

# Background

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## EUCOM Should Lead U.S. Combatant Commands in Defense of National Interests in the Arctic

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**Abstract:** Eight countries hold vast territories in the Arctic: the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Sweden, and Iceland. All eight countries are positioning themselves to protect their sovereignty, defend their competing territorial claims, and develop significant natural resources. Future disputes could involve shipping routes, potential environmental degradation, and local residents' concerns, as well as how best to combat terrorism and transnational crime. The U.S. faces the challenge of how to protect its national interests in the region, especially how it will do so under a unified combatant command. Four defense experts explain why the European Command should take the lead and detail the top priorities for U.S. national security—from missile defense to maritime security operations.

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In the years ahead, the Arctic will become a region of increasing commercial importance, international competition, and possible strategic challenges. In particular, global shipping patterns will change as both the United States and Europe may make greater use of trans-Arctic shipping routes, possibly reducing transit times between trading partners by up to 40 percent. Furthermore, as access to the Arctic becomes more common, nations will increasingly seek to exploit the region's vast natural resources and claim sovereignty.

The United States must determine how it will protect its national interests in the region. A crucial question is how the Pentagon will integrate its resources and apply them under a unified combatant command

### Talking Points

- Eight countries—the U.S., Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Sweden, and Iceland—hold vast territories in the Arctic, a region of increasing commercial importance, international competition, and strategic challenges.
- Global shipping patterns will change as the U.S. and Europe make greater use of trans-Arctic shipping routes, possibly reducing transit times by up to 40 percent. As access to the Arctic becomes more common, nations will increasingly seek to exploit its vast natural resources and claim sovereignty.
- The U.S. must determine how it will protect its national interests in the Arctic. A crucial question is how the Pentagon will integrate its resources under a unified combatant command.
- The European Command (EUCOM) should be the lead for combatant command Arctic operations. EUCOM is a natural fit—it has responsibility for the largest area of the Arctic, and has close political and military relationships with most Arctic-claimant nations.

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to achieve this goal. The annual Unified Command Plan (UCP) assigns geographical responsibilities to major military commands for overseeing all operations in their area of responsibility (AOR). In addition, theater commanders are often concerned about activities on the periphery or border of their AOR since today's complex challenges do not end neatly at geographic borders. This is called their area of interest.

The Arctic region is unique in that it borders the AOR of three major combatant commands. While all the commands can provide forces or conduct operations in support of U.S. interests in the Arctic, one command should have responsibility for assuming the lead in coordinating U.S. military operations. The European Command is best suited to fulfill this role. It provides the core of U.S. support to NATO, which includes all major U.S. allies with which American forces might collaborate for Arctic operations. The NATO–Russia Council also potentially provides a forum within which the U.S. and its allies can talk to Russia on this key security issue.

### American Interests at Stake

The Arctic includes the region of land and waters north of the Arctic Circle—a latitudinal circle around 66.30 degrees north. Eight countries hold territories north of this line: the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark (Greenland is a Danish territory), Finland, Sweden, and Iceland. With respect to the United States, nearly one-third of Alaska, along with its northern waters, falls north of the circle (not including the frigid Bering Strait—the body of water that separates Alaska from Russia).<sup>1</sup> Canada, Denmark, and Norway—all U.S. military allies through NATO—have various economic and territorial interests in the Arctic. The existence of

competing territorial claims between the United States, other NATO members, and Russia makes the area one of potential competition. As a result, there is a clear requirement for U.S. military commands to monitor the region as well as develop a strategy for avoiding confrontations, assuring friendly states of U.S. military support should it become necessary, and defending the other U.S. interests at stake.

Of primary importance, the Arctic Ocean has two main sea routes that, with the help of icebreakers, are open to shipping about five months each year: the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage. The Northern Sea Route links the Barents Sea and the Bering Straits. When navigable, this route reduces transportation time and costs between the Pacific Rim and Northern Europe and Eurasia. The Northwest Passage runs through Canada's Arctic archipelago, which reduces transit distance and time from Asia and the eastern North American continent to Europe by one to two weeks. However, Canadian shipping organizations predict that the Arctic Ocean will not be ice-free year-round for another decade or two, thus making the Northwest Passage hazardous to continual navigation. Still, current increased human activity has stoked fears of endangerment of the Arctic biodiversity and risk of environmental degradation from oil spills and pollution.<sup>2</sup>

The Northern Route cuts distance and costs considerably as well depending on whether the alternative is the Suez Canal or the traditional Rotterdam-to-Yokohama routes. Using the Northern Sea Route instead of the Suez Canal to transport an iron ore shipment from the Norwegian town of Kirkenes shaves off eight days to China, 11 to Korea, and 13 to Japan. Similarly, the Northern Sea Route along Russia's northern route is forecast to become increasingly navigable. This passage

