

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 04/03/2017		2. REPORT TYPE Masters Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) Sep 2016-Apr 2017	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Time For a United States Arctic Command				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A	
6. AUTHOR(S) Soto Jr., John, F., Major, USMC				5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A	
				5e. TASK NUMBER N/A	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT A United States Arctic Command is necessary to stop Russian expansionism in the region, re-establish the balance of power in the region, and provide security for commerce and economic development as the effects of climate change widen Arctic sea lanes. The US and NATO are currently ill equipped to respond to a potential crisis because there is not a GCC solely focused on the Arctic to advocate for its issues or capabilities needed to execute a clear and comprehensive US-led strategy for the Arctic.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS United States Arctic Command, Russian Arctic strategy, Russian aggression, NATO in the Arctic, new US Arctic Strategy, security challenges in the Arctic, climate change impact on Arctic security					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			USMC Command and Staff College
unclas	unclas	unclas	UU	28	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Administration Office)

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2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia
22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

TIME FOR A UNITED STATES ARCTIC COMMAND

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Time for a United States Arctic Command

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Thesis: A United States Arctic Command is necessary to stop Russian expansionism in the region, re-establish the balance of power in the region, and provide security for commerce and economic development as the effects of climate change widen Arctic sea lanes.

Discussion: The US Department of Defense released its Arctic Strategy in December 2013 and nested its mission within the National Strategy for the Arctic Region signed by President Obama earlier in the year. The DoD's Arctic Strategy highlights U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) as the lead DoD agency responsible for Arctic issues, but U.S. European Command and U.S. Pacific Command also have a stake and varying priorities. NATO does not maintain an Arctic strategy, and the Arctic Council chooses not to address Arctic military matters. Russian militarization of Arctic bases over the last ten years; the discovery of fossil fuels, natural gas, and precious metals in the Arctic; the effects of climate change on the northern ice cap along with the potential for widening of Arctic sea routes for commerce; and increased acts of Russian aggression and military posturing throughout Europe are strong indicators that the Arctic will soon become an area of increased tensions. The US and NATO are currently ill equipped to respond to a potential crisis because there is not a GCC solely focused on the Arctic to advocate for its issues or capabilities needed to execute a clear and comprehensive US-led strategy for the Arctic. Moreover, if a crisis were to occur today, it would force the US and its allies to respond from a position of confusion and implement a defense strategy to counter Russian provocation or military aggression.

Conclusion: The current US strategy fails to provide clarity for the region in the near term and lacks a comprehensive approach. It is inadequate to secure and maintain national interests of the US and its allies in the Arctic. Moreover, because there are three separate Geographic Combatant Commands whose AOR boundaries converge in the Arctic, there exist conflicting levels of prioritization and mission importance resulting in current C2 architecture that is unable to execute an effective deterrence to Russian aggression in the region. The solution is the establishment of a United States Arctic Command as a stand-alone GCC for the Arctic region.

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The current United States national strategy for the Arctic neither deters Russian expansionism nor provides long-term economic security and stability for commerce within the region. It misses the mark because multiple U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) organizations have overlapping responsibilities in the region, but none prioritize the mission. This puts the US and its allies in a geopolitically vulnerable position while Russia grows its reach and influence in the region.

Although written prior to the release of President Obama's strategy for the Arctic, "Improving US Posture in the Arctic" calls for the United States to "realign the sub-unified command in Alaska that is empowered, resourced, and organized to coordinate the implementation of national and DoD Arctic strategy within the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) area of responsibility (AOR)."¹ The essay captures the challenges and opportunities in the Arctic region and suggests that the way forward is a re-organized Alaskan Command (ALCOM) best able to command and control (C2) in the Arctic. This paper serves to build upon this recommendation but highlights the greater need for a shift in strategy by advocating for the wholesale establishment of a United States Arctic Command (USARCCOM) as a stand-alone Geographic Combatant Command (GCC). This shift is necessary to stop Russian expansionism in the region, to re-establish the balance of power in the region, and to provide security for commerce and economic development as the effects of climate change widen Arctic sea lanes.

First, this paper will discuss the current Arctic security architecture by discussing how the international community addresses Arctic issues, the shift in Russian Arctic strategy, and strategic positions by both the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations. Second, it will describe the Arctic's resource-rich environment, the relational tie that the Arctic shows

according to the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and impact of viable sea lanes for commerce in the Arctic Circle. Third, it will identify how the DoD is currently aligned in the region while describing the positions of the US and NATO and Russia's regional endgame. Fourth, it will describe the steps necessary to stop Russian expansion in the region, the need for the US and NATO to re-establish the balance of power in the Arctic, and the role that a new, US-led organization will play in providing security and stability for commerce and economic development within the Arctic Circle. Finally, it will highlight what a new US GCC, solely focused on the Arctic, can do to meet the challenges presented, where and how it could operate, manning for missions, and its relationship with NATO and other Allies for a peaceful Arctic region in the future.

