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**STATEMENT OF  
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COMMANDER  
UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND  
AND  
NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND**



**BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE – STRATEGIC FORCES**

**13 MAY 2025**

Chairwoman Fischer, Ranking Member King, and distinguished members of the Sub-Committee: I am honored to appear today and to represent the men and women of United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Both commands continue to defend North America through what is arguably the most complicated and rapidly evolving operational environment we have seen. The USNORTHCOM and NORAD operational environment remains diverse and dynamic, ranging from persistent competitor activity in the vicinity of North America to major natural disasters that have impacted millions of Americans. I am proud to report that the service members and civilian federal employees at the heart of every USNORTHCOM and NORAD endeavor have risen to each challenge as they stand their unending watch over our homelands.

USNORTHCOM and NORAD are distinct commands linked by history, collaboration, and a shared commitment to defending North America. USNORTHCOM was established in 2002 as the U.S. geographic combatant command responsible for homeland defense, security cooperation with allies and partners in the command's area of responsibility, and Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) in the continental United States and Alaska. USNORTHCOM is responsible for defending the United States – to include Hawaii and Alaska – from ballistic missile attacks, while the Commander of USNORTHCOM is also designated by the Unified Command Plan as the Department of Defense Advocate for Arctic Capabilities. Finally, in accordance with Presidential Executive Orders issued on 20 January, 2025, USNORTHCOM is rapidly integrating requested military personnel and assets to support the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Customs & Border Protection (USCBP) along the southern border, employing unique military capabilities in all domains, and developing plans for establishing territorial integrity along the southern border. USNORTHCOM's current

mission in support of USCBP is to seal the borders and repel all forms of invasion including mass migration, narcotics trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking, and other criminal activities.

Established in 1958 to counter the threat of Soviet long-range bombers, NORAD is the bi-national U.S. and Canadian command responsible for aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning for North America. For nearly 67 years, the U.S. and Canadian personnel assigned to NORAD have worked side-by-side in a shared commitment to continental defense. Forged through operational experience and a common vision, NORAD consistently demonstrates world-class professional standards while executing its critical defense mission 24 hours a day. Today, NORAD remains the world's only bi-national command, safeguarding the U.S. and Canada while routinely demonstrating seamless interoperability and operational excellence that our competitors can only hope to match.

Together, USNORTHCOM and NORAD's experience, expertise, and dedication to homeland defense are more critical today than ever. Following years of steady investment, our strategic competitors have the means to overcome U.S. advantages provided by our favorable geography and advanced technology. Today, our competitors have the capability and capacity to threaten all of North America with a range of advanced nuclear, conventional, and non-kinetic systems while employing disruptive grey-zone, cyber, and information operations against the United States and our international partners. As part of that effort, competitors have formed strategic relationships that increase their collective ability to challenge U.S. and allied interests around the world with growing disregard of international norms or the sovereignty of nations that challenge their expansionist ambitions. Meanwhile, unprecedented flows of illicit drugs and

human traffic across the U.S. southern border have created a crisis that undermines national security and the safety of citizens and communities across the country.

The dynamic operational environment and evolving threats to North America require USNORTHCOM and NORAD to execute new missions on a moment's notice without sacrificing ongoing operations and future planning. USNORTHCOM and NORAD are fortunate to draw upon decades of shared history and lessons learned to shape the commands' plans and operations, and defending the homelands in the coming years will require forward thinking, advanced capabilities, and a professional workforce with the experience and technical knowledge necessary to plan, resource, and execute the commands' crucial missions in tremendously demanding conditions.

The homeland defense enterprise will continue to rely on realistic planning, targeted investment, and forward-looking policies that ensure the Commands' ability to detect, track, and defeat potential threats in all domains. USNORTHCOM and NORAD are working in close synchronization with each of the commands' interagency, international, and DoD partners to improve shared all-domain awareness, interoperability, and the defeat mechanisms required for a layered all-domain defense capable of deterring and defeating a wide range of threats to critical infrastructure, force projection capability, and our citizens.

