

**Fifth Symposium on the Impacts of an Ice-Diminishing Arctic**  
**Remarks of the Commandant**  
**U.S. Navy Memorial, Washington, D.C.**  
**Tuesday, July 16, 2013**

Good morning! It is great being here today with so many friends and colleagues to talk about the challenges and opportunities our nation faces as an increasingly ice-free arctic emerges.

As many of you know, this is a subject of great interest to me – and of great importance to our Service and our Nation. My interest in this part of the world first began over 30 years ago with my first duty station in the Coast Guard – a 180-foot buoy tender working out of the Aleutian Islands – and it has continued to this day. I’ve visited Alaska every year I’ve been the Commandant, and I’m going back this summer.

When I traveled to Alaska last year, I was accompanied by the Secretary of Homeland Security and Senator Lisa Murkowski from Alaska. We were also joined by Sen. Mary Landrieu from the State of Louisiana. In addition to a testifying at Senate field hearing on Coast Guard operations in the Arctic, I was able to take this group out the Coast Guard Cutter BERTHOLF, which was conducting operations in the Bering Sea, and we also made the trip up to Barrow, 300 miles above the Arctic Circle, to see Coast Guard operations there. It was a terrific trip and we were able to see firsthand this wonderful part of our country – as well as many of the challenges we face.

You may wonder why a Senator from Louisiana would make this trip. It’s certainly a different environment than she is used to her home state on the Gulf of Mexico. Well, as a member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and the Chairwoman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, she understands the national imperative we face in the Arctic. The changing conditions in the Arctic represent some of the most important challenges and opportunities of our times. A newly opening ocean is emerging right before our eyes, bringing with it enormous potential, risks and responsibilities.

The greatness of a Nation can be measured by its commitment to providing mariners safe and secure approaches to and from its coasts and ports. And, a Nation’s prosperity is proportionate to how well it ensures the safe, secure, and

efficient movement of trade and commerce to and from its shores. A great Nation will also strive to ensure the environmental protection of the ocean and coasts.

Wherever human activity takes place, government has a responsibility to uphold the rule of law, ensure the safety and security of its people, and ensure responsible maritime activity. We in the Coast Guard call this “maritime governance.” It is an essential component of the national and homeland security of the United States.

As a maritime Nation, the United States relies on the sea for our prosperity, trade, transportation, and security. For over 200 years our Coast Guard has provided maritime governance protecting those on the sea, protecting America from threats delivered by sea, and protecting the sea itself. Safety, security, and stewardship. These are fundamental principles to all that guide all that the Coast Guard is and does.

I mentioned my history in the region. Well the Coast Guard has a much longer history in the Arctic region. In 1867 the Coast Guard Cutter LINCOLN carried the official U.S. delegation to Alaska for the ceremony transferring the new territory to the United States. Following that ceremony, LINCOLN immediately turned to the business of enforcing our laws, conducting scientific exploration, charting the waters, providing humanitarian assistance, engaging in search and rescue operations, and maintaining a sovereign presence in this vast new territory. It sounds very similar to the work we are still doing today.

The Arctic region is vital to our national interests, economy and security. It is rapidly growing into a navigable sea, attracting increased human activity and unlocking access to vast economic opportunities and energy resources. The economic promise of oil and gas production in the Arctic is increasingly attractive. We have seen a dramatic increase in traffic through the Bering Strait, and well over one million tons of cargo was shipped through the region last year. Alaska represents a cornucopia of mineral riches, including the largest zinc mine in the world. Coal, iron ore, top-quality graphite, gold and silver, and even rare earth minerals are present in abundance. In addition, more than 50% of America’s fish stock comes from the waters off the coast of Alaska, especially in the Bering Sea.

This diminishing ice, growing economic interests and energy demands, and increasing use of the seas for maritime activities by industrial, commercial, native, and recreational users demands a persistent, capable U.S. Coast Guard presence in the Arctic region. Our mandate to ensure maritime safety, security, and stewardship applies in the Arctic just as it applies in the Atlantic and Pacific

Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, or on the Great Lakes. We must be present and prepared to act in the region.

Although we have lived and served in southern Alaska for most of the Coast Guard's existence, our access to and operations in northern Alaska on the North Slope have been only temporary and occasional, with no permanent infrastructure or operating forces along the Beaufort or Chukchi seas. There are no deepwater ports in the U.S. Arctic. However, the acceleration of human activity in the region, the opening of the seas, and the inevitable increase in maritime activity mean increased risks of maritime accidents, including those involving cruise ships; oil spills; illegal fishing and harvesting of other natural resources from U.S. waters; and a host of other threats to our safety, security or sovereignty. Those growing risks demand the Coast Guard's attention and commitment to meet our responsibilities to the Nation.

With so much happening in the Arctic, it is vital that we have clear strategic priorities and goals. In early May the President issued a National Strategy for the Arctic Region, setting the vision and direction for the Nation and committing to integrate the work of Federal departments and agencies with activities already underway at the State, local, and tribal levels. Last month, the United States Coast Guard became the first federal agency to release a strategy that furthers the three lines of effort and guiding principles contained in the National Arctic Strategy and focuses our Service efforts to achieve those goals.