Arctic Strategies

In 1996, the Ottawa Declaration established the Arctic Council, following the development of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy in 1991² “to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.”³ Membership is limited to states that possess territory in the Arctic Circle of which all Arctic states are members.ⁱ Since its establishment, the Council has been the primary venue to manage Arctic issues through mutual cooperation and shared interests within the region. However, the declaration specifically states that it should not deal with matters related to military security.⁴ Over the last decade, changes in climate conditions in the Arctic region, the

ⁱ Arctic state is defined as one of the eight nations making up the permanent membership of the Arctic Council and includes the following nations: Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

identification of new resources under the ice and the development of the technology to reach and harvest them, and a change in Russian policy with a growingly aggressive posture have left the US and its Allies vulnerable in the Arctic.

The first indication of a shift in Russian policy towards the Arctic came in 2008 when the Russian government openly stated its support and advocacy for the document, “The fundamentals of state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to 2020 and beyond.”⁵ This document highlights the importance of the region to Russia and formalized its pursuits in the Arctic. It further highlights the resources available underneath the ice and the impact that these resources could have in renewing the Russian economy.

In 2009, during the final days of his presidency, Bush issued a directive formalizing and codifying US national security interests for the Arctic.⁶ Bush’s strategy laid out a US policy that would “meet national security and homeland security needs in the Arctic, protect the Arctic environment and conserve its biological resources, and ensure that US economic development and natural resource management efforts were environmentally sustainable.” Additionally, it would seek to strengthen cooperation with the Arctic Council and Arctic indigenous communities and enhance scientific efforts on Arctic environmental issues. In 2013, Obama followed with “*The United States National Strategy for the Arctic Region*,” which guides and directs a US whole of government approach.⁷ Obama’s strategy set forth the mission of “preserving freedom of the seas, which includes all of the rights, freedoms, and uses of the seas and adjacent airspace, including freedom of navigation and overflight, in the Arctic supports the nation’s ability to exercise these rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea and airspace throughout the world, including through strategic straits.”⁸ While the strategy outlines efforts and its national aims within the US interagency, it fails to outline the employment of this vision and completely

neglects its effect on US alliances with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. Furthermore, it does not address who or what organization within the United States would bear the lead responsibility of executing the principles that guide US whole of government actions. Finally, it fails to address Russia as a key player that led to the development of this strategy to begin with.

The Environment, UNCLOS, and Passage

On July 23, 2008, the United States Geographic Survey (USGS) released the findings of a study estimating that approximately thirteen percent of the world's undiscovered oil, thirty percent of the world's undiscovered natural gas, and twenty percent of the world's undiscovered natural gas liquids resided in the Arctic Circle. It's expected that eighty-four percent of these identified resources are occurring offshore⁹, and eighty-seven percent of the Arctic's undiscovered oil and natural gas locations run across, on, and underneath several countries' established and internationally recognized borders.¹⁰ Estimates show that large deposits of coal reside in the Arctic as well as iron and other ferro-alloy minerals like nickel, cobalt, chromite, titanium, and tungsten.¹¹ Significant deposits of non-ferrous minerals detected in the Arctic consist of bauxite, zinc, lead, copper, and palladium while precious metals detected included gold, silver, and platinum and even diamonds, of varying functionality and quality.¹² The discovery of these minerals and precious metals underscores the importance of the region to prospectors and a nation seeking to expand its economic portfolio. The advancements of capability and technology in drilling, mining, and sustaining human life in the Arctic have enhanced states' ability to access, harvest, and count on these resources.

Ice cover in the Arctic is declining¹³ allowing greater access to identified boundaries and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), which require international effort to resolve disputes.

UNCLOS III is an international agreement that came about from the third convention from 1973 to 1982¹⁴ and is internationally referenced when discussing maritime disputes. The article identifies, describes, and defines sovereignty and states' limits with regards to sea, airspace, and the space underneath its bed and soil.¹⁵ UNCLOS III is vital because it represents the closest agreement that the international community recognizes concerning maritime territorial disputes, but it is not enough. Without an organization to enforce it, UNCLOS III does very little to deconflict or dissuade aggression. Although the US recognizes UNCLOS as part of international law, it has not ratified it because some experts believe doing so would serve to undermine US sovereignty and also limits US flexibility when acting in its own self interests.¹⁶

Exacerbating the effect of climate change is its potential impact on sea lanes in the Arctic. According to Malte Humpert and Andreas Raspotnik of the Arctic Institute, "Arctic transit routes represent a new link between European and Asian markets at a time when traditional transit routes through the Panama and Suez Canal are approaching their carrying capacity."¹⁷ There are three major Arctic sea lanes: The Northeast Passage (NEP), running alongside the majority of Russia's and Norway's northern coasts, the Northwest Passage (NWP) running primarily along the North American coast lines, and the Transpolar Sea Route (TSR), which is only navigable using ice breakers and runs along international waters in the Arctic largely avoiding sovereign waters. Mark Serreze from the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) predicted that due to the effects of climate change, the world was on a path to see an ice-free summer in the Arctic by 2030.¹⁸ According to Humpert and Raspotnik, "The TSR represents one of three sea routes that have the potential to transform commercial shipping in the 21st century."¹⁹ The potential for increased traffic along any of these routes would require increased Search and Rescue operations (SAR), shipping recovery, and icebreaking along a