As competitor ambitions and capabilities grow, USNORTHCOM and NORAD remain committed to improving all-domain awareness, reinforcing our vital network of allies and partners, and fostering a workforce of skilled and dedicated civilian and military professionals. Each of these focus areas are critical to ensuring the homeland defense enterprise remains ready to deter and defeat any threat to our nations today and well into the future, and both commands

have made significant strides in building the capabilities, networks, and people needed to execute their vital missions.

## **THREATS TO NORTH AMERICA**

The global security environment is growing increasingly volatile, characterized by intensifying competition among major powers and mounting threats to the rules-based international order. Among the myriad developments that are reshaping the strategic environment, three trends are of particular concern to NORAD and USNORTHCOM due to their immediate implications for our Homeland Defense mission.

First, the likelihood of a direct conflict between the United States and one of its four principal adversaries is increasing. While the PRC, Russia, North Korea, and Iran each seek to avoid armed conflict with the United States, their perception of Western decline fosters a growing willingness to challenge the United States on the global stage and increases the risk of miscalculation in a crisis. As Russia's brutal and misguided invasion of Ukraine enters its fourth year, there remain several plausible pathways by which the war could escalate into a direct military conflict with the United States. Similarly, the conflict ignited by Hamas' October 2023 attack on Israel has expanded to encompass much of the Middle East and threatens to embroil the United States in a direct military conflict with Iran and its proxies.

Meanwhile, simmering tensions in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea carry a persistent risk of escalation into armed conflict between China and the United States, with consequences that could span a generation. Finally, Kim Jong Un's public abandonment of peaceful reunification as a national goal and growing assertiveness on the global stage risks sparking renewed conflict on the Korean Peninsula after more than seven decades of uneasy Armistice.

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Second, strategic cooperation between and among our four principal adversaries has grown substantially since the beginning of the Ukraine War, increasing the risk that war with one adversary could quickly expand into war with an enemy coalition. To date, each of these relationships has remained mostly transactional, and none has advanced to the level of a formal military alliance. Nonetheless, these countries' shared perceptions of the West as a global destabilizing force could form the foundation of a wartime partnership. At the center of this concerning dynamic is a rapidly evolving relationship between the United States' two most capable adversaries.

Despite decades of mutual mistrust, Beijing and Moscow seem determined to advance their strategic partnership and military cooperation to counter what they perceive as a persistent U.S. threat to their core security interests. Catalyzed by the onset of a major war, this nascent military cooperation could quickly expand into coordinated military operations that complicate U.S. and allied planning and advance each adversary's ability to threaten North America. We saw glimpses of this enhanced military cooperation last summer when Chinese bomber aircraft deployed to a Russian Arctic airbase and flew a combined patrol with Russian heavy bombers over the Bering Sea.

Such "access transfer" accelerates and extends China's ability to threaten North America in the air domain and raises the specter of coordinated military operations in the event of a strategic conflict. Separately, North Korea's willingness to risk its own troops in support of Russia's war in Ukraine demonstrates the lengths to which these partners are willing to go to advance their strategic positions and defy the Western-led international order. It also raises concerning questions about the quid pro quo that Moscow may offer in return, potentially

including expertise that could accelerate Pyongyang's development of advanced strategic weapons.

Third, each of our adversaries is advancing its ability – and, in some cases, rehearsing its plans – to threaten North America in multiple domains and from multiple vectors, increasing the likelihood that an armed conflict would include direct strikes on the Homeland. The PRC is expanding its ability to hold portions of North America at risk with conventionally armed weapons, providing Beijing a strike option against our Homeland that is above its demonstrated robust cyberattack capabilities but below its threshold for nuclear use. Last July, Chinese surface combatants deployed to the Bering Sea for the fourth straight year and operated within cruise missile range of critical infrastructure throughout Alaska. Since 2023, China has launched two hulls of its new Shang III class of nuclear-powered guided-missile submarines (SSGN), which in the coming years could provide Beijing a clandestine land-attack option against critical infrastructure in Alaska and the U.S. West Coast. In November, China incorporated air-refuellable H-6N medium bombers into a Sino-Russian combined bomber patrol, marking the first long-range use of a platform that will extend the PLA Air Force's strike range to include portions of Alaska even without basing or overflight permissions from the Russians. Finally, China may be exploring the development of conventionally armed ICBMs that could allow Beijing to strike targets in Alaska and the continental United States without crossing the nuclear threshold.