1. Ronald O'Rourke, "Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, January 21, 2011, at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41153.pdf> (March 8, 2011).
2. Chris Mayer, "Northwest Passage Reopens Global Shipping Routes with Global Economic Impact," *The Daily Reckoning*, October 10, 2007, at <http://www.dailyreckoning.com.au/northwest-passage/2007/10/10/> (March 8, 2011); "Canada's Marine Ecosystems Face Threat: Report," Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, October 20, 2010, at <http://www.cbc.ca/technology/story/2010/10/20/marine-report-card.html> (March 8, 2011); Andrew Revkin, "Arctic Shipping Gets Boring," *The New York Times*, September 16, 2010, at <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/16/arctic-shipping-gets-boring/> (March 8, 2011); and Claes Lykke Ragner, "The Northern Sea Route," in Torsten Hallberg, ed., *Barents-ett Gränsländ i Norden* (Stockholm, Arena Norden: 2008), p. 114.

cuts transit time between Europe and Asia by one-third and cuts distance by half. The precipitous decrease in the ice sheets that have historically blocked the majority of Arctic waters makes passage feasible.

Additionally, the Arctic is a repository of fossil fuels. Estimates of petroleum resources in this region range up to 22 percent of the world's remaining undiscovered hydrocarbon reserves.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that areas north of the Arctic Circle contain up to 90 billion barrels of economically recoverable petroleum and 44 billion barrels of liquid natural gas.<sup>4</sup>

In 2008, the U.S. Minerals Management Service began selling oil and gas leases for drilling rights in the outer continental shelf.<sup>5</sup> The Russian gas company Gazprom has already staked plans for extracting gas from the 3.8 trillion-cubic-meter Shtokman field 370 miles north of the coast of the Kola Peninsula in northwestern Russia.<sup>6</sup> In addition to oil and gas reserves, Norway's Svalbard Islands hold large coal mines in the Arctic; the Svea Nord mine produced 4 million tons of coal in 2007.<sup>7</sup> Greenland may also have its own coal deposits.

The Arctic also contains economically significant marine life such as cod and whales, which are already exploited. Much of these resources are out-

side of the 200 nautical-mile limits of the national exclusive economic zones (EEZ), hence the rush by Denmark and Russia to extend their EEZs. The United States does not recognize these claims.

Military interests are also a factor in the Arctic region. Russia bases nuclear-missile ballistic submarines in Arctic waters. Russian, as well as American and British, nuclear submarines are designed to be able to smash through the Arctic ice in order to launch missiles. In addition, the flight paths of U.S. and Russian bombers and missiles pass through the Arctic airspace because it is the most direct route between American and Russian territories. Over the past two years, Russian Tu-160 strategic bombers apparently penetrated northern Canadian airspace using Arctic routes.<sup>8</sup> For that reason, the U.S. and Canada maintain air defense early-warning and missile-tracking radars that provide surveillance of Arctic airspace. The U.S. Air Force's 12th Space Warning Squadron operates a Ballistic Missile Early Warning Site at Thule in Greenland.

Air sovereignty remains a primary concern. In August 2010, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and the Russian Federation air force conducted a cooperative air defense exercise, "Vigilant Eagle."<sup>9</sup> Although the exercise happened near the Arctic, its focus centered on shadowing "highjacked" commercial air-

3. Scott G. Borgerson, "Statement before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs," March 25, 2009, at <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/111/bor032509.pdf> (March 8, 2011).
4. Kenneth J. Bird *et al.*, "Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Gas and Oil North of the Arctic Circle," U.S. Geological Survey, Fact Sheet, July 23, 2008, at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf> (March 8, 2011).
5. Ariel Cohen, "From Russian Competition to Natural Resources Access: Recasting U.S. Arctic Policy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2421, June 15, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/06/from-russian-competition-to-natural-resources-access-recasting-us-arctic-policy>, and Alexander's Gas and Oil Connections, "Alaskan Oil and Gas Blocks for Sale," *News Trends: North America*, February 4, 2008, at <http://www.gasandoil.com/goc/news/ntn80617.htm> (March 8, 2011).
6. "Russia's Gazprom Ups Shtokman Reserves to 3.8 tcm," Reuters, November 15, 2007, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL1589543420071115> (March 8, 2011).
7. "Important Dates in Store Norske's History," Store Norske, January 11, 2010, at <http://www.snsk.no/important-dates-in-store-norskes-history.145749.en.html> (March 9, 2011).
8. Rob Gillies, "Canada Intercepts Two Russian Bomber Planes," *The Washington Times*, August 25, 2010, at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/aug/25/canada-intercepts-two-russian-bomber-planes/> (March 9, 2011).
9. Mead Treadwell, "Climate Change and the Arctic: New Frontiers of National Security," testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, March 25, 2009, at <http://www.arctic.gov/testimony/treadwell-03-25-09.pdf> (March 9, 2011).