shared international venture. It is noteworthy that the US possesses only two ice breakers, of which only one is operational, while Russia currently operates forty. In June of 2016, Russia launched the world's first nuclear powered ice breaker giving it an overwhelming advantage in the Arctic by increasing its capability to project power throughout the region while the US cannot. As the ice melts, the Arctic will be even more impactful to global security and stability across current GCC boundaries, and it begs the question, "which current command is ultimately responsible in the Arctic?" Russia is prioritizing the Arctic while the US and its allies are merely paying it lip service. As previously stated, ALCOM is responsible for the Arctic but only as a subset of CDRUSNORTHCOM's portfolio of missions which only impacts his portion of the region. A new strategy or an additional GCC does not create more ice breakers but it prioritizes the commander's advocacy for them because his mission requires them instead of the current construct that has them competing against more important things for CDRUSNORTHCOM.

The NATO and DoD position

At its core, United States European Command (USEUCOM) is deeply influenced by its NATO partners and together each advance towards pursuing a shared vision of a peaceful and stable Europe. NATO's most recently published strategic concept reinforces its mutual shared interests and cooperative security while recognizing that the modern security environment calls for "Collective Defense, Crisis Management, and Cooperative Security."²⁰ Shouldn't NATO have an Arctic strategy if the Arctic is part of the modern security environment? The answer resides in a US-led strategy and employment of an Arctic GCC to protect vital interests for both US and NATO just as it does in other AORs today. Only the US, Canada, and Norway have an interest in the Arctic which would explain why there is a lack of interest from the rest of NATO.

In November of 2013, then-Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Chuck Hagel outlined DoD's contribution and efforts to promote "a secure and stable region where U.S. national interests are safeguarded, the U.S. homeland is protected, and nations work cooperatively to address challenges."²¹ Describing the strategic approach, he references the *2011 Unified Command Plan* (UCP) directive, which identified Commander, United States Northern Command (CDRUSNORTHCOM) as responsible for advocating for Arctic capabilities.²² One of CDRUSNORTHCOM's duties is to collaborate and coordinate DoD and other US agencies to "identify and prioritize emerging Arctic capability gaps and requirements."²³

A Unified Combatant Command has "a broad continuing mission under a single commander and composed of significant assigned components of two or more Military Departments that is established and so designated by the President, through the Secretary of Defense with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."²⁴ Additionally, joint forces are usually established along a geographic area, which is the most common method to assign responsibility to a Combatant Commander (CCDR) for continuing assigned operations.²⁵ Doctrine further states that, "unless otherwise directed by SECDEF, when significant operations overlap the boundaries of two GCCs' AORs, a Joint Task Force (JTF) will be formed."²⁶

A sole CCDR leads the efforts as outlined within the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF). He disseminates his vision to the force assigned and its regional allies by maintaining the mission profile for their respective region on behalf of the United States. CDRUSNORTHCOM executes numerous missions of which the Arctic is one. Although it may seem a simplified argument, waiting for the region to reach a state of crisis is not the time to deter Russia or engage allies for solutions.

USNORTHCOM, United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), and USEUCOM have AORs that converge in the Arctic region. United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) also share interest in the region as functional combatant commands tasked with employing the strategic capabilities and special operations activities for the US. Arctic issues subsequently affect each command differently as each has unique and separate issues that do not always prioritize in the same order or level of concern. Currently, there is only advocacy by committee in the Arctic, which is directed by a US national strategy that is focused on peace and stability yet doesn't explain how it will be achieved and maintained.

On June 19, 2015, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report capturing DOD's Arctic planning considerations. The report identifies that USNORTHCOM was in the process of updating its Arctic plans as well as the Commander's Estimate for the Arctic and would continue to conduct the analysis that would aid in determining future capability requirements.²⁷ It continues, "according to Northern Command officials, it may be too early for the command to fully identify the supporting operational requirements given the current state of the Arctic climate and level of activity"²⁸ and that according to its Arctic Strategy, DoD planned to mitigate risks identified in the Arctic "by monitoring the changing Arctic conditions to determine the appropriate timing for capability investments."²⁹ The timing for these identified actions, investments, and capability development is now.

Russian Expansion in the Region

In 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev, then-President of the Soviet Union (USSR), declared the Arctic region an "area of and for peaceful cooperation."³⁰ Under Gorbachev's leadership and through his successor, Boris Yeltsin, the USSR began to work alongside US and NATO allies to

develop a mutually cooperative structure in the Arctic region and an overall “thawing” of post-Cold War relations. These efforts, in large part, contributed to the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996. Since then, Arctic states, as well as those countries that had interest in the region were able to cooperate and coordinate national and geo-political positions without “sabre rattling,” military action, or provocation.

