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STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

before the

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

on

U.S. POLICY AND POSTURE IN SUPPORT OF ARCTIC READINESS

March 3, 2020

The 2019 DoD Arctic Strategy is anchored in the priorities of the National Defense Strategy (NDS), focusing on great power competition as the principal challenge to long-term U.S. security and prosperity. It describes the Department's desired end-state for the Arctic as "a secure and stable region where U.S. national interests are safeguarded, the U.S. homeland is defended, and nations work cooperatively to address shared challenges."

Strategic competitors are seeking to take advantage of the increasing accessibility of the Arctic to expand their activities in the region. Russia and China are both increasingly active in the region, although in different ways, for different reasons, and with different implications for U.S. national security. Russia's military investments in the Arctic contribute to its territorial defense, but may result in greater operational risk to forces that access the region. China is seeking a role in Arctic governance, despite the fact that it does not have territory claims in the region. There is also a distinct risk that China may repeat the predatory economic behavior in the Arctic that it has exhibited in other regions to further its strategic ambitions.

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DoD's focus, however, is on achieving our defense objectives, rather than seeking to duplicate the capabilities or approaches of our competitors – since doing so plays to their strengths and fails to gain full value from our key advantages. To this end, the DoD Arctic Strategy establishes three defense objectives that guide the Department's approach to addressing strategic competition in the Arctic.

- 1) Defend the homeland;
- 2) Compete when necessary to maintain favorable regional balances of power; and
- 3) Ensure common domains remain free and open.

Competition in the Arctic must be considered in the context of the relationship between the Arctic and key regions identified in the NDS. The Arctic is a potential avenue for expanded great power competition and aggression, since it is located between the two key NDS regions (the Indo-Pacific and Europe) and the U.S. homeland. The Arctic is a region through which the United States may project power to advance favorable balances of power in these key regions. For example, the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap illustrates the close relationship between the Arctic and the regional balance of power in Europe. Furthermore, competitors may be tempted to use malign or coercive activities in the Arctic in an attempt to advance their objectives in other regions.

The Department, both independently and in cooperation with allies and partners, is taking steps to enhance the Joint Force's ability to operate in the Arctic and project power through and beyond the region. For example, we are pursuing enhanced domain awareness, regular exercises and training, interoperable supporting infrastructure, and extreme cold weather resilience with allies and partners. Of special note, our cooperation with Canada through the North American

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Air Defense Command (NORAD), a long-standing bi-national organization, is vital for homeland defense.

More broadly, our network of allies and partners is the cornerstone of the Department's approach to the Arctic region and represents a strategic advantage for the United States, which China and Russia do not possess. Six of the seven other Arctic nations are either NATO Allies or are NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partners. Our allies and partners are highly capable and proficient in the Arctic region's operating conditions, and they share the United States' interest in maintaining and strengthening the international rules-based order – including in the Arctic. Defense cooperation with allies and partners complements broader U.S. Government cooperation in other forums, such as the Arctic Council (which excludes matters related to military and security from its mandate).

The Joint Force must have the proficiency to respond to regional contingencies, both independently and in cooperation with allies and partners. This will require agile and capable forces that are able to conduct operations flexibly in the region. We recognize that this task has implications for the Joint Force's capabilities, given that operations in the harsh Arctic environment place unique demands on the Joint Force.

The Department assesses global posture needs based on strategic priorities, the Joint Force's operational capability needs, and other factors. The Department balances the mission demands of a particular region like the Arctic against other global demands, in a manner consistent with the NDS. In accordance with DoD's Arctic Strategy, and consistent with Section 1752 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020, the Department is assessing infrastructure needs in the Arctic to support operational flexibility and power projection. The Department regularly re-evaluates its capability and infrastructure needs as conditions,

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opportunities, and risks related to U.S. national security evolve. The Department is reviewing potential strategic port sites in the Arctic within the broader context of NDS priorities.

Although the Arctic presents unique challenges to the Department, we believe the Department has the right strategic approach, and a strong network of allies and partners, to navigate the region in an era of strategic competition.

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