the importance of having Indigenous people present and engaged for discussions regarding the future of the Arctic.

While Alaska Native people have their own agency and priorities, many Alaska Native communities share the same concerns of policymakers in Washington D.C. regarding a rising China, a militarized Russia, and the national security implications of a changing climate. Indigenous communities live at the frontline of these emerging geopolitical tensions.

Specifically, China seeks to use direct foreign investment in Greenland to increase PRC influence in the wider Arctic. 2020 Russian naval exercises in the Bering Sea resulted in confusion, concern, and several million dollars in losses for Alaska Native fishermen. As a result, the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) has worked to expand their activities related to national security and hosted Alaska Day events in 2018, 2019, 2020 and planning is in place for Alaska Day 2021. These events engage representatives from the Federal Government and U.S. military and featured deep dives into geopolitical topics and their effect on the Alaska Native community.
AFN has conducted follow-up events exploring regional border issues, water and sanitation in remote communities, and the economic implications of collapsing oil prices and COVID-19. Today, as in the past, Alaska Natives played an essential role in national security. Alaska Native have enlisted and served within the U.S. military both in times of peace and in times of conflict, while Alaska Native Corporations serve as important DOD partners. Though COVID-19 has prevented in-person visits to remote communities, this method of direct engagement serves an important role in fostering the relationships that serve as the basis for domain awareness and national security in the Arctic.

As the Alaska Native community faces a new normal in a post-pandemic world, many are bracing for change and seeking sustainable economic opportunities to reduce poverty in rural communities. The pandemic’s economic effects have exacerbated long-term issues of poverty and lack of public services in many communities. With the passage of further COVID-19 economic stimulus and possibility of the passage of a large infrastructure bill by the United States Congress, Alaska Native groups like the Alaska Federation of Natives will advocate for a fair distribution of Federal funding to support schools, community centers, and law enforcement in rural communities. As a whole of government approach is needed to address these challenges, Alaska Native people will seek a ‘seat at the table’ as Federal agencies make decisions affecting Alaska Native communities.

Panel #5: U.S. Arctic Defense Allies and Partners

Allies and partners: assessing changes and advancing opportunities for the High North.

The final Day 1 panel was focused in gaining international Defense and security members of the Canadian and European region Arctic-oriented NATO allies and partners to describe their current position on what is driving the defense and security strategy, planning, and policies of their respective capitals. Included in the discussion were reflections on the environmental impacts of a warming Arctic in defense strategy and planning. The U.S. Executive for the International Cooperative Engagement Program for Polar Research (ICE-PPR), who is vested as a senior leader of a multinational Arctic (and Polar) defense research collaboration joined this panel to offer reflections from the 7-nation collaboration in advancing science and research oriented to the polar regions.

Moderator: Dr. Whitney Lackenbauer, Network Lead, North American and Arctic Defense and Security Network (NAADSN), Trent University, Ontario.

Panelists:

- RADM Martin La Cour-Anderson, Defense Attaché and Danish Defense, Counselor, Washington D.C.
- Col Petteri Seppälä, Defence, Military, Naval and Air Attaché Embassy of Finland, Washington D.C.
- BGen Patrick Carpentier, Commander, Joint Task Force (North), Yellowknife NWT
- RADM Ole Morten Sandquist, Norwegian Embassy, Defense Attaché and Naval Attaché, Norwegian Embassy, Washington D.C.
- RADM Lorin Selby, USN, Chief of Naval Research and U.S. Executive of the International Cooperative Engagement Program for Polar Research (ICE-PPR)

As Arctic and North Atlantic regions are vital for transatlantic security from a military perspective, these regions hold equal strategic importance for Europe and North America. While the entire pan-Arctic region remains challenging from a logistical standpoint, the European and North American Arctic are
quite different in terms of available infrastructure, communications, and available energy. While the North American Arctic is defined by vast undeveloped territory, the European Arctic is characterized by a relatively extensive communication and transportation network that supports larger population centers above the Arctic Circle. Panelists reiterated an understanding that militarization within the region is not a coming threat but rather an existing fact.

As Russian advancement of Arctic capabilities has provoked a reciprocal response in investment and focus on Arctic by NATO countries, there remains an understanding that military presence does not necessarily equal conflict as each country must monitor and govern their own sovereign territory. Therefore, there could be a greater role for multilateral institutions that include defense officials from all Arctic nation-states.