Meanwhile, China is advancing the quantity and sophistication of its North America-threatening nuclear deliver platforms. Chinese missile developers are probably developing nuclear-armed ICBMs equipped with hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs) or the ability to fly a fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS) trajectory that approaches North America from

the south rather than the traditional northerly vector for which our legacy early warning radars were designed. Such systems, if fielded, would erode strategic stability by degrading our ability to provide granular and actionable warning of an inbound attack.

Despite the degradation of its warfighting capabilities in Ukraine, Russia has enhanced its already formidable capability to threaten North America with conventionally armed air- and sea-based cruise missiles. Three years of strike operations into Ukraine have provided valuable operational experience to Russian aircrews and naval forces. In the last year, Russia's heavy bomber fleet has resumed its pre-war pace of strategic deterrence patrols – including multiple flights along the North American coastline – while simultaneously intensifying its strike operations into Ukraine. In the maritime domain, the Russian submarine force conducted its first port call in Cuba since the Cold War and further integrated advanced Severodvinsk-class SSGNs into the Russian Pacific Fleet, portending regular – and potentially concurrent – patrols by cruise missile-capable submarines off North America's Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

In the nuclear domain, Russia fielded the world's first HGV-equipped ICBM over five years ago and continues to develop and test other novel nuclear delivery systems, like the FOBS-capable Sarmat heavy ICBM, the Poseidon transoceanic torpedo, and the Burevestnik nuclear-propelled cruise missile. If fielded, these advanced weapons will severely challenge our ability to detect and characterize an inbound attack and determine an appropriate response during a conflict.

North Korea continues to defy the international nonproliferation regime and advance its strategic weapons program. Kim Jong Un's newest ICBM – the Hwasong-19 he first tested last October – probably can deliver a nuclear payload to targets throughout North America while minimizing our ability to provide pre-launch warning due to the shortened launch preparation

timelines afforded by its solid-propellant design. Regime rhetoric surrounding the new ICBM suggests Kim is eager to transition his strategic weapons program from research and development to serial production and fielding, a process that could rapidly expand North Korea's inventory and narrow my confidence in USNORTHCOM's ballistic missile defense capacity in the coming years.

Finally, Iran retains the capability to strike the United States in the cyber domain and through its asymmetric and proxy operations. Meanwhile, Iran's burgeoning nuclear energy and space launch programs provide a viable pathway for developing a North America-threatening ICBM should its leaders determine that they need a more forceful means of challenging the United States.

Separately, we face a variety of non-traditional threats that could disrupt critical services in the Homeland and degrade NORAD and USNORTHCOM's ability to carry out our no-fail missions. Key among these is a spate of activity over the past year involving small uncrewed aircraft systems (sUAS) operating over sensitive DoD installations and other Defense Critical Infrastructure. While much of this activity may be attributable to hobbyists, peer adversaries clearly have incentive to collect intelligence on these installations, and our law enforcement partners have uncovered evidence of a foreign intelligence nexus in some of these incidents.

Meanwhile, our principal adversaries are concentrating their increasingly sophisticated offensive cyberoperations on U.S. defense and civilian infrastructure. Over the last year, Russian-affiliated cyber actors have conducted attacks on water supply, wastewater, hydroelectric, and energy facilities in the United States, while PRC-sponsored cyber actors have positioned themselves on IT networks in multiple U.S. sectors, potentially enabling them to rapidly transition to disruptive attacks in the event of a crisis or conflict.

Finally, I remain highly concerned by threats presented by non-state actors.