liners and monitored aircraft exchanges.<sup>10</sup> This exercise was conducted as part of an overall counterterrorism strategy.<sup>11</sup>

Maritime situational awareness of, and protecting sovereignty from, state and non-state actors are also an enduring concern. As the shipping industry uses Arctic corridors more often, terrorism and smuggling may become even more significant issues. Canada released a declassified report stating that “In recent years, vessels with links to human smuggling, drug trafficking, and organized crime have attempted to access the Canadian Arctic.”<sup>12</sup> Barry L. Campbell, head of operations at the U.S. Navy’s Arctic Submarine Laboratory in San Diego, pointed out that “We’re a worldwide Navy and the Navy’s position is we should be able to operate in any ocean in the world. When you go through the Panama Canal, every terrorist and his brother knows you’re there. When you go through the Arctic, no one knows you’re there.”<sup>13</sup>

### Complicating Military Operations at the Top of the World

The net result of a changing Arctic landscape combined with the enduring interests of Arctic nations will result in a notable growth in human commercial activity, which will increase demands for search-and-rescue missions. The inherent risks of such activity are known: Unpredictable ice floes and adverse weather may endanger even the most resilient polar vessels, and rescue operations are likely to be hampered by the remoteness of the Arctic expanse. Commercial activity will also increase the need for environmental monitoring and response, as well as a more robust law-enforcement and mili-

tary presence. Responding to these requirements will demand a more efficient military contribution from the U.S. combatant commands.

The competitive international activities in the Arctic complicate the military operational environment. In May 2008, representatives of the five countries bordering the Arctic Ocean—the U.S., Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark—met in Greenland. The Ilulissat Declaration reaffirmed their commitment to resolve conflicting national territorial disputes concerning the Arctic on a peaceful basis. But the Ilulissat Declaration does not cover pre-existing or future military alliances and other arrangements, which means its provisions do not apply to U.S. NATO commitments.<sup>14</sup>

Legal issues concerning jurisdiction over Arctic waters are a significant factor in the character of Arctic competition. The United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark (via Greenland) have shoreline resting on the Arctic Ocean and thus already have jurisdiction over parts of the Arctic waters.<sup>15</sup> All have competing territorial claims and all seek to extend their territory further into the ocean. Unique to Canada are its many waterways snaking through its land territories, some nearly 100 miles in width, and the Canadian government wants to secure international recognition of its claims over those waters as well.

Except for those of the United States, these jurisdictional claims are largely based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The United States has not ratified UNCLOS, and therefore has not yet made any formal claims. In addition to establishing numerous

10. Sergey Borisov, “Russian, US Air Forces Defend Commercial Aircraft in First-ever Joint Exercises,” *Russian Times*, August 12, 2010, at <http://rt.com/Politics/2010-08-09/vigilant-eagle-counterterrorism-exercises.html> (March 9, 2011).

11. *Ibid.*

12. “Arctic Terror Threats Real: Security Agencies,” *The Canadian Press*, November 10, 2010, at <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2010/11/10/cp-arctic-security-threats.html> (March 9, 2011).

13. Barrie Barber, “U.S., Royal Navy Subs Test Tactics Under Polar Ice Pack,” *Navy NewsStand*, March 29, 2007, at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2007/03/mil-070329-nns03.htm> (March 9, 2011).

14. Arctic Ocean Conference, “The Ilulissat Declaration,” May 28, 2008, at [http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat_Declaration.pdf) (March 9, 2011).

15. Greenland will likely achieve independence from Denmark soon. The people of Greenland are already enjoying self-rule. They are likely to see independence in the future and have made Kalaallisut the official language of the massive island country.



other maritime laws, UNCLOS outlines EEZs, areas of the sea in which adjacent states have exclusive rights to all natural resources contained therein.<sup>16</sup> EEZs typically extend 200 nautical miles from a coastal state's shoreline; if a coastal state is part of a continental shelf that extends beyond 200 nautical miles, that state's EEZ may extend to the edge of the shelf.<sup>17</sup> It is the responsibility of each nation to delineate its own EEZ, and to support this claim based either on the 200-nautical-mile stipulation or on the continental-shelf stipulation. Oftentimes, these areas overlap and become disputed territories. Islands and in some instances rocks contribute to an expansion of territorial claims.<sup>18</sup> The coastal country must provide evidence of a natural prolongation of its land territory past the 200-mile EEZ.<sup>19</sup> Countries seeking to extend their EEZs must make their claims before the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.<sup>20</sup>