Our strategy document contains three strategic objectives that will guide Coast Guard efforts in the Arctic over the next 10 years. They are:

1. Improving Awareness;
2. Modernizing Governance; and
3. Broadening Partnerships.

Our first strategic objective is simply to better understand the Arctic operating environment, the increase in activity, and the risks and opportunities it presents. This understanding will inform and enable effective Coast Guard presence to identify and address risks as early as possible. We need improved collection, analysis, and sharing of maritime information – which requires a collaborative network of domestic and international partners, drawing upon their cumulative authorities, capabilities and experience.

It also requires presence...persistent presence of the Coast Guard to be able to rapidly detect, prevent, and respond to maritime threats and hazards. This is a

challenge given the distances involved and the often hostile environment – and is further compounded by the lack of shore infrastructure in the remote reaches of the Arctic.

When the Cutter LINCOLN took that first delegation to Alaska, most vessels in Alaskan waters – when they were not under sail – were fueled by coal. These vessels often had to mine their own coal from the veins accessible on the cliffs near Unalaska – because the infrastructure to provide coal supplies to power the ships was not available. Eventually small coal stocks were laid in for the ships that visited these remote areas, and as human activity and presence increased, coal depots were built to provide an even greater ability to sustain those ships providing valuable services, along with more robust shore stations to provide support for the crews.

As human activity in an increasingly ice-diminished arctic increases, we may likewise need to make greater investments in shore infrastructure to support a more robust or continuous operational presence. However, until that time comes, the expense of building permanent infrastructure and the uncertainty of dynamic and evolving requirements counsel that the Coast Guard rely on mobile offshore infrastructure to meet demands. And we are currently building and putting into service some remarkably capable off-shore “infrastructure” – our National Security Cutters. Although they do face limitations operating in a heavy ice environment, these cutters can carry all of the supplies they need to provide a sustained presence, can carry and launch small boats and helicopters to conduct the full range of Coast Guard missions, and can provide a robust suite of communications and intelligence capabilities for effective command and control of operations.

We have tested and proven this approach over the past several years, and that will be our approach for the coming decade.

When I visited the Arctic last August, the Coast Guard and its partners were engaged in Arctic Shield 2012, a 9-month interagency operation consisting of outreach, operations, and assessment of capabilities, including the deployment of a National Security Cutter and two of our ocean going, ice capable buoy tenders. We also surged two helicopters to Barrow, 800 miles from Kodiak and 300 miles above the Arctic Circle. The National Security Cutter BERTHOLF provided us with an effective presence and “off-shore infrastructure” in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas during industry exploratory drilling. These National Security Cutters provide floating maritime governance, in the tradition of LINCOLN and all of the others cutters that have served in Alaska for over a century and a half.

Also, the Nation now has two operational icebreakers to ensure U.S. access to ice-bound waters: HEALY, our medium icebreaker, and POLAR STAR, the world's most powerful non-nuclear heavy icebreaker, which just returned to active service and is currently conducting operations. And, with the support of the Secretary Napolitano, the Administration, and the Congress, we have begun the process of developing and analyzing the requirements to design and build the next generation of heavy icebreaker over the next decade.

For the foreseeable future, the Coast Guard's priority is to employ mobile infrastructure and seasonal presence of cutters, boats, and aircraft—supplemented by the existing shore-side infrastructure—to provide the flexible and adaptable capability needed for Arctic operations.

Our second strategic objective is to modernize governance in the Arctic. We will do this by:

- Leading within the interagency to strengthen international legal regimes;
- Safeguarding the marine environment;
- Preserving living marine resources; and
- Protecting U.S. sovereignty and sovereign rights.

A legally certain and predictable set of rights and obligations to address activity in the Arctic is paramount. The United States must be part of such a legal regime to protect and advance our security, economic, and environmental interests. Unlike Antarctica, the Arctic is governed by multiple legal regimes and forums. Some are evolving and dynamic, such as the work of the Arctic Council. Others aspects, such as the Law of the Sea Convention, are well settled. The United States is the only Arctic Nation that has yet to accede to the Law of the Sea Treaty. We have just over one full session of Congress remaining before the U.S. assumes the Chair of the Arctic Council in 2015. In order to exercise leadership, improve our ability to influence outcomes, and effectively interact with other Arctic Nations, we urgently need the Senate to approve U.S. accession to the treaty as soon as possible.

For the past several years there has been a race by countries other than the United States to file internationally recognized claims on the maritime regions and sea beds of the Arctic. Alaska has more than 1000 miles of coastline above the Arctic Circle on the Beaufort and Chukchi seas. Our territorial waters extend 12 nautical miles from the coast, and the exclusive economic zone extends to 200 nautical miles from shore just as along the rest of the United States coastline. So along the

North Slope, that's more than 200,000 square miles of Arctic water over which the Coast Guard has jurisdiction.