In what was arguably the most significant portion of his strategy, Hagel identified the challenges and risks to the strategic approach: 1) projections about future access to and activity in the Arctic may be inaccurate, 2) fiscal constraints may delay or deny needed investment in Arctic capabilities and may curtail Arctic training and operations, 3) political rhetoric and press reporting about boundary disputes and competition for resources may inflame regional tensions, and 4) being too aggressive in taking steps to address anticipated future security risks may create the conditions of mistrust and miscommunication under which such risks could materialize.³¹

One of the most concerning items in Hagel’s challenges and risks to the strategic approach is this notion of “being too aggressive...creates conditions of mistrust and miscommunication.” The political climate in the Arctic has changed and not for the better and this US position of working to “not upset the Arctic apple cart” has ultimately left Russia unchallenged in the region.

Under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, Russia views this resource-rich region as critical to its long term national security and made the bold step of establishing a presence to protect self-identified interests. Russia has established an Arctic command of its own³² to provide the C2 structure to protect and secure Russian interests in the region. The Russian Northern Joint Strategic Command (NJSC) was established in December 2014, and its sole purpose is to “coordinate military operations in the Arctic theater.”³³ Russia has also operationalized existing installations and has established additional bases in the region to allow

greater access and range for its long-range strategic bombers as well as basing early warning and satellite and intelligence gathering assets in the Arctic. Although returning old bases to an operational status within its own territory is not provocative on the surface, the underlying concern is that Russia took this unprecedented step during the same timeframe that it was directly involved with the destabilization efforts on the Crimean Peninsula.

One of the most tangible aspects of Russian aggression in the region is that it continues the narrative of Russian hegemony similar to what the world has seen with regards to its annexation of Crimea in 2014. Although implicated, Russia has vehemently denied allegations of military involvement and continues to communicate its desire for peace and cooperative security in Europe while providing military equipment and personnel to support anti-Ukrainian government factions. As a result, the US joined with its NATO allies as a participant in Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR). According to USEUCOM, “OAR is a demonstration of continued U.S. commitment to collective security through a series of actions designed to reassure NATO allies and partners of America's dedication to enduring peace and stability in the region in light of the Russian intervention in Ukraine.”³⁴ Russia’s actions have formed distrust from both US and European leaders, none more so than General Phillip Breedlove, CDRUSEUCOM, in 2016, when he stated that “Russia did not share common security objectives with the West.”³⁵

Stopping Russian Arctic expansionism

Countering Russian militarization in the region is critical to protecting US national interests in the Arctic as well as those of its international and NATO partners. First, a fully functional USARCCOM would serve as a counter weight to Russian growth and interests by providing responsive C2 to halt Russian expansion in the region. Second, USARCCOM would lead an international coalition through Joint and Combined operations, similar to Operation

ATLANTIC RESOLVE in the Crimea to thwart Russian aggression. Lastly, with USARCCOM advocating for Arctic issues, it would take necessary steps to ensure the right-sized force, equipped with the required capability, to achieve persistence vigilance and security in the Arctic.

USARCCOM would become the conduit to execute and maintain a US national strategy in concert with a “whole of government” approach for the Arctic and in support of its NATO allies and their interests. Additionally, USARCCOM would breathe life into DoD’s vision of “ensuring security, supporting safety, and promoting defense cooperation” within the region. USARCCOM, instead of multiple layers of coordination with NATO, USPACOM, USNORTHCOM, USEUCOM, and USTRATCOM would serve as the lead US DoD agency with a primary mission of directing, employing, and executing vital US and international security interests in the Arctic. Currently, USNORTHCOM has primary responsibility for the region, but the convergence of issues with four Arctic nations who are a part of NATO also means USEUCOM is implicated and so begins the confusion.

Multiple GCC boundaries converging in one region can be problematic but cooperation has been accomplished before. For example, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan and the force for Operation Unified Protector/Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya were NATO-led missions supported by USCENTCOM and United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), respectively. Precedent has been established for NATO as the lead organization for international operations like these, yet it can be argued that each mission was successful and supportable because it had the backing of a US GCC responsible for the AOR where the operation took place.

Prior to 2007, when USAFRICOM was established, the African continent was assigned to three separate GCCs. After Bush made the decision to establish USAFRICOM, there was a

period of cross coordination amongst US departments to begin staffing for the mission that lay ahead.³⁶ It is unrealistic to think that USARCCOM would become operational overnight. However, the establishment of USARCCOM would likely require a similar time-phased approach, similar to the establishment of USAFRICOM, over a one to two-year period to grow and staff the manpower necessary to reach an Initial Operating Capability (IOC) level prior to assuming the Arctic AOR.