USNORTHCOM assesses the threat of a foreign terrorist attack in North America is at the highest level in at least five years, as the Israel-Hamas conflict has motivated foreign terrorist organizations to rejuvenate their attack planning against the United States. These groups have also redoubled their propaganda efforts in the last 18 months to inspire lone-wolf terrorists to pursue attacks within the Homeland, as seen with the deadly January 1<sup>st</sup> 2025 attack in New Orleans.

Separately, transnational criminal organizations based in Mexico continue to threaten U.S. sovereignty and territorial integrity through the production and trafficking of fentanyl and other dangerous drugs and the facilitation of unlawful mass migration toward the U.S. southern border. Drug-related violence has escalated in recent years as rival cartels fight for control of lucrative drug and human trafficking routes and demonstrate a growing willingness to directly engage Mexican security forces, increasing the risk of spillover violence into the United States.

## **DEFENDING THE HOMELAND**

Homeland defense remains USNORTHCOM and NORAD's top priority and essential task. Strategic competitors continue their rapid testing and fielding of precision weapons systems capable of striking targets well into the U.S and Canadian interior. As those threats increase, USNORTHCOM and NORAD are tasked with defending critical defense infrastructure in the homeland from attack in order to preserve U.S. force projection capability and mitigating risks to vital transportation, energy, and manufacturing hubs. Addressing threats from long-range missiles, cyberattacks, and unmanned aerial systems requires close coordination and collaboration with a host of interagency, international, and DoD partners, and USNORTHCOM

and NORAD are ideally situated to serve as the synchronizer and integrator for that crucial whole-of-government enterprise.

Over the course of the last year, USNORTHCOM and NORAD have expanded on already robust efforts to improve the capability of the Joint Force and the interagency community to defend key sites – from military installations to civilian transportation and energy nodes – from attack. That effort is making significant progress thanks in large part to the expertise, cooperation, and commitment of our DoD and interagency partners. As this critical effort moves forward, success will depend on collaboration across the interagency community, as well as on developing the forward-looking capabilities and policies necessary to ensure a seamless and well-coordinated defensive enterprise that accounts for the unique requirements of conducting defensive operations inside the United States and Canada.

In the event of combat operations or attacks against the United States, USNORTHCOM will have a role in protecting DoD installations – along with airports, seaports, rail networks, and highway infrastructure necessary to project forces into overseas geographic combatant commands – from both kinetic and cyber threats. USNORTHCOM is actively engaged with the whole-of-government enterprise involved in this nationwide effort to refine the plans and deployable, low-collateral capabilities required to mitigate the wide range of threats to these key sites inside the United States.

### **Protecting Territorial Integrity**

Following the January 20, 2025 Presidential declaration of a national emergency on the U.S. southern border, USNORTHCOM was assigned amplified responsibilities for maintaining the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the United States. In accordance with Presidential Executive Orders and Department directives, USNORTHCOM immediately deployed 1,800

military personnel, aircraft, and equipment to the southern border to reinforce existing federal border security operations in support of US Customs & Border Protection (USCBP).

Meanwhile, the command is preparing a Commander's estimate and a detailed contingency plan (CONPLAN), in accordance with Presidential Executive Orders and Department directives, to provide steady-state border security in accordance with the pending update to the Unified Campaign Plan (UCP) directed by the President. USNORTHCOM's priority is to meet the requirement and intent of these directives, and the command's actions and plans reflect the urgency associated with the President's emergency declaration.

### **Defending Against Air and Missile Threats**

The DPRK continues to test increasingly capable ICBMs, while Russia and the PRC have steadily expanded their stockpiles of highly capable long-range land-attack cruise missiles and the fleets of the delivery platforms that launch them. The risks to the homeland posed by nuclear-armed ICBMs are clear, while advanced PRC and Russian cruise missiles are difficult to detect and can carry both nuclear and conventional payloads. All of these weapons can be launched against the United States and Canada in an effort to degrade the infrastructure enabling U.S. military force projection, inflict economic harm, and weaken public support for U.S. intervention in overseas conflicts.