Below the surface, the United States also may assert sovereign rights over natural resources on its continental shelf and the water column out to 200 nautical miles. However, after its accession to the Law of the Sea Convention, the United States will be able to exercise additional sovereign rights over the living and non-living resources on an extended continental shelf, one that may reach as far as 600 nautical miles into the Arctic from the Alaska coast.

While the United States stands by, other nations are moving ahead in perfecting rights over resources on an extended continental shelf. Russia, Canada, Denmark (through Greenland), and Norway—also Arctic nations—have filed extended continental shelf claims under the Law of the Sea Convention that would give them exclusive rights to oil and gas resources, other minerals, and living resources on this shelf. They are making their case publicly in the media, and in construction of vessels to patrol these waters. Even China, which has no borders near the Arctic Ocean, has raised interest by conducting research in the region. The United States should join the Law of the Sea Convention to protect our national security interests: sovereignty, environment, economy, and energy.

Other international legal regimes governing the Arctic are remarkably dynamic and evolving. Two months ago in Sweden, the Arctic Council agreed to expand its membership beyond the eight original Arctic nations to include six new observer states: China, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea. The admission and participation of these non-Arctic nations in the Council demonstrates a clear recognition of the importance of the Arctic to global security and prosperity, and the importance of broader inclusion to develop binding international regimes and standards there.

The Arctic Council adopted a resolution to prepare and coordinate a response to potential spills that could result from increased oil and gas exploration. This joins the earlier agreement by Council members to coordinate search and rescue operations. Both agreements, which were signed by the United States, focus on common risks and interests of member states, and provide the foundation for future coordination on other areas. Canada just assumed the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, and the United States will succeed them in 2015. And we are building on the strength of existing relationships with Canada, Russia, and within the North Pacific and North Atlantic Coast Guard Forums.

The Coast Guard leads the U.S. delegation to the International Maritime Organization, the recognized body for administering international standards and rules governing safety of life at sea, maritime environmental protection, maritime security, and standards for competency of mariners. The IMO continues development of a Polar Code to govern vessel operations, and the Coast Guard is working closely with the Department of State and other Federal agencies on that effort. Together, this evolving and diverse mosaic of international legal regimes demand the United States remains an active leader and participant to ensure our national interests.

Further, the Coast Guard will safeguard the marine environment and preserve living marine resources in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone through persistent Coast Guard operational and law-enforcement presence. We will seek to prevent dangerous or illicit maritime activities through regulation, inspections, and enforcement of standards. If undesirable or unlawful maritime events do occur—whether deliberate or accidental—we will rapidly and effectively respond.

Protecting U.S. sovereignty requires maritime governance. We cannot exercise such governance without effective operational presence. Our third strategic objective is to broaden partnerships. We will do this by:

- Developing and promoting the Coast Guard as an expert and experienced resource for partners;
- Leveraging domestic and international partners as force multipliers; and
- Supporting a national approach for Arctic planning.

While the Coast Guard's Arctic Strategy is focused on our role in the region, the Arctic is not just a Coast Guard issue. It is a national issue requiring a whole-of-government approach: Federal, State, local and tribal governments. . . . and a whole of Nation approach, including private industry, academia, environmental groups, and other non-governmental organizations.

Today there are centers of experience and pockets of expertise among these groups that we must use to build a network of partners. That is essential to achieving the unity of effort necessary to carry out the National Strategy for the Arctic Region. Within the Department of Homeland Security, we are taking a One DHS approach for operations in the region among our components to secure the border, prevent terrorism and lead adaptation to climate change. We are working closely with the Department of Interior, Department of Defense, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, and other Federal agencies.

But we must rely in particular on leadership outside of the Federal government, especially the native Alaskan tribal governments and peoples, and the State of Alaska. And we must work closely with the private sector, including the maritime industry that we are responsible for governing. Again, this requires a whole of Nation approach in planning and activities.

I believe we have a national imperative in the Arctic...driven by an emerging maritime frontier and the promise of opportunity and prosperity . . . as well as risks. We all are called to action to meet that imperative.

For the Coast Guard – and for many of you – it is essential that we work to position ourselves to obtain the capabilities, competencies, and authorities that we need to operate in the Arctic. We need to set a course to be capable of exercising the same missions in the Arctic that we have done in all the waters we have operated in over the past two centuries.

For almost 225 years, we have overseen the safety, security, and stewardship of our Nation’s waters. Our challenge today is to ensure we are prepared with a Coast Guard capable and ready to meet our responsibilities in the Arctic region. There are no shortcuts. We know what it will take. Just like in the 18th and 19th century, we need strong ships . . . and highly trained crews if we are to be true to our Coast Guard motto, *Semper Paratus* (Always Ready).

It is an honor to be here with you, and I look forward to discussing the U.S. Coast Guard’s Arctic Operations and Strategy with you further. Thank you.