The Russian EEZ claim centers around the Lomonosov Ridge, and the Mendeleev Ridge is also of significant importance in the Arctic.<sup>21</sup> The Lomonosov Ridge is a structure of continental crust that snakes under the central part of the Arctic Ocean and connects Russia's New Siberian Islands to Ellesmere Island, a large island situated in the Canadian Arctic archipelago. Canada, Denmark, and Russia have claimed parts of the ridge to

expand their EEZs, and all hope to gain significant territories.<sup>22</sup> But the waterway situated between Ellesmere Island and Greenland forms part of the Northwest Passage, a highly valued shipping route.<sup>23</sup> As such, a ruling on the Lomonosov Ridge could affect Canada's or Denmark's control of the Northwest Passage as well.

UNCLOS has proven far from a panacea in moderating Arctic competition. Indeed, ongoing disputes highlight the flaws of the treaty.<sup>24</sup> Current international legal regimes provide cold comfort for addressing future challenges.

With ongoing disputes, Arctic states are turning their attention to the precise dimensions of their respective EEZs. All five circumpolar countries have launched exploratory missions, projects, or studies in order to establish and supplement territorial claims in the Arctic. The United States has coordinated an exploratory expedition with Canada to map the sea floor.<sup>25</sup> Yet, the convergence of international attention in the Arctic and the myriad legal and political questions that have accompanied it seem to portend some amount of international controversy and friction. Certain symbolic gestures, such as the planting of the Russian flag on the sea floor at the North Pole in August 2007 confirm this prediction. At a May 2008 meeting between Arctic states, the Danish foreign minister Per Stig Møller sought to dispel "all the myths about a race for the

16. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Part V, Article 55, at [http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm) (March 9, 2011).

17. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Part IV, Article 76.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. Paul Reynolds, "Russia Ahead in Arctic 'Gold Rush,'" BBC News, August 1, 2007, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6925853.stm> (March 9, 2011), and "Cold Wars: Russia Claims Arctic Land," *GeoTimes*, August 1, 2007 (note the useful map), at <http://www.geotimes.org/aug07/article.html?id=WebExtra080107.html> (March 9, 2011).

22. "Cold Wars," *GeoTimes*.

23. Doug Struck, "Melting Arctic Makes Way for Man: Researchers Aboard Icebreaker Say Shipping Could Add to Risks for Ecosystem," *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2006. Map at <http://media3.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2006/11/05/GR2006110500016.gif> (March 9, 2011).

24. Steven Groves, "LOST in the Arctic: The U.S. Need Not Ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty to Get a Seat at the Table," Heritage Foundation WebMemo No. 1957, June 16, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2008/06/lost-in-the-arctic-the-us-need-not-ratify-the-law-of-the-sea-treaty-to-get-a-seat-at-the-table>.

25. Government of Canada, "Canada's Northern Strategy," January 18, 2011, at <http://www.northernstrategy.gc.ca/index-eng.asp> (March 9, 2011).

North Pole.”<sup>26</sup> In reality, though, all Arctic coastal nations, the EU, and NATO have separate Arctic doctrines. Several states are preparing—economically, legally, and militarily—to protect their sovereignty in the Arctic.

The ongoing disputes concern:

- **Canada.** The United States and Canada in the Arctic have clashed over two main issues: the Beaufort Sea and the Northwest Passage. The United States and Canada disagree about how to divide the Beaufort Sea between Alaska and Canada, and the U.S. is challenging Canada’s sovereignty claim over the Northwest Passage, arguing that “the Northwest Passage is a strait used for international navigation...the regime of transit passage applies to passage through those straits [the Northwest Passage and the North Sea Route].”<sup>27</sup>
- **Denmark.** Denmark’s claims derive from its possession of self-governing Greenland and the surrounding waters. The Danish government claims that the Lomonosov Ridge is a geological extension of Greenland. Russia disagrees.
- **Norway.** The Norwegian government has been as ardent as its Canadian and Danish counterparts in asserting national claims. In 2006, Norway submitted claims to the Barents and Norwegian Seas seabed to the United Nations. Norway’s Arctic claims conflict with those of Russia but in 2010 the two countries agreed on sea border demarcation.<sup>28</sup> In August 2009, Norway moved its Operational Command Headquarters to the Arctic, arguing that a military presence is conducive to stability, conflict prevention, and crisis management.
- **Russia.** In 2001, the Russian government submitted formal claims to an area of 1.2 million square kilometers (460,000 square miles) that extends from the undersea Lomonosov Ridge and Mendeleev Ridge to the North Pole.<sup>29</sup> In 2010, Russia and Norway agreed on maritime boundaries within the Barents Sea, ending a 40-year dispute.<sup>30</sup> Norway’s parliament ratified the record in February 2011. The Russian Duma is expected to ratify the agreement within a month.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, Russia and Canada agreed that the United Nations would be the final arbiter of who has jurisdiction over the Lomonosov Ridge.<sup>32</sup> Yet, Russia continues to pursue its claims to the ridge. To advance its position, Russia has undertaken a three-year mission to map the Arctic.<sup>33</sup> Russia is also establishing a comprehensive sea, ground, and air presence spearheaded by military units. The Kremlin published its Arctic doctrine in March 2009. The main goal is to transform the Arctic into Russia’s strategic resource base and make Russia a leading Arctic power by 2020.<sup>34</sup>