As air and missile threats to the homeland will continue to mount, USNORTHCOM and NORAD are taking immediate actions to implement the January 27, 2025 Executive Order directing the building of a Missile Defense Shield for North America. USNORTHCOM and NORAD envision this defensive system of systems as three overlapping defensive domes that will provide a continental all-domain awareness network directly linked to tailored defensive systems capable of defeating threats ranging from high-altitude ballistic missiles to lower-flying

air-breathing threats, including cruise missiles and unmanned aerial systems. These systems threaten all of North America, and the commands are working closely with Canadian allies to ensure a fully integrated approach to continental defense.

As the foundational dome, improved domain awareness from the seafloor to space remains the most critical priority for deterring and defeating missile threats to the homeland. USNORTHCOM and NORAD are working closely with the U.S. Air Force, which has been tasked as the executive agent for air-and cruise-missile defense of the homeland to identify potential solutions to domain awareness challenges. It is vital that the domain awareness network provide the ability to detect, discriminate, and deliver crucial real-time information and a single common operational picture to leaders at all appropriate levels. Command modernization initiatives, including the establishment of a layered system of sensors such as space-based Airborne Moving Target Indicator (AMTI), Over-the-Horizon Radar (OTHR), the E-7 Wedgetail, and Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS), remain critical to continental defense in order to detect, track, and prosecute adversary submarines, aircraft and surface vessels, as well as inbound missiles.

In the next tier, USNORTHCOM will continue to defend the United States – to include Alaska and Hawaii – attacks from ballistic missiles as well as emerging threat systems. In the near-term, the current U.S. ground-based midcourse defense system has a long record of success and remains fully capable of defending against a potential DPRK missile attack. However the DPRK’s demonstration of larger and more capable ICBM technology will require a corresponding increase in U.S. BMD capability beyond planned inventories. The on-time fielding of the Next-Generation Interceptor (NGI) remains a major USNORTHCOM priority, and I am working closely with the Missile Defense Agency and the Department to ensure that

program remains on track. Looking forward, the United States and Canada must develop the capability to detect, track, and defeat emerging adversary systems, to include ICBMs armed with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs), and fractional orbital bombardment systems (FOBS).

The final tier will defend against air-breathing threats, to include unmanned aerial systems, threat aircraft, advanced land-attack cruise missiles, and hypersonic cruise missiles designed to challenge U.S. homeland defense systems from lower altitudes. To ensure effectiveness, the three nodes must be resilient, interconnected, and tailored to defeat specific threats, and developing these defenses and associated policy guidance that reflect the complex strategic environment and the reality of a homeland at risk will be critical in the coming years. I have every confidence in our collective ability to overcome these challenges and remain fully committed to collaboration with the Department, international allies, industry partners, and this Committee in pursuit of that critical goal.

#### **OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE (ONE)**

While some of the capabilities required for comprehensive air and missile defense of the homeland remain in development, Operation NOBLE EAGLE (ONE) and NORAD's aerospace control mission have secured North American airspace for decades, adapting constantly to ever-evolving threats including Russian – and now PRC – bombers, violent extremist threats to civilian aviation, and advanced cruise missiles launched from the air and sea. NORAD's ability to adapt to and outpace emerging challenges is a cornerstone of the command's longstanding reputation as a pillar of continental defense.

The threats to North American airspace have steadily grown more complex, and now include a spectrum of competitor capabilities that range from modernized long-range bombers

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and hypersonic cruise missiles down to small unmanned systems that can fit into a backpack.

While two decades of whole-of-government response have reduced the threat of terrorist threats to civil aircraft, NORAD maintains the ability to deter and defeat nation-state threats from every avenue of approach to North America while safeguarding national leaders from aerial threats, both in the National Capital Region and around the country.

Given the evolving security environment and robust mitigation efforts carried out by interagency partners, NORAD, in cooperation with the Department and the National Guard Bureau, will make specific changes to “just in case” aerospace control alert forces (ACA-1) this year and is conducting ongoing analysis of “just in time” flexible response capabilities (ACA-2). Such adjustments will allow NORAD to optimize protection of prioritized Defense Critical Infrastructure while maintaining adequate national response capability in support of civilian air traffic. In turn, the Air Force and the Air National Guard will be able to generate greater readiness against high-end threats through enhanced campaigning and training while remaining available to NORAD when indications and warning triggers are met.

