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| **Purpose:** Provide remarks at the 7th biennial Symposium on the Impacts of an Ice- Diminishing Arctic co-hosted by US Arctic Research Commission and National Ice Center (Navy, NOAA, & USCG). Media is expected and the event will be webcast.**Audience:** Up to 250 experts (plus an online streaming audience) on Arctic marine operations, the environment, science, policy, law and governance all with an interest in naval and other maritime operations in an “ice-free Arctic.” **The audience will be familiar with Arctic issues and interested in Coast Guard plans and actions for the region (recommend avoid spending limited time on basic scene-setter information).** **Media:** On-the record. Media will be present, and the event will be webcast.**Strategic Objective:** Bolster third-party advocacy **Duration:** 30 minutes. |

**OPENING**

* It’s great to be back! Great to see so many partner agencies and organizations represented here today. Together, we have taken a lot of steps in the right direction these past 2 years (since this group last convened).
* We cannot take our eye of the ball in the Arctic – we have an **obligation** to the citizens of this country to be prepared so that we can ensure our **National Security, assert our Nation's Sovereignty, and protect our National Economic Interests today and into the future**.
* Primarily, the Coast Guard strives to ensure our National security through effective governance. Governance hinges on **Diplomacy and Assured Access**.
* In parallel, prudence demands we incorporate plans to address increasing militarization of the Arctic.
* Let’s focus on Governance first because we have a good news story to tell:

**DIPLOMACY**

* Since we last met, in October of 2015, we established the **Arctic Coast Guard Forum**. It has proven to be even more successful than I imagined. When we first started meeting, we were strangers. Now, all 8 Arctic Nations are cooperating to build a cohesive governance regime in the region.
* And be sure, the value of this forum extends far beyond the confines of the Arctic Circle… **Cooperative partnerships in this space can be used to diffuse strained relationships elsewhere**.
* The issues emerging in the Arctic are too broad for any single entity or single Nation to manage - **readiness requires collaboration**.
* [SAR] Case in point: the Crystal Serenity. Just a few weeks ago, we medevaced an injured passenger off the cruise ship. Fortunately, the ship was only off Yakutat and well within range of our air station in Sitka, but in less than a month she’ll head to New York by way of the NW Passage with 1700 people onboard. Yes, today’s relatively routine medevac will turn into a multi-agency and logistically complex undertaking as the ship’s voyage progresses. Through our cooperative partnerships, we have contingency plans in place, but there are no risk-free scenarios. Consider this – there are just four emergency room hospital beds in Barrow, AK.
	+ Also, we’ve had 4 subsistence fisher deaths this year as Native Alaskans are forced farther off-shore due to receding ice.
* [Resources] And while we have seen low exploration activity in the Alaskan Arctic over the past few years, with an estimated 13% of the world’s undiscovered oil and 30% of the world’s undiscovered natural gas in the region, there are prospects for significant development of Arctic resources over the next 10 years.
	+ **Knowing how quickly the private sector can mobilize... we need to ready ourselves now. Prudence demands it**. The Coast Guard cannot be the ones holding up industry because we are not ready.
	+ Experience tells us a boom in industry will come with gaps in experience, training, competence – especially when we are talking about the dynamic environment of the Arctic – and that means higher risk… risk to the environment and to lives.
* As I’ve indicated, proper governance will require a collaborative approach. In its two years, the **ACGF has proven to be an action oriented body** – we don’t just talk about what could happen – we actively prepare. We’ve executed SAR and Environmental Response exercises like the Arctic Chinook live field SAREX in NW Alaska last summer (2016). We’ve updated data and information sharing protocols… we have a pilot Automated Information exchange System that was furthered during a workshop in Murmansk Russia just this June.
* Finland recently took over the reins of the ACGF and I don’t see the momentum slowing. The next exercise will be in September off Iceland. And in 2018 we have Environmental response exercises and collaboration on innovative solutions on the agenda.
* Beyond the ACGF, another example of where we have seen collaboration is with the port access route study for the Bering Strait. The study was initiative in response to the users need for safe shipping and protection of the marine environment within the region.
	+ First announced in 2010, our outreach included meetings with indigenous peoples’ communities, visits to villages, correspondence with 200+ native village presidents, interviews and announcement in the Federal Register.
	+ The preliminary recommendation is for a voluntary, four mile wide, two-way route from the Bering Strait to Unimak Pass, all within U.S. Territorial waters. This two-way route will segregate deep draft traffic along to keep it separate from commercial fishing and indigenous hunters.
	+ We hope to have this process complete by the end of 2017 along with continued outreach and work with the Russian Federation.
	+ All of these efforts further our goals for global assured access.