Collaboration among the Arctic national militaries is generally a positive and useful aid to regional security and safety. For example, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum in which all Arctic national Coast Guards participate at the 4 star admiral level, and the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable in which 7 of 8 Arctic nations, plus additional nations in Europe participate in an annual forum of military 2 star level general and flag officers. Each advance respective collaboration and partnership in search and rescue, disaster response, humanitarian assistance, and other crisis level support to civil authorities in an Arctic context. The Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFCO) serves as a unique training and exercise construct for Nordic nations to leverage each other’s training and exercise airspace and ranges that also provides an opportunity to advance respective system’s interoperability of communications equipment.

As great politics competition unfolds within the region, U.S. allies and partners are overall focused on fostering a stable and more secure Arctic region. Russian Arctic military capability enhancement has added to the security risks of defending and securing remote territorial regions of America’s Arctic allies and partners.

Russia’s military exercises, messaged as defense of their national territories and territorial waters, are conducted aggressively and generally with little notice. Meanwhile, China has sought to expand its scientific and commercial activities across the Arctic, which includes remote regions in and near Greenland, which complicating respective national protection measures from an economic and environmental vantage. In response, U.S. allies and partners have invested more in communications, surveillance, intelligence, and naval assets in the region. As Russia and China advance different measures oriented to their respective national interests, America’s Arctic allies and partners have also sought closer cooperation with each other and the United States. Each nation as well has advanced cooperation and engagement with the Indigenous people of High North, particularly Canada, Greenland, and the Nordic regions, who have ultimate regional expertise.

America’s Arctic allies and partners have continued to seek to advance measures that not only afford improved domain awareness and the ability to defend and protect their respective national interests. Overall, these Allies and partners also are serious about measures that complement hard power
(securing needed capabilities, exercises, and postures), but also seek to advance through the design and employment of soft power means...education, studies and analysis, training, and engagement.

In the North American Arctic, America’s allies are concerned about rising military activity by Russian Long-Range Aviation, increased maritime traffic, coping with environmental change, and the means to project (and sustain) operations to conduct search and rescue, respond to disaster, and offer humanitarian assistance. The ability to project ice hardened vessels to achieve persistent presence remains limited, at a time where such limitations could result in unanticipated risks to defending respective national interests.

Exercising between Allied and partner militaries in the demanding environment of the Arctic remains a strong desire in order to advance joint capability between national militaries, but the frequency of such training and exercises is challenged due to the expenses and complexities of enabling logistics.

Two Nordic nations do not participate in any military alliance; these policymakers instead actively pursue an independent policy that preserves their respective sovereignty and interests. In the Arctic, these measures work to ensure security and stability between nation-states. Therefore, such foreign policy rests on multilateral engagement with institutions like the Arctic Council and bilateral engagement with all actors within the region. This helps those nations maintain a balance of power between competing actors within the region.

Finland (for example) possesses a robust and capable deterrence force with general conscription for the entire country and a full-time standing military of 280,000 troops. As one-third of Finnish territory is in the Arctic, all members of the Finnish Defense Forces must be prepared to fight in Arctic conditions. Finland also maintains a broader policy towards the Arctic, which focuses on climate mitigation, the well-being of Finnish and Indigenous peoples, and the Arctic research and infrastructure development.

America’s Nordic NATO Allies are also experiencing similar increases in human activity in their Arctic territory, noting a rise in fishing, tourism, and commercial shipping. For example, as Norway shares a maritime and land border with the Russian Federation, Norwegian officials have noted with concern the assertiveness of the Russian government within the Arctic. Such challenges from Russia are leading U.S. Nordic NATO allies to increase their cooperation with the alliance, participating in joint exercises with the United States, and facilitating cold weather training for U.S. troops. In the case of Norway, they see it as the ‘eyes and ears’ of NATO in the north and operates to establish a strong baseline of situational awareness to separate abnormal and normal behavior in the Arctic.

One key to domain awareness is developing a greater understanding of Arctic baseline oceanographic conditions. The International Cooperative Exchange Program for Polar Research (ICE-PPR) was developed to pool resources and knowledge on the unique polar environment between nations. The body was formalized in fall 2020, and includes Canada, New Zealand, the United States, Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. ICE-PPR consists of four working groups on separate topics including the environment, human performance, situational awareness, and platforms.

Through these working groups, ICE-PPR seeks to address four major themes:

1. Improving basic understanding of the changes happening in the polar environment.
2. Development of better environmental models.
3. Exploring new technology that enables persistent observations.
4. Exploiting remote sensing for basic understanding and Arctic operations.