USARCCOM could begin by re-organizing the preponderance of ALCOM to focus on the Arctic mission but would require an adjustment to the GEF as well as new or modifications to US legislation that would provide funding for the force. USARCCOM's structure could be comprised of personnel representing all Joint directorates, similar to other GCC's. In addition, it would require representation from other US Departments like State, Energy, Interior, Homeland Security, as well as enablers from the private energy and environmental sector. It would rely heavily on these experts, advocates, and researchers to provide understanding of the environmental impacts of harvesting natural resources and precious minerals in the region, planning for and developing solutions to deal with the impacts of climate change, and contextual knowledge to assist in developing whole-of-government solutions, in operational design, that support the CCDR's decision making process.

However, with the correct C2 provided by a GCC in the Arctic, the CCDR for USARCCOM would advocate and lead the US effort, alongside its NATO allies as well as other US Government agencies to execute this whole-of-government approach to stopping Russian expansion in the Arctic. With its previously established Arctic Strategy³⁷, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) could appoint an Admiral or Vice Admiral as the CDR or Deputy Commander (DCDR), respectively given the extensive knowledge and expertise that the USCG

cultivates as a service in the region. The USCG has never been assigned a leadership role in GCC's due to serving under DHS during peacetime but the USCG is going to be called upon to do significantly more in support of a USARCCOM. It is for this reason that its leadership is most poised to begin leading the efforts towards the establishment of this GCC with unique requirements and constraints. The USAFRICOM model has two DCDRs; one for military operations and one for civil-military engagement due to the uniqueness of the USAFRICOM mission. The Arctic region represents uniqueness of its own that calls for a whole-of-government solution to a set of complex problems. There is no better way to begin providing a whole-of-government solution to these challenges by assigning a leadership role to a senior leader from the USCG that has extensive knowledge and experience, as a service, in the region.

USARCCOM would play a pivotal role in stopping similar Russian expansion in the Arctic by coordinating with the Joint Staff and US service components to assign and task the right mix of forces, personnel, and equipment to maintain a presence in the Arctic that is second to none. The joint force, with a significant emphasis on its maritime capabilities, would serve to maintain a vigilant presence similar to forces assigned to USPACOM and USAFRICOM by rotating forces through a rotational deployment into the Arctic region. The role that these commands serve within their respective region provides stability and reinforces US commitments within those respective regions to its partnered allied and host countries through diplomacy and engagement. Relationships that USPACOM and USAFRICOM have cultivated with its allies are formed by shared hardship, mutual security cooperation, and an integrated network of intelligence, logistics, and training through rotational forces. It is this type of model that could provide similar opportunities for the Arctic under a new GCC.

Additionally, USARCCOM could assume forces through rotational unit deployments similar to the United States Marine Corps' (USMC) Unit Deployment Program from continental United States (CONUS) based units assigned to I and II Marine Expeditionary Forces (I MEF and II MEF) as well as deploying units from Hawaii. Marine units deploy to US installations on Okinawa, Japan where they train and develop critical operational skills in addition to partnering with Japanese Self Defense Forces (JDSF) for cooperative training and exercises. With a shared vision of peace and stability in the far East, the US and its Pacific allies develop necessary communications, intelligence, logistics, interoperability, and maneuverability of a Joint and Combined force. Although this example is specific to the Pacific region, the Joint force could implement this model with allied Arctic states through the establishment of new deployments of personnel and equipment into the Arctic. These highly trained forces would be the cornerstone of any Combined or Joint military effort, across the Range of Military Operations (ROMO) in the Arctic. US and allied components forward deployed to Arctic states on a rotational basis would serve to deter Russian aggression and maintain the collective security in the Arctic by preventing Russian expansionism.

Re-establishing the balance of power in the Arctic

In order to re-establish the balance of power in the Arctic region, it is imperative USARCCOM serve as the epicenter for synergy between all departments of the United States Government executing regional specific Arctic issues, developing existing bilateral and multilateral alliances, growing and extending exercise involvement with Arctic allies, and leading the efforts of NATO to establish a clear, coherent, and comprehensive strategy for the Arctic.

Over the last approximately twelve years, Russia has openly advocated and adopted its current Arctic strategy, while the United States and NATO's lack of activity have left Russia unchecked in the region. What is currently missing from re-establishing balance in the Arctic is a clear and directed strategy from the United States and just as important, the organization to employ it. Along with a new strategy for the Arctic, USARCCOM, in full cooperation with NATO and other US government agencies, would lead the way in re-establishing the balance of power within the Arctic. Specifically, it would do this by providing the C2 structure and US-led strategy to implement force rotations, maritime patrols, and increased intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) that would contain current Russian aggression and provide a common operational picture in the Arctic. The US DoD cannot "go it alone" in any aspect or in any area of the world, and the Arctic would be no different.