I am grateful to the Committee for your support for these key USNORTHCOM and NORAD priorities, as we work to identify effective and affordable capabilities that will meet this important challenge now and well into the future. The same can be said of our Canadian partners, as the Government of Canada has committed to fielding long-range sensors and weapons system to deter and defeat potential air, sea, and missile threats in the approaches to North America. Integration and collaboration with Canada – through NORAD and in broader continental defense initiatives – will grow even more necessary as our competitor field greater numbers of increasingly advanced long-range cruise missiles.

## **Countering Unmanned Aerial Systems**

There is perhaps no better example of the rapidly evolving strategic environment than the emergence of small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) as a threat to infrastructure and personnel in the homeland. The availability and utility of small drones has grown exponentially over the last decade, and some have repeatedly employed these systems for illicit purposes. While U.S. and coalition forces overseas have faced the threat of weaponized unmanned systems for years, small drones have emerged as a significant risk to infrastructure and safety in the United States in a relatively short period of time. The widespread availability of small drones, coupled with a complicated regulatory structure and limitations on UAS countermeasures based on concerns for flight safety and privacy, has created significant vulnerabilities that have been exploited by known and unknown actors.

There have been multiple incursions by UAS over military installations in the United States over the past year. To mitigate the potential threats to safety and security presented by UAS overflight of DoD facilities, USNORTHCOM and NORAD, in close coordination with the military Services and DoD, resourced equipment and analytic tools to installation commanders to assist with detection, tracking, and mitigation of potential UAS threats. In November 2024, then-Secretary of Defense Austin directed USNORTHCOM to serve as the synchronizer, integrator, and/or coordinator of domestic counter-small UAS (C-sUAS) activities within the continental United States and Alaska for DoD and, when requested and approved, for the interagency. USNORTHCOM will play a critical role in an enduring whole-of-government effort to protect people, infrastructure, aircraft, and facilities from malign sUAS incursions. This effort will require investment in robust and evolving mitigation technologies suitable for use in

the United States, alignment with interagency and industry partners, and policy and statutory changes that balance safety, privacy, and defensive requirements.

In October 2024, USNORTHCOM and NORAD were proud to host Demonstration FALCON PEAK 25.1, which brought together DoD, interagency, and industry partners seeking to demonstrate counter-sUAS sensors and defeat mechanisms. Thanks to extraordinary support from the U.S. Army's 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Colorado National Guard, and many others, demonstration participants tracked and engaged live sUAS targets in complex, realistic scenarios over a number of days and nights within military Special Use Airspace. The demonstration provided important insights that the Commands and our partners will continue to build on, including during FALCON PEAK 25.2, which will include a larger slate of vendors, participants, and systems in August 2025, meeting FY25 National Defense Authorization Act direction.

In recognition of the sUAS threat and the Commands' increased responsibilities, USNORTHCOM and NORAD have shifted resources and personnel to establish a C-UAS operations branch within our headquarters. This Committee has long been aware of the potential threat presented by sUAS, and I would like to extend my appreciation for your ongoing support for C-UAS research and acquisitions. That support will remain critical as success in the homeland C-sUAS mission will depend on improved C-UAS technology, interagency collaboration, and corresponding authorities and resourcing for the mission to defend against this significant risk to safety and security.

### **Cyber Domain Roles and Responses**

Threats to civil and military infrastructure are a direct and constant concern for USNORTHCOM and NORAD. While not directly responsible for the defense of non-

USNORTHCOM networks, cyberattacks against U.S. and Canadian infrastructure carry the potential to negatively impact DoD force projection and could require significant defense support to civil authorities to mitigate the consequences of a damaging cyberattack against transportation, energy, or economic networks.