**GLOBAL ASSURED ACCESS**

* **Readiness also requires assured access**. Diplomacy and cooperation are empty without the right maritime domain awareness. That includes a fleet of polar icebreakers that can provide assured year-round access. **Assured access is the only way we can effectively respond to threats (man-made or otherwise), facilitate emerging commercial activities (be it fisheries and sea mammal management, resource extraction, shipping, etc.), and enforce our sovereign rights in the EEZ and on the ECS**.
* As for icebreakers, our Nation currently has two that are operational – one heavy and one medium… and the heavy is 40 years old. As Senator Murkowski puts it, “1.5 Icebreakers does not constitute a fleet.” And it is sorely short of our minimum requirements per the high lat study of 3 heavy and 3 medium. I also appreciate the detailed work of the National Academies of Sciences and the expertise they applied to this issue, and I’m pleased to see **yet another credible body validate the urgent need** for more U.S. icebreaking capability. Their report confirms the challenge of maintaining the Polar Star – our only heavy icebreaker in operation – past 2020, and reiterates the urgent need to begin an acquisition program. If we do not recapitalize now, the United States will be without heavy icebreaking capability even as the demand for the capability increases.
	+ Tomorrow, our Acquisitions Directorate will be here to update you on the status of the icebreaker procurements so I won’t belabor it here. But I am extremely grateful for the support we have received from this Administration and Congress.
	+ We are considering every opportunity for cost savings **that doesn’t delay delivery** **or sacrifice mission need**!
* While we move out on the procurement for these critical assets, we’ve also adapted our presence and optempo to improve our MDA as maritime activity in the region continues to increase.
	+ D17 executes operation Arctic Shield annually, to providea **mobile, seasonal, and scalable presence**.
	+ [Kotzubue FOL / partnerships with Alaska Air National Guard]
	+ [CGC MAPLE NW Passage transit as opposed to Panama Canal to CG Yard (support Port Access Route Study (PARS))]
	+ [D17 Tribal Liaison - Clinton Scott]
	+ [Launching a CubeSat Polar Scout next year to detect EPIRBs (3 planned).]

**CLOSING / PRUDENCE**

* When all is said and done, **we are an Arctic Nation and we have important National Security interests in Antarctica as well**.
	+ The recent ice event in Antarctica reminds us of the precarious sea and weather conditions in the Polar Regions. There is now an iceberg the size of Delaware floating off Antarctica… the largest in history… it would take you three hours (if it were on a highway!) to drive across it... And it may still be present in November when cruise ships and research vessels return to the continent creating a perilous situation for mariners.
* Ice patterns and weather are becoming less predictable. And opening oceans and rising sea levels are impacting citizens of our Nation right now. Look at Shishmaref – subject to stronger storm surges and increased flooding. A storm in 2013 eroded 50 feet of the beach overnight. And there are 31 other Alaska Native villages in "imminent danger" because of erosion and flooding. We literally have houses falling into the ocean [see slide]. While there is a range of predicted sea level rise in the U.S. (IPC reports a range from 0.26-0.98m while NOAA projects a range from 0.5-2.5m), the fact remains, we must prepare.
* And, **where there are U.S. waters opening and borders exposed… we have both rights and obligations**. It is the Coast Guard’s intention to secure those rights and meet those obligations. **Prudence demands action now**.
* My **highest priority** for the Arctic is to build a fleet of 3 heavy and 3 medium PIBs that are equipped to respond to our current needs while reserving space, weight, and power to meet future demands. Towards this end, our acquisition work has resulted in over $200M in project efficiencies which has lowered the forecasted costs of the lead heavy icebreaker to a range of $900-$950M and an estimated delivery date of FY2023. It is not lost on me that Russia plans to add two Arctic corvettes to their already impressive fleet. These vessels will be armed with cruise missiles and we expect to see the first by 2020.
* The Coast Guard is moving out to ensure our National security and sovereignty in this region, and I appreciate the efforts of many in this room as we work to raise awareness of these important issues! I hope I’ve left enough time for a few questions….

IF ASKED:

QUESTION: The National Academies of Sciences report regarding **the most cost efficient plan** for a new Coast Guard polar fleet recommended that the Coast Guard build **four heavy icebreakers, in a block buy.** Their notional schedule would commission the **first ship in May 2024 and the second ship in July 2025.** Admiral, what is your opinion of this plan?

ANSWER: As I mentioned previously, I **appreciate** the detailed work of the committee members and applying their expertise to this vital issue of National Security.

I cannot overstate, and we cannot underestimate, the value of assured year-round surface access for national security, to assert our sovereignty and to enhance our maritime domain awareness in the Polar Regions. **The report reiterates this need and the need for** **urgency in beginning an acquisition program**.

Further, the Coast Guard is willing to look at **every opportunity for cost savings *that doesn't sacrifice mission need***. Block buys is one such strategy, but the most pressing need remains moving out… and ensuring the **delivery of our first heavy no later than 2023**.

With respect to the number of vessels recommended… My 41 years of experience has taught me many things. One of those things is that **when it comes to the operation and maintenance of a military asset – it takes 3 to have 1**. To that, the recommendation for 3 heavy and 3 medium icebreakers in the July 2010 High-Latitude Study makes sense.

When all is said and done, the immediate need is to move out on building our Nation’s first new heavy icebreaker – now!

QUESTION: If asked to comment on **Garamendi’s defeated amendment** #94, which would have struck language in section #123 of the FY18 NDAA prohibiting DoD funding for the procurement of an icebreaker vessel.

ANSWER: I am **extremely grateful for the support** we have received from this Administration and Congress. A few weeks ago (28 June) the Senate Armed Service Committee unanimously passed out of committee a provision authored by Senator Sullivan to **authorize the procurement of up to six U.S. Coast Guard polar-class icebreakers** as well as the President himself announced at the USCGA graduation that he would work to get us **“many icebreakers.”**

The **Coast Guard** and **Navy** have established an **Integrated Program Office** (IPO) to rebuild the Nation’s heavy icebreaking capability. This arrangement leverages the expertise of both organizations as we work to accelerate the design and construction of new heavy polar icebreakers.

As a **military service**, the Coast Guard has an **obligation** to the citizens of this country to be prepared so that we can ensure our National Security, assert our Nation’s Sovereignty, and protect our National Economic Interests today and into the future.