





THE WHITE HOUSE

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We in the lower forty-eight and Hawaii join Alaska's residents in recognizing one simple truth that the Arctic is an amazing place.

The Arctic is one of our planet's last great frontiers. Our pioneering spirit is naturally drawn to this region, for the economic opportunities it presents and in recognition of the need to protect and conserve this unique, valuable, and changing environment. As we consider how to make the most of the emerging economic opportunities in the region, we recognize that we must exercise responsible stewardship, using an integrated management approach and making decisions based on the best available information, with the aim of promoting healthy, sustainable, and resilient ecosystems over the long term.

The Arctic region is peaceful, stable, and free of conflict. The United States and its Arctic allies and partners seek to sustain this spirit of trust, cooperation and collaboration, both internationally and domestically. Together, we have made much progress on issues of common concern, such as search and rescue, and pollution prevention and response. Working together, we will continue to increase our understanding of the region through scientific research and traditional knowledge.

Through the National Strategy for the Arctic Region, we articulate our strategic priorities to position the United States to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. We will seek to prioritize and effectively integrate the work of Federal departments and agencies with activities that are already underway in the State of Alaska and at the international level. And we will partner with the State of Alaska and Alaska Natives, as well as the international community and the private sector, to develop innovative solutions and new ways of operating.

The Arctic is changing. We must proceed, cognizant of what we must do now, and consistent with our principles and goals for the future.

**NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE ARCTIC REGION**

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## **Executive Summary**

- **Make Decisions Using the Best Available Information** – Across all lines of effort, decisions need to be based on the most current science and traditional knowledge.<sup>2</sup>
- **Pursue Innovative Arrangements** – Foster partnerships with the State of Alaska, Arctic states, other international partners, and the private sector to more efficiently develop, resource, and manage capabilities, where appropriate and feasible, to better advance our strategic priorities in this austere fiscal environment.
- **Consult and Coordinate with Alaska Natives** – Engage in a consultation process with Alaska Natives, recognizing tribal governments’ unique legal relationship with the United States and providing for meaningful and timely opportunity to inform Federal policy affecting Alaskan Native communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Traditional knowledge refers to a body of evolving practical knowledge based on observations and personal experience of

## Introduction

We seek an Arctic region that is stable and free of conflict, where nations act responsibly in a spirit of trust and cooperation, and where economic and energy resources are developed in a sustainable manner that also respects the fragile environment and the interests and cultures of indigenous peoples.

As the United States addresses these opportunities and challenges, we will be guided by our central interests in the Arctic region, which include providing for the security of the United States; protecting the free flow of resources and commerce; protecting the environment; addressing the needs of indigenous communities; and enabling scientific research. In protecting these interests, we draw from our long-standing policy and approach to the global maritime spaces in the 20th century, including freedom of navigation and overflight and other internationally lawful uses of the sea and airspace related to these freedoms; security on the oceans; maintaining strong relationships with allies and partners; and peaceful resolution of disputes without coercion.

To achieve this vision, the United States is establishing an overarching national approach to advance national security interests, pursue responsible stewardship of this precious and unique region, and serve as a basis for cooperation with other Arctic states.

## ***Structure of the Strategy***

Through this \_\_\_\_\_ we seek to guide, prioritize, and synchronize efforts to protect U.S. national and homeland security interests, promote responsible stewardship, and foster international cooperation.

This strategy articulates three priority lines of effort. It also identifies guiding principles as a foundation for Arctic region activities. Through a deliberate emphasis on the priority lines of effort and objectives, it aims to achieve a national unity of effort that is consistent with our domestic and international legal rights, obligations, and commitments and that is well coordinated with our Arctic neighbors and the international community. These lines of effort identify common themes where specific emphasis and activities will be focused