Bilateral and multilateral alliances across the globe make up a significant effort of the DoD strategy as part of the NDS and the GEF. One of the largest multinational exercises, which serves to strengthen ties between the US and its Arctic allies, develops interoperability between foreign nations unified in a common goal towards a peaceful Arctic, yet also serves as a warning through deterrence to the Russians is Exercise COLD RESPONSE. According to Lieutenant General Rune Jakobsen, Commander of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters, the main purpose of Exercise COLD RESPONSE is to train personnel in how to conduct combat operations under cold weather conditions.³⁸ Hosted by the Norwegian Armed Forces since its inception in 2006, throughout multiple locations predominantly in Central Norway's land, air, and territorial waters, Exercise COLD RESPONSE serves to provide an opportunity to partner the US and NATO allies to respond to a scenario where allied forces must counter an aggressive state in the harsh environment that is prevalent during Norwegian winters. The vastness of the Arctic Ocean poses

a challenge to any security force, but as demonstrated in Exercise COLD RESPONSE, the Arctic NATO countries possess a significant maritime capability that could serve alongside US maritime and ISR assets to patrol the regional waters and provide security through persistent presence. This type of combined training with renewed focus signals that NATO is united in maintaining peace and prosperity beyond its international borders and more importantly, won't sit idly by while unchecked aggression dominates the Arctic.

Exercise COLD RESPONSE is a significant step in the right direction, but more must be done. USARCCOM would be capable of taking the lead and focusing the same spirit found in training in exercises like COLD RESPONSE, in addition to a coordinated effort to grow SAR and recovery missions in the Arctic Ocean. Through rotational deployment of forces from forward staged locations within USEUCOM's AOR, a US Arctic GCC could assist and develop a mutual supporting Arctic NATO strategy that is flexible, responsive, and deterrent of aggression in the Arctic and thereby re-establishing the balance of power in the Arctic. The US must build and establish a GCC capable of leading this effort, firmly nested and in support of its national interests and those of its allies.

Providing security and stability for commerce and economic development

A USARCCOM would serve to provide security and stability for international commerce and economic development in the wake of melting polar ice caps, which could further emphasize the viability and future trafficability of identified northern sea shipping lanes. A peaceful and thriving Arctic extension of the international economy cannot be developed and maintained if Russian interests and aggression continue under an atmosphere of suspicion and a climate of military posturing via shadowy influence. A US and NATO presence in the Arctic Region

would serve to protect and sustain freedom of navigation and commerce as it does in other parts of the world.

Today, in the Pacific the US Navy plays a vital role in maintaining a peaceful and stable commercial environment that is the lynch pin for the flow of goods and services. As the guarantor of maritime security, along with its international partners, the US Navy provides around-the-clock vigilance and power projection that is so desperately needed in a region where the majority of the world's goods are made and exported. A similar maritime capability in the Arctic is necessary to provide the type of security and stability, visible in the Pacific, for all that own and operate vessels that would travel along the established and newly formed Arctic routes. USARCCOM could lead a similar effort in the Arctic Circle. It is unlikely and unnecessary to advocate that USARCCOM should have the same amount of resources allocated to it like USPACOM. However, resourcing the Arctic by establishing a GCC that can lead missions through a whole-of-government approach in the region is what is needed. USARCCOM would serve to establish, cultivate, and maintain the security and stability of a changing region as well as re-capturing what President Gorbachev's vision of a "peaceful Arctic" meant for not just the US and its allies but Russia as well.

In 2012, the USMC established its Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D) as a way to increase its operational role as the nation's Expeditionary Force in Readiness. Much like its UDP rotations, MRF-D has served to strengthen US relations and interoperability with the Australian military. The presence of a rotational force in Australia has only served to increase stability and security in a region that continues to see the rise of terrorism, piracy, and an unclear Chinese agenda. A MRF-D like capability echoes the US spirit and intent of mutual cooperation with its Allies, similar to the newly announced USMC rotation in Norway. Arctic States could

base and host a US-led security and stability force in the Arctic in order to offset US fiscal constraints in exchange for an expeditionary force that has the capability and throughput means to project power into the region.

Finally, alongside its NATO allies, US forces would execute a new US Arctic Strategy led by a new US GCC to provide the required security and stability necessary to allow the global community to develop and refine corridors of commerce, transit, resource development, and shipping in the Arctic. A US-led Arctic Strategy that is alliance-wide is necessary because there are many nations, outside of the Arctic States, that have a vested interest in seeing the Arctic as a peaceful option to mitigating the throughput challenges in other strategic chokepoints.

An Argument Against

In SECDEF's challenges and risks to the strategic approach, he eloquently states that, "there is some risk that the perception that the Arctic is being militarized may lead to an 'arms race' mentality that could lead to a breakdown of existing cooperative approaches to shared challenges."³⁹ Many counter arguments exist in advocating for a US Arctic Command. The first is that a new US strategy, which incorporates the creation and employment of an Arctic specific GCC, would create a militarization of the Arctic with Russia on one side and the US and NATO on the other. This would only add to the narrative that the US and Russia are engaged in a new "Cold War" and exacerbate existing tension between the two superpowers, both economic and political. Second, there are many who would argue that during a time of financial constraints, establishing an Arctic Command isn't necessary and costs the US and its allies more treasure that would be better served developing new technologies to counter the perceived effects of climate change. Third, adding another mission to its already wide ranging portfolio as the perceived "world's police force" further burdens the US and the US taxpayer. Fourth, any increase of US