Any direct action against the United States by a major competitor would almost certainly involve cyberattacks against strategic North American infrastructure, and USNORTHCOM collaborates daily with U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and any number of other intergovernmental partners to deter, defend, and – if necessary – respond to cyberattacks.

### **Defense Operations in the Arctic**

Defending North America is inherently linked to the ability of the Joint Force to operate effectively across the entire USNORTHCOM area of responsibility – to include the Arctic. Russia is expanding its capability and capacity to conduct military operations in the Arctic, seeking to control access to northern sea lanes and threaten North America from the northern approaches. In 2024, Russian and PRC aircraft and surface vessels conducted joint patrols in the Bering Sea, while the PRC repeatedly deployed dual-purpose vessels into the Arctic as part of a longstanding effort to expand the ability of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to conduct multi-domain operations in the high north.

Arctic responsibilities are shared across multiple geographic and functional combatant commands, and as competition in the region increases, safeguarding Arctic access and freedom of maneuver will depend on Joint Force Arctic operational capabilities and build on the already strong ties between Arctic partners. USNORTHCOM places enormous value on the ability to

conduct operations and exercises in the high north and to execute assigned missions in coordination with fellow combatant commands.

The annual ARCTIC EDGE exercise is a key example of a USNORTHCOM event that evaluates combatant command planning, communications, and operational oversight while simultaneously providing warfighters and enablers with valuable operational experience as they test the people, equipment, and logistics trains needed to execute their missions in remote and austere locations. Regular exercises and real-world operations in the Arctic remain critically important and generate valuable lessons learned for participants from the combatant command and components headquarters down to the operational and tactical levels. Effective operations in the Arctic require specialized training and equipment under the best of conditions, and there is no substitute for real-world experience in the region. USNORTHCOM and NORAD will continue to advocate for designated Arctic units that are specifically trained and equipped to execute their assigned missions in all conditions.

As inter-reliance between allies and partners grows increasingly vital to ensuring a secure and open Arctic, USNORTHCOM and NORAD gain strength and capability from our military partnerships. In particular, the Canadian Armed Forces' expertise in Arctic operations and the Government of Canada's longstanding commitment to Arctic security are of enormous value to continental defense. Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy (CAFP), announced in December 2024, clearly recognizes the significance of Russia-PRC collaboration in the Arctic as well as the vast importance of the North American Arctic to both the United States and Canada.

This policy will directly support NORAD through international diplomatic engagement and a series of important Canadian defense investments that will strengthen shared continental defense capabilities. The extraordinary value of the U.S.-Canadian defense relationship has

proven itself time and again over the course of six decades, and I have every confidence that the the strategic vision and commitment to North American defense articulated in the CAFP, when resourced, will pay dividends for the defense of North America for many years to come.

## **SECURITY COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS**

USNORTHCOM's regional security cooperation relationships remain a critical element of the command's missions. USNORTHCOM's military partnerships with Canada, Mexico, and The Bahamas enhance our own homeland defense while building the capacity of those partners to operate and communicate with U.S. forces. Those relationships are vital to countering competitor influence and presence in the Western Hemisphere while improving intelligence sharing, border security, and domain awareness.

Decades of information sharing, combined exercises, and routine direct engagement between USNORTHCOM senior leaders and our Canadian, Mexican, and Bahamian military counterparts has brought North American defense cooperation to a historic high point. The bilateral and multilateral ties between our militaries will be of critical importance over the next 18 months as the United States, Mexico, and Canada prepare to host the FIFA World Cup in the summer of 2026. USNORTHCOM's capacity to synchronize interagency and international partners will be crucial to ensuring the safety and security of this quadrennial global tournament. That work – which will involve dozens of military, intelligence community, and law-enforcement partners from all three host nations – is already well underway and will grow in scope and scale through the end of the competition.

In the meantime, USNORTHCOM's routine engagements and exercises with our regional partners have produced operational capability with direct benefits for the defense of North America. In 2024, as a Russian Navy surface action group (SAG) transited the Atlantic

Ocean, USNORTHCOM, NORAD, the Canadian Armed Forces, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Southern Command maintained constant common situational awareness of the SAG's location, while executing seamless operations across multiple international and combatant command boundaries. The execution of this mission was the direct result of the close ties between USNORTHCOM and our international and cross-command partners and demonstrated a degree of commonality and interoperability that our competitors are years from being able to match.