Through this vehicle of collaborative research, participating nations will be better equipped to deter other nation-states from taking advantage of the polar regions for military or commercial reasons.

The panel next discussed Arctic region national priorities. Key priorities included the development of a multilateral body that addresses military security issues and deeper cooperation among allies. Advancing Arctic science emerged as an important theme, as it serves as the foundation for knowledge about climate change and informs all other aspects of Arctic change. Similarly, the need to advance communications capabilities was also noted, as it would enhance situational awareness and disaster response within the region.

**Day 1 Closing Reflections – Lt Gen Krumm**

The main session of Day 1 concluded with closing reflections from Lt Gen David Krumm and ADAC Executive Director Randy “Church” Kee, Maj Gen USAF (ret.). While much Day 1 discussion was focused on the challenges faced in the Arctic, Lt Gen Krumm elaborated that there are an equal number of opportunities as well. He reflected that the only way forward is to work together between allies, communities, and policymakers to develop a positive vision for the future of the Arctic.

**Extracurricular Event**

**Perspective on ASLS21 Points and Priorities**

Following the formal close of Day 1, ALCOM ASLS21 planners and organizers remained online to conduct an organized roundtable to facilitate participant discussion to address questions, provide clarifications, and discuss/elaborate on important points raised during the plenary session. The session also included a review of polling details from prior panels.

Participants first addressed how the future Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security will include non-military, scientific agencies like NOAA to advance Arctic research and collaboration. The Ted Stevens Center will adopt both a soft and hard power approach to Arctic security, inviting scientific collaboration from non-military organizations from across the Federal Government and Arctic region. As addressed in previous panels, science serves a great unifier of effort and vision for the diverse groups of experts focused on addressing Arctic challenges.

Participants also discussed how U.S. policymakers are increasingly focused on framing the foreign policy priorities within a domestic security agenda relevant to the American public. While a whole of government approach is absolutely necessary to address risk from climate change and greater human activity within the Arctic, it may be more useful to identify first a ‘core of government’ approach and then expand to more U.S. Government components.

As panelists addressed the growing Arctic great power competition, participants noted cooperation and diplomacy are still maintained as a preferable option to increased conflict and tension. Instead of increasing tensions through reciprocal militarization and aggression, vigilance and greater cooperation between allies were promoted as a better alternative.
Day Two: 11 March 2021

Panel #6: U.S. Military Service Panel

Harnessing the power of exercises and training to better protect and preserve U.S. and allied/partner Strategic Interests.

ALS21 Day 2 started with a panel discussion titled, “Harnessing the power of exercises and training to better protect and preserve U.S. and allied/partner Strategic Interest.” The panel featured a distinguished array of U.S. military Service members from across all branches. These leaders are responsible for organizing, training, and equipping forces for DOD or DHS national security missions.

Moderator: Randy “Church” Kee, ADAC, University of Alaska, Anchorage, AK

Panelists:

- Lt Gen Samuel Clinton Hinote, USAF, HQ USAF, DCS Strategy, Integration and Requirements (AF/A5), Pentagon, Washington D.C.
- VADM Phillip Sawyer, USN, OPNAV N3/5, Pentagon, Washington D.C.
- Maj Gen Paul Rock, USMC, HQ USMC Director of Strategy and Plans, Pentagon, Washington D.C.
- VADM Scott Buschman, USCG, HQ USCG Deputy Commandant for Operations, Washington D.C.
- MG Brad Gericke, USA, Director, Strategy, Plans and Policy, HQ Department of the Army G3/5/7, Pentagon, Washington D.C.

Panelists described the challenges, concerns, needs, and opportunities that could better orient operations, exercises, and training activities to create sustained effects for U.S. Arctic presence and posture. Panelists repeatedly emphasized the importance of training in the High North to prepare Service members for the severe weather and cold of the Arctic. In doing so, troops gain familiarity with operating in cold weather conditions. Additionally, transportation and basic Service equipment can be tested.
Emergent Themes

Theme 1: Unity of Government

As ASLS21 featured a multidisciplinary group of leaders from across the U.S. Federal Government, a ‘Unity of Government’ was frequently suggested to address Arctic issues. No single government entity can meet the totality of the needs and services necessary to promote governance, sustainability, national defense, and community vitality. This is in part a necessary reflection based on the limits to resources and infrastructure in the region as government agencies like the National Weather Service and United States Coast Guard must partner with local communities to maintain domain awareness and validate changes in the environment. From this reliance on local communities emerges strengthened relationships between local communities and higher levels of government. However, as noted by many panelists, sustaining this relationship requires persistence to maintain lines of communication and relationships between contacts.