26. O’Rourke, “Changes in the Arctic,” p. 33.

27. George W. Bush, “Arctic Region Policy,” National Security Presidential Directive 66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25, January 9, 2009, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-66.htm> (March 9, 2011).

28. “Russia, Norway Agree on Maritime Borders,” *RT*, September 20, 2010, at <http://rt.com/politics/norway-russia-border-maritime> (March 22, 2011).

29. Dave Sloggett, “Climate Change Offers Planners New Horizons,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, August 22, 2007, p. 23, and Richard Lovett, “Russia’s Arctic Claim Backed by Rocks, Officials Say,” *National Geographic News*, September 21, 2007, at <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/09/070921-arctic-russia.html> (March 9, 2011).

30. Andrew Kramer, “Russia and Norway Agree on Boundary,” September 15, 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/16/world/europe/16russia.html> (March 9, 2011).

31. “Russia to Ratify Maritime Border Pact with Norway Within Month—Lavrov,” *Ria Novosti*, March 7, 2011, at <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110307/162902601.html> (March 22, 2011).

32. “Russia and Canada Seek UN Ruling on Lomonosov Ridge,” *BBC News*, September 16, 2010, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11331904> (March 9, 2011).

33. John Vinocur, “A Heads-Up on Russia’s Role in Arctic,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 2009, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/08/world/europe/08iht-politicus.html> (March 9, 2011).

34. Ariel Cohen, Lajos F. Szaszdi, and Jim Dolbow, “The New Cold War: Reviving the U.S. Presence in the Arctic,” *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* No. 2202, October 30, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2008/10/The-New-Cold-War-Reviving-the-US-Presence-in-the-Arctic>.

## U.S. Military Arctic Operations and Responsibilities

Three of the six U.S. regional combatant commands operate in Arctic regions. The European Command (EUCOM), Pacific Command (PACOM), and Northern Command (NORTHCOM) each have substantial equity in the Arctic, stemming from the geographic extension to the North Pole of their respective spheres of command.

EUCOM controls the largest area of the Arctic, spanning the eastern shore of Greenland, across Northern Europe, and through the Kara Sea in Northern Russia. PACOM is responsible for the remainder of the Russian coast, including the Laptev and Eastern Siberian Seas, but stopping short of the Beaufort Sea adjacent to Alaska and Northern Canada. NORTHCOM controls the remaining area, which includes the Alaskan coastline, Canada, and the western shore of Greenland. Control of operations is split within Alaska between PACOM and NORTHCOM. The three commands intersect at the geographic North Pole.

What is significant about the territorial claims that will determine the character of Arctic competition and cooperation and the geographical responsibilities of the command is that all of the major players are members of NATO or European powers. The Arctic is also an emerging issue for the NATO alliance. Former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, now NATO's Secretary General, noted that the Arctic region posed "potentially huge security implications" and has stated that NATO could become a "forum for consultation and discussion on [Arctic] issues."<sup>35</sup> Admiral James Stavridis, Supreme

Allied Commander for Europe, sums up the situation well: "I look at the High North and I think it could either be a zone of conflict...[or] a zone of competition...and as an alliance we should make this as co-operative as we possibly can."<sup>36</sup> From the NATO perspective, having the alliance pay greater attention to the challenges of operating in the Arctic makes sense.