Building our partners' ability to operate with U.S. forces has led directly to improved regional domain awareness, information sharing, and cooperation against shared security challenges, especially given the efforts of peer competitors to gain influence with the United States' nearest neighbors. USNORTHCOM's dedicated efforts to support our partners' defense requirements over the years have played an important role in maintaining the United States as the clear partner of choice while simultaneously improving our partners' capability and capacity for addressing internal security challenges. USNORTHCOM remains committed to these essential relationships.

#### **DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES (DSCA)**

USNORTHCOM's support to civilian federal agencies in times of need stands as the command's most visible mission to American citizens. Operating in support of a lead federal agency, USNORTHCOM leverages the command's expertise in planning, synchronization, and operations to prepare for, assess, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents. In 2024, USNORTHCOM provided air assets and ground forces to fight major wildfires in the western United States, to include the recent fires in Los Angeles; delivered relief to Americans in need following major hurricanes and flooding along the Atlantic coast; supported federal law

enforcement in securing National Special Security Events (NSSE) ; reinforced federal counter-drug efforts; and augmented USCBP border operations.

USNORTHCOM is proud to support each federal partner, and delivering relief to American citizens exercises the same planning, operations, and communications mechanisms required to conduct homeland defense operations during periods of crisis and conflict. Drawing on the Command's expertise, specialized capabilities, and robust interagency networks, USNORTHCOM supports the vital missions of U.S. federal law enforcement partners as they safeguard U.S. borders and citizens by leveraging the command's specialized intelligence collection capabilities abroad.

Those capabilities also allow USNORTHCOM to play an increasing role in illuminating the illicit networks used by criminal cartels to move money, human traffic, and illegal drugs. The narcotics smuggled into the United States by transnational criminal organizations are directly responsible for tens of thousands of deaths each year, and USNORTHCOM welcomes the opportunity to assist partners in reducing the flow of illicit drugs into the United States.

In the aftermath of the catastrophic flooding that struck eastern North Carolina in October 2024, USNORTHCOM supported the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with ground forces and aviation assets for search and rescue, delivery of relief supplies, route clearance, and other key missions that directly assisted residents of the affected areas. I want to specifically recognize the extraordinary response of leaders and Soldiers from the U.S. Army's XVIII Airborne Corps, to include units from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Thanks to their readiness, skill, and devotion to their mission, every USNORTHCOM request for forces was executed well ahead of required timelines and enabled an extraordinary response to a historic disaster. While there were certainly lessons learned for an even more

effective response in future contingencies, I am extremely proud of the work done by USNORTHCOM, U.S. Army North, and the deployed U.S. Army units whose incredible efforts helped so many Americans in need.

A similar level of support from across the Department enabled USNORTHCOM to augment U.S. Secret Service (USSS) protection of the major presidential and vice-presidential candidates during the last several months of the 2024 presidential campaign. In response to a USSS request for assistance following the attempted assassination of President Trump, USNORTHCOM, in concert with the Joint Staff and the military Services, provided explosive ordinance technicians, military working dog teams, and rotary-wing assets to ensure the safety and security of the candidates at nearly 200 locations. Successfully deploying dozens of highly specialized security teams to hundreds of event sites was a testament to the professional planners and operators involved with the mission, and I am proud of USNORTHCOM's support for this critical effort.

## **CONCLUSION**

I am honored and privileged to lead the men and women of USNORTHCOM and NORAD. I thank our service members and civilian employees for their efforts while executing our noble mission of defending the United States and Canada as both commands continue to expand our bi-national, whole-of-government, continental approach to homeland defense. I appreciate the critical role Congress plays in ensuring our service members remain ready to defend our homeland now and in the future, and I look forward to continued collaboration with all of our critical partners in defending our great nations.

*We Have the Watch*