However, a whole of government approach, while desirable, may not be entirely useful in every situation. Instead, a more strategic outlook is required when determining which components of local, State, and Federal Government are required when addressing Arctic issues. A preferred approach could be to first develop ‘core of governments’ with the most basic partners required to meet a given challenge. This core would then pull in other assets or partners from other agencies from all levels of government as needed.

Theme 2: Unity among Nations

Like Theme 1, no one nation-state is equipped to address the emerging challenges of the 21st century. As noted by panelists from all participating nations, global security challenges are best addressed through international partnerships based on strong lines of communication working to form unity of effort. Arctic nation-states with similar democratic values need to develop strong working relationships and a respect of one another’s interest in the Arctic region. Mutual respect and understanding can serve as the foundation for the development of mutual interest.

As infrastructure and emergency response capabilities are highly varied between nations and geographic regions, governments need to maintain working relations between all Arctic nations to facilitate search and rescue and environmental response. Panelists throughout the Summit emphasized the need to reopen a working dialogue with the Russian Federation to address security issues outside of the Arctic Council. This could include the resumption or establishment of a multinational body that brings together defense officials from across the Arctic to avoid misunderstanding or mutual miscalculation. Therefore, nation-states in the region should endeavor to maintain strong working relationships on essential issues despite political disagreement or geopolitical rivalries.

Theme 3: Relevance of Great Power Politics

As noted by many panelists, Great Power competition is increasingly relevant within the Arctic region. While perspectives may differ on whether geopolitical competition in the Arctic ever stopped or if the newfound relevance is a legitimate lens for viewing a relatively stable and peaceful region, there is a mutual recognition that geopolitical competition between NATO, the People’s Republic of China, and the Russian Federation is a reality that defines Arctic politics moving forward. Russia and China have developed a quasi-alliance consisting of a respect for mutual Arctic region interests. However, this partnership may prove unsustainable in the long term as China will seek to militarize based on its
growing commercial and scientific capabilities within the Arctic region and long-term interest in the Arctic will likely diverge. Some participants believe within this dynamic is an opportunity for the United States to work with Russia as a swing power to counter the influence of China in the Arctic.

As many participants observed, the United States has a regional advantage based on its strong partnerships and alliances with other Arctic nation-states. Of the eight Arctic nations on the Arctic Council, five are members of NATO. As noted by ASLS21 participants, Finland and Sweden maintain a strong partnership with the United States in addressing regional national security issues and growing militarism of the Russian Federation. The U.S. should therefore ensure that strong lines of communication are maintained, and an understanding exists of any potential fissures within the U.S. and allied/partner nations as the Russian Federation may seek to exploit this when it takes chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

Conclusion

Under the Summit’s overall theme of “Arctic Vistas,” the event convened a talented group of professionals and leaders from across the circumpolar north with a vested interest in safety, security, and defense of the Arctic Region. Participants engaged in spirited discussions and shared expertise insights into the challenges and opportunities emerging from a changing and dynamic Arctic region. ASLS21 improved participant and observer understanding of the challenges in the complicated risk environment that describes the new circumpolar north. This was well accomplished via a series of thoughtful discussions and activities providing insights for needed solutions to address and potentially help reduce the associated defense and security risks.

In assessing the discussions from both days of ASLS21, and in seeking to understand the challenges, concerns and opportunities...there are a number of questions that need to be at least considered and likely further examined in future venues. For example:

- Russia’s militarization along their Arctic frontiers is significant, but is such militarization to be viewed as rational for defense or threatening to the region? (As long as Russian military intent to their activities remain fairly opaque to the U.S. and America’s partners and allies, this question is difficult to answer).

- Is China’s pursuit and flexing of their economic muscle in and through the Arctic a threat to the U.S. and America’s allies and partners, or is this a pursuit that can be managed by investing in mechanisms that mitigate and minimize any malign activity? Do existing governance forums such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, Arctic Council, and Arctic science and economic forums (which are several) provide enough useful forms of collaboration, and venues to reduce security risks from malign action, or are more measures (or more power to existing measures) needed?

- Do the existing frameworks of defense cooperation among U.S. Arctic partners and allies advance sufficient capability and interoperability to sufficiently preserve, protect and advance capability to deter and dissuade malign activity in the Arctic, or...are such measures too meager, and only serve to invite malign activity?