The 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest outlined five guiding principles for NATO activity in the Arctic Circle: (1) "information and intelligence fusion," (2) "projecting stability," (3) "advancing international and regional cooperation," (4) "supporting consequence management," and (5) "supporting the protection of critical infrastructure."<sup>37</sup> Military participation among NATO states, guided by these primary defense interests, will be paramount to the stability and security of the Arctic. NATO member states have conducted multilateral naval exercises in the Arctic, including one in August 2010.<sup>38</sup> The role of NATO in the Arctic has become a point of contention with Moscow, however. Russia continues to oppose the expansion of NATO's competencies as well as NATO enlargement and several other alliance initiatives. Russia has declared its willingness to protect interests in the Arctic, and openly questioned the necessity for NATO to play a role. In March 2009, Dmitry Rogozin, the Russian ambassador to NATO, stated that Russia would not cooperate with the organization on Arctic matters.<sup>39</sup> In 2010, President Dmitry Medvedev—who has also called for a new European Security Treaty that would undermine NATO's role in transatlantic security<sup>40</sup>—asserted that the "Arctic can do fine without NATO."<sup>41</sup>

35. "NATO Chief Warns of Climate Change Security Risks," AFP, October 1, 2009, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hWjIkkKwrfQpH1R6F0fHNpPRcEg> (March 9, 2011).

36. Tom Coghlan, "NATO Commander Warns of Conflict with Russia in Arctic Circle," *The Times* (London), October 3, 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article6859007.ece> (March 9, 2011).

37. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, "Speech on Security Prospects in the High North," NATO, January 29, 2010, at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-D508C29B-9621B10C/natolive/opinions\\_50077.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-D508C29B-9621B10C/natolive/opinions_50077.htm?selectedLocale=en) 9 (March 9, 2011).

38. O'Rourke, "Changes in the Arctic," p. 34.

39. Tony Halpin, "Russia Sends Troops to Frozen North to Claim Arctic Resources," *The Times* (London), March 28, 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article5989257.ece> (March 23, 2011).

40. Sally McNamara, "Russia's Proposed New European Security Treaty: A Non-Starter for the U.S. and Europe," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2463, September 16, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/09/Russia-s-Proposed-New-European-Security-Treaty-A-Non-Starter-for-the-US-and-Europe>.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Clarifying the Russian position, Medvedev stated that Russia “views [possible NATO] activity with quite serious tension, because it is after all a zone of peaceful cooperation, economic cooperation, and of course the military factor always—at a minimum—creates additional questions.”<sup>42</sup>

Although Russia does not currently support placing multilateral efforts under the auspices of NATO, it presents an opportunity to test whether Moscow is genuinely serious about resetting relations with the West. It also tests whether Moscow is prepared to use the NATO–Russia Council as a place to address real security issues, or whether Moscow merely intends to play an obstructionist role in European security.

The European Union has also showed an increasing interest in Arctic policy. In 2008, an EU report noted that:

The European Union is inextricably linked to the Arctic region...by a unique combination of history, geography, economy and scientific achievements. Three Member States—Denmark (Greenland), Finland and Sweden—have territories in the Arctic. Two other Arctic states—Iceland and Norway—are members of the European Economic Area. Canada, Russia and the United States are strategic partners of the EU.<sup>43</sup>

The EU recently announced plans for building its own icebreaker for research and exploratory purposes, although the U.S. should not plan on using this capability in the near future, if at all. While construction is set to be completed by

2016, EU projects have traditionally run notoriously over-schedule.<sup>44</sup>

EUCOM is the primary operational conduit to European nations and the U.S.’s participation in NATO. Since future Arctic operations will likely require close cooperation and coordination with friendly and allied nations, EUCOM must play the lead role in coordinating U.S. military activities among the combatant commands’ AOR. EUCOM also has extensive experience in cooperating with Russia, including in nuclear submarines decommission.<sup>45</sup>

That does not exclude cooperation with other combatant commands. In fact, close cooperation with PACOM and NORTHCOM is necessary given their noteworthy Arctic-related responsibilities. In the Pacific region, for example, the military is monitoring the Arctic interests of Asian maritime powers. In March 2010, a Chinese admiral summarized his country’s interests in the Arctic region, stating that “the current scramble for the sovereignty of the Arctic among some nations has encroached on many other countries’ interests,” adding that China will “make short and long term ocean strategic development plans to exploit the Arctic because it will become a future mission for the navy.”<sup>46</sup> Some analysts predict that China will not strongly assert its interests in the region and will employ diplomatic forums in an effort to gain access to Arctic resources.

Other Asian powers are also paying attention to the Arctic. Shipyards in Korea and Singapore are starting to build new icebreakers and strengthen-

42. Denis Dyomkin, “Russia and Norway Sign Border Deal for Arctic Energy,” Reuters, September 15, 2010, at [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39190341/ns/world\\_news-europe](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39190341/ns/world_news-europe) (March 9, 2011).