or NATO involvement in the Arctic beyond its current position provokes Russia into further aggression as a result of a perceived threat to its national interests in the Arctic. Finally, the US already has a command that advocates for the Arctic in USNORTHCOM with USEUCOM playing a supporting role and USPACOM on the periphery; adding another GCC is preposterous and unnecessary when a problem does not exist and Arctic advocacy already occurs. Although not limited to these five counter arguments, making the case for a US Arctic Command highlights serious considerations that must lead to a new strategy for the Arctic. These examples have merit and are debatable at any level. However hypothetical, all potential situations should be debated, argued, and picked apart by US leaders and its allies. This debate raises several questions: If advocacy already exists why does the US only possess one icebreaker? What's wrong with ALCOM and USNORTHCOM as they are currently structured? Why does the US need another GCC especially in the Arctic and where are the personnel going to come from? The problem that exists today is that the United States and the international community are waiting idly by until forced to react to a crisis in the region.

Conclusion

In July of 1947, US Diplomat George Kennan penned an article in *Foreign Affairs* titled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct."⁴⁰ The thesis of his article advocated for a policy of containment that would serve as a significant pillar of what is known as the Truman Doctrine. A US policy of containing "Russian expansive tendencies," as Kennan called it, would continue from the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower until the fall of Communism during the early years of Gorge H.W. Bush's presidency. Although the Soviet Union fell in 1989 and the world experienced significant political changes and alliances with the US as the lone world's superpower, Russia has not abandoned its expansive tendencies that Kennan referred to in 1947.

In 2012, during the US Presidential campaign between the Republican candidate, Governor Mitt Romney and incumbent President Barack Obama, Governor Romney repeatedly stated that the greatest threat to US national security was Russia. In response to a moderator's question during one of the US Presidential debates, President Obama made the statement, "Mitt, the 1980's called and they want the foreign policy back."⁴¹ President Obama inadvertently identified the very problem that the US and its allies experience in the Arctic today; the world doesn't take or seem to take the threat of Russian Arctic hegemony seriously. As the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump's administration is faced with a myriad of issues that will come to re-define or reinforce the policies of the United States. Lost in the priority of importance is the rapidly changing geopolitical, economic, and military environment in the Arctic Circle. The DoD Arctic Strategy of 2013 set the stage for current conditions in the Arctic today and reveals the need for a stand-alone organization capable of leading the US and NATO efforts for the Arctic's future. It lacks a policy of containment and makes no mention of how to address the real threat to peace in the Arctic: Russia.

With the increased tensions in Europe, it could be tempting to re-assign responsibility of the Arctic from CDRUSNORTHCOM to CDRUSEUCOM because the mission is so closely related to USEUCOM's role in the region and their expertise in dealing with Russian and related European issues. Implementing a C2 architecture like this does nothing to change the current dynamic, does not address the lack of a clear and inclusive strategy, and simply "kicks the Arctic can down the road" until the US and NATO are forced to respond in knee-jerk fashion.

The US military stands ready to begin a *UDP-like* rotation in support of Arctic operations. The US military's cold weather fighting capability, along with those of its partners, has never been more integrated, mutually understood, and interoperable than today. With US

Marine rotations like the force in Darwin, Australia and Norway, along with other service deployments to regions around the globe; the Joint force is poised and equipped to provide its range of capabilities in support of a peaceful and secure Arctic Circle while reducing the financial burden that would accompany the construction of Arctic bases. There is no need for the US to build Arctic bases when a US-led force is able to project power into the region from established allied locations throughout Canada and Northern Europe. During the height of the Cold War and today, the US Navy maintains the capability to project strategic US assets in defense of its interest and those of its Allies in the Arctic. The recommendation of an expansion in maritime activity to provide for a secure Arctic comes at a time when the US and its Allies must find a way to bring stability to this increasingly accessible frontier. The global commons will continue to expand its reach into and through the Arctic in order to sustain the growth of commerce and to mitigate the impact on known sea chokepoints elsewhere. It is critical for the US, NATO, and the international community to increase investment in SAR capabilities as well as the capabilities to recover and render aid to stranded and distressed vessels operating and transiting through the Arctic high seas.

The world has experienced two major world wars followed by a US/Soviet Union Cold War. The world doesn't need to re-live rising tensions between Russia and the US and NATO that starts another conflict. Russia can still cease aggression and underhanded influence in world affairs and just like any country, it can still pursue its identified natural interests but not at the expense of fleecing the Arctic or by secretly creating unstable foundations for change like it has in the Ukraine.