- Is there a need to advance new measures that provide soft power, such as research and thought center complements to hard power (such as more icebreakers, 5th generation fighters and advanced land force measures) to improve U.S., allied, and partner Arctic security? If so, what
would such measures be...and what tasks could be made to such measures in order credibly gain soft power complements to hard power means?

- What can be done to create greater unity between military, civilian government, industry, academia, and the residents who call the region home? What associated measures of trust can be established to forge such unity?

- How can characterizing and understanding the environmental changes now underway across the Arctic be used to establish more effective measures to reduce regional risk to residents, wildlife, investments and more? What can be done amongst those who advance measures to protect and defend national interests to also support greater understanding among those who are being defended?

Quite frankly, are the United States and our allies and partners investing sufficiently to preserve and protect our respective national interests and is the U.S. doing enough with partners and allies to better enable credible deterrence against malign and threatening risks?

In sum, while ASLS21 continued the momentum started with AMS18 and advanced through ASLS19 and AAS19, senior leader reflections need to be brought forward to more robustly analyze and think through possible solutions in setting the stage for the next Arctic Symposium later in 2021.
Annex – Arctic Senior Leader Summit and Arctic Symposium Background Information

ALCOM Arctic Senior Leader Summits and associated (but broader in scope) Arctic Symposia 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). These ALCOM Arctic-focused events are designed to 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. 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 associated Arctic Symposia 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.

ALCOM’s ASLS21 provided 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 provided 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 was 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 was accomplished by conducting a focused exchange of insights and associated discussion via a select and multidisciplined set of leaders, oriented on the Arctic. This included 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 provided important insights and understanding of the emerging Arctic challenges, concerns and opportunities.

While rising competition between Great Powers (Russian Federation, People’s Republic of China, and the United States) in the Arctic region has become a topic of considerable interest over the past several years, such competition is but one element of the challenges facing the North American and the overall Arctic region. To be sure, the rise of military activities such as field training exercises are rising as are the number of air intercepts by U.S. and Allied/partner Air Forces with Russian Long-Range Aviation. Russia’s Arctic airfield and port refurbishment of prior Soviet facilities as well new infrastructure indicate a long-term commitment by Moscow to defend their Arctic interests. Russia’s dominant ice breaking fleet and a rising Chinese ice breaking capability enables their respective long-term Arctic presence, while the United States, Canada and other allied/partner Arctic national measures remain...
newly underway in advance additional fielded capability to enable a corresponding persistent surface presence.

While such militarization advances, a rapidly changing environment with diminished Arctic Sea Ice, volume decreases of the Greenland Ice sheet and other aspects associated with regional warming are affecting movements of fish stocks, and variations among marine and terrestrial based wildlife as well as creating a myriad of change factors for Arctic residents, industry and governance activities. Economic challenges remain a fact of life for much of the North American Arctic, while diminishing ice conditions reduce the challenge and threshold costs of mineral extraction by industry that exports such wealth to lower latitudes for processing. A warming Arctic environment is making subsistence activities more difficult due to less predictable conditions. Accordingly, many facets of Arctic safety, security, and defense are now much more dynamic than in prior decades and such change may actually accelerate in the coming years and beyond.

Therefore, there is an ever increasing need to understand the many facets of change, which is essentially, the evolving state of Arctic Domain Awareness’, and in which includes understanding power contests between nations, and the myriad of associated Arctic environmental, economic, cultural, and political tensions...from local to pan Arctic.

The dimension of understanding the new Arctic is unfolding and there is an awakening the Arctic region is now a part of the complex international spaces in which rising tension between powers that are not aligned with the United States and America’s Arctic allies and partners. These challenges indicate, that while operating in the Arctic, has never been easy, the need for military forces to improve their existing capabilities, associated interoperability, and competency in the region has a new and growing need.

While COVID-19 prevented participants from meeting in person, the event still served as venue for leaders to secure and strengthen key partners that ensure overall strategic alignment as the United States, allied and partner nation-states address the key challenges of the 21st Century Arctic. Due to the virtual conferencing, many more participants were able to join ASLS21 as compared the last Arctic Senior Leader Summit conducted at National Defense University at Ft McNair, Washington, D.C. As such, while COVID-19 prevented the desired format in which planners wished to conduct, the benefit was many more in addition to the senior leaders benefitted to the remarkable discussions.