43. Commission of the European Communities, “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The European Union and the Arctic Region,” November 20, 2008, at [http://eeas.europa.eu/arctic\\_region/docs/com\\_08\\_763\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/arctic_region/docs/com_08_763_en.pdf) (March 9, 2011).

44. European Science Foundation, “Aurora Borealis,” at <http://www.eri-aurora-borealis.eu/en/home/> (March 9, 2011).

45. Dieter Rudolph, Ingjerd Kroken, Eduard Latyshev, and Andrew Griffith, “Challenges Posed by Retired Russian Nuclear Submarines,” Department of Defense Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Network and Information Exchange, January 27, 2003, at <http://www.denix.osd.mil/international/upload/Steering-Group-Paper-Challenges-Posed-by-Retired-Russian-Nuclear-Submarines.pdf> (March 22, 2011).

46. Linda Jakobson, “China Prepares for An Ice-Free Arctic,” *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security*, No. 2 (March 2010), at <http://books.sipri.org/files/insight/SIPRIInsight1002.pdf> (March 9, 2011). (Jakobson cites: “Admiral Urges Government to Stake Claim in the Arctic,” *South China Morning Post*, March 6, 2010).



ing tankers for the arduous Arctic sea routes.<sup>47</sup> Japan has pursued scientific operations in the Canadian Arctic to determine the viability of new energy sources.<sup>48</sup> Japan is also watching shipping times and hopes to benefit from its northern latitude.<sup>49</sup> The shipping route from Yokohama to Rotterdam via the Northwest Passage is nearly 5,000 miles—and up to seven days—shorter than traditional routes.<sup>50</sup> While PACOM continues to monitor the role and interests of Asian powers in the Arctic, the region is not a primary area of focus for PACOM. Russia is also considered by some as an “Asian power” in some respects, but falls under the brief of EUCOM.

The United States, of course, is also an Arctic nation. NORTHCOM has responsibility for the defense of U.S. territory. Most of the forces available to NORTHCOM and to the U.S. Coast Guard (which has significant military responsibilities, as well as for law enforcement, environmental protection, and safety operations) are stationed in the “lower 48” and have little application to Arctic operations. NORTHCOM’s current force structure in the Arctic is primarily in place to provide the strategic territorial defense of the United States.

NORTHCOM also has several structural disadvantages in dealing with the broad range of issues that span the Arctic. NORTHCOM bears significant strategic defense responsibilities through NORAD and its subordinate United States Fleet Forces Command that operates in Arctic waters. This is in addition to NORTHCOM’s mission to protect the homeland and support civil authorities during a crisis. Saddling NORTHCOM with more responsibilities could overstretch the command and compromise the homeland defense mission. Additionally, NORTHCOM does not have the range of foreign military-to-military working relationships that EUCOM and PACOM do. In short, it

could well be overwhelmed by the responsibility of attempting to lead the broad military response to Arctic challenges.

### Coordinating Military Operations

U.S. joint doctrine does not specify how U.S. combatant commands should cooperate where their “areas of interest” extend beyond their AOR, or how combatant commands should cooperate where they have joint interests that cross over between two commands. Furthermore, the U.S. military employs a strategy of global basing, meaning that forces stationed in any combatant command could well find themselves deployed to support operations in another AOR. Given that three major U.S. commands have varying degrees of interest and responsibilities in the Arctic region, establishing a formal means for integrating their activities will be critical.

To date, Washington has not yet adequately addressed the issue of coordinating and integrating military operations across combatant commands. On January 9, 2009, just days before leaving office, President George W. Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25 (NSPD 66/HSPD 25), which served as the first revision of U.S. Arctic Region Policy since 1994.<sup>51</sup> The directive outlined U.S. Arctic policy objectives:

- Meet national security and homeland security needs relevant to the Arctic region;
- Protect the Arctic environment and conserve its biological resources;
- Ensure that natural resource management and economic development in the region are environmentally sustainable;
- Strengthen institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations (the United States, Cana-

47. Borgerson, statement before the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

48. Rob Huebert, “Polar Frontiers,” *Armed Forces Journal*, at <http://armedforcesjournal.com/2010/03/4500480/> (March 9, 2011).

49. Borgerson, statement before the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

50. Lt. Col. Tarn M. Abell (USAF, Reserves), “Arctic Security in a Warming World,” U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, March 23, 2010, at <http://www.roa.org/site/DocServer/AbellTSRPPdf?docID=29001> (March 9, 2011).