The US must establish an Arctic Command as a GCC to stop Russian expansion, re-establish the balance of power, and provide long term stability in the Arctic region. The United

States and NATO are currently involved in a new Cold War with Russia. As difficult as that may be to grasp or as provocative a statement as it seems, there is little doubt that the US and its allies can continue operating within the Arctic under the current strategy. The reality is that there is very little standing in the way of Russia and its ability to assert its dominance within the Arctic. What are the consequences of maintaining the current US strategy in the Arctic as the status quo to both NATO and US national interests? Does the current strategy prevent this new Cold War from escalating and what action or event(s) will it take for either the US or NATO to stop Russian aggression in the region? How far must things negatively trend or become before the US takes serious action by creating an organization equipped to handle the myriad of challenges that the Arctic region presents? These are all questions that must be answered and addressed sooner rather than later. There is no better time than now to hit the “reset button” on the US strategy for the Arctic and to establish the DoD organization that will execute such a bold yet necessary step towards the future. It is time for a United States Arctic Command.

End Notes

¹ Peter Ohtnicky, Braden Hisey, and Jessica Todd. *Improving US Posture in the Arctic*. JFQ / issue 67, 4th quarter 2012, 56. Commas are used to separate author names from title. Article titles are in quotation marks, not italicized. Joint Forces Quarterly would also be spelled out and italicized as a publication title. I would check our section in Ch 9 on journal articles for more information as you revise.

² Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. *Declaration on the Protection of Arctic Environment*. Rovaniemi, Finland. June 14, 1991.

³ Ottawa Declaration, *Declaration on Establishment of the Arctic Council*, September, 1996, 1.

⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁵ Security Council of the Russian Federation, *Osnovy gosudarstvennoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Arktike na period do 2020 goda i dalneishuiuperspektivu*, September 18, 2008, Hereafter Osnovy, 2008. (Translated) www.scrf.gov.ru.

⁶ George Bush. National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD)-66/ Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-25, (NSPD-66/HSPD-25), January 9, 2009
<https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-66.htm>

⁷ Barack Obama. *US National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, May 2013, 2. In the endnotes, as I mentioned in comments on your previous draft, author name is first name last name. In the bibliography, this would be the preferred format.

⁸ Ibid, 3.

⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, United States Geological Survey, *90 Billion Barrels of Oil and 1,670 Trillion Cubic Feet of Natural Gas Assessed in the Arctic*. July 23, 2008.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Lars Lindholt. *The Economy of the North. Arctic Natural Resources in a Global Perspective*. 30-31.

¹² Ibid, 31-32.

¹³ Lauren James, Jason Treat, Ryan Williams, Chiqui Esteban, and Chris Combs, “See for Yourself: How Arctic Ice Is Disappearing”, *Nation Geographic Magazine*. January 2016
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2016/01/arctic-ice-shrinking-graphic-environment-text>

¹⁴ United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea

¹⁵ Ibid, 27.

¹⁶ Steven Groves. Accession to the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea Is Unnecessary to Secure U.S. Navigational Rights and Freedoms. *The Heritage Foundation*. August 24, 2011
<http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/accession-the-un-convention-the-law-the-sea-unnecessary-secure-us-navigational>

¹⁷ Malte Humpert and Andreas Raspotnik. *The Arctic Yearbook 2012, The Future of Arctic Shipping Along the Transpolar Sea Route*, 294

¹⁸ John Vidal. “Arctic May Be Ice Free Within 30 Years”, *The Guardian*. July 11, 2011
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/jul/11/arctic-ice-free>

¹⁹ Malte Humpert and Andreas Raspotnik. *The Arctic Yearbook 2012, The Future of Arctic Shipping Along the Transpolar Sea Route*, 299.

²⁰ North American Treaty Organization. *Active Engagement, Modern Defense, Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*. November 2010, 7-8

- ²¹ Chuck Hagel. U.S. Department of Defense. *Arctic Strategy*, November 2013, 1.
- ²² Ibid, 8.
- ²³ Ibid, 8.
- ²⁴ Joint Publication 1, *Joint Publication 1 (JP-1), Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, GL-12
- ²⁵ Ibid, IV-1.
- ²⁶ Ibid, IV-1
- ²⁷ United States Government Accountability Office. GAO-15-566, *Arctic Planning: DOD Expects to Play a Supporting Role to Other Federal Agencies and Has Efforts Under Way to Address Capability Needs and Update Plans*. June 19, 2015, 22-23.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 23.
- ²⁹ Ibid, 24.
- ³⁰ Kristian Åtland. *Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk Initiative, and the De-securitization of Interstate Relations in the Arctic*, “Cooperation and Conflict”. 2008, Vol. 43, No 3, 290. (p. 289-311)
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<http://tass.com/defense/841935>
- ³³ Matthew Bodner. Russia’s Polar Pivot. *Defense News*. March 11, 2015.
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- ³⁷ Robert Papp Jr., United States Coast Guard Arctic Strategy, May 2013.
- ³⁸ Information Folder to participating military forces in Exercise Cold Response, Norwegian Armed Forces, Winter 2016.
<https://forsvaret.no/en/ForsvaretDocuments/Information%20Folder.pdf>
- ³⁹ Chuck Hagel, U.S. Department of Defense. *Arctic Strategy*, November 2013, 13.
- ⁴⁰ George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”, *Foreign Affairs*, 25, No 4, July 1947.
- ⁴¹ US Presidential Debate. C-SPAN. Oct 22, 2012
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