51. Abigail Mahony, “Great Decisions 2009 Spring Updates: The Arctic,” Foreign Policy Association, November 1, 2010, at [http://www.fpa.org/topics\\_info2414/topics\\_info\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=858684](http://www.fpa.org/topics_info2414/topics_info_show.htm?doc_id=858684) (March 9, 2011).

da, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden);

- Involve the Arctic's indigenous communities in decisions that affect them; and
- Enhance scientific monitoring and research into local, regional, and global environmental issues.<sup>52</sup>

In terms of U.S. national and homeland security interests in the Arctic region, the presidential directive states that “the United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic region and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safeguard these interests.”<sup>53</sup> U.S. security interests in the region include:

- Missile defense and early-warning systems;
- Deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations;
- Ensuring freedom of navigation and over-flight; and
- Preventing terrorist attacks and mitigating criminal or hostile acts that could increase U.S. vulnerability to terrorism in the Arctic region.<sup>54</sup>

These issues of national security, governance, maritime transportation, scientific research, and environmental conservation fall under various U.S. government agencies and departments, including the Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security. U.S. Arctic region policy is coordinated by the Arctic Interagency Policy Committee, run jointly by the National Security Council and the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The policy committee met in February 2010 for the first time. It is charged with assessing the status of implementation of the Arctic presidential directive.

In July 2009, the Obama Administration created the Ocean Policy Task Force under the CEQ. The task force is charged with ensuring good stewardship of the oceans, U.S. coasts, and the Great Lakes. In August 2009, White House officials and other federal officials traveled throughout the Arctic to observe ongoing activities and met with industry representatives and local residents.<sup>55</sup> The Arctic Policy Group (APG) is an interagency coordinating body managed by the U.S. State Department. Domestically, the APG works with U.S. implementing agencies and formulates and presents unified U.S. Arctic policy positions at the Arctic Council, an international body that includes the five circumpolar states—the U.S., Canada, Denmark, Norway, and Russia—as well as Finland, Sweden, and Iceland. The council is heavily weighted toward environmental issues. Military and security issues are not the focus of this forum and arise only tangentially.

The May 2010 National Security Strategy states that:

The United States is an Arctic Nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic region, where we seek to meet our national security needs, protect the environment, responsibly manage resources, account for indigenous communities, support scientific research, and strengthen international cooperation on a wide range of issues.<sup>56</sup>

The strategy, however, fails to articulate a concept for how military operations and cooperation with friends and allies will be harmonized among the combat commands.

The United States must determine how it will protect national interests in the Arctic, taking into account altered regional activity by NATO and non-NATO Arctic nations, as well as by emerging outside powers like China. A crucial element of this ques-

52. “Arctic Region Policy,” NSPD 66/HSPD-25.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. “DoDLive Bloggers Roundtable: Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Thad Allen,” U.S. Department of Defense, August 28, 2009, at <http://www.dodlive.mil/index.php/tag/ocean-policy-task-force> (March 9, 2011).

56. “National Security Strategy,” The White House, May 2010, at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf) (March 9, 2011).

tion is how the Pentagon will integrate its resources and apply them under a unified command arrangement toward the Arctic region.

### Establishing a Lead Combatant Command

There is a clear case for establishing a “lead” among the combatant commands. The multiple Arctic-claimant nations have diverse relationships with the United States. The militaries of the Arctic nations that are also NATO allies already have close relationships with their U.S. counterparts, which extend to institutional joint training, shared military education and research programs, common procurement, and decades of personal and institutional ties. Such military ties have previously translated into increased political cooperation over sensitive matters and are diplomatically significant for the key issues here (national territorial and maritime claims). For that reason, EUCOM is the most viable choice for harmonizing the efforts between the three combatant commands and synchronizing their efforts with the military operations of U.S. friends and allies.

For starters, among the issues the combatant command lead should address are:

- Improving situational awareness, information-gathering, and intelligence fusion;
- Developing an integrated Arctic training and exercise program;
- Enhancing crisis action coordination and integrated consequence management; and

- Undertaking comprehensive search-and-rescue initiatives.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff should revise the Unified Command Plan to establish EUCOM as the lead for combatant command Arctic operations. EUCOM is a natural fit since it has responsibility for the largest area of the Arctic, and has close political and military relationships with the majority of Arctic-claimant nations. In addition, the Arctic is an emerging strategic issue for the NATO alliance. Close cooperation between EUCOM and NATO will be critical to U.S. national security in the midst of territorial and economic claims that will determine the future of the Arctic. EUCOM also has years of experience dealing with its Russian military counterparts. Establishing a sound Arctic policy is central to ensuring that U.S. economic competitiveness and sovereignty are safeguarded throughout the 21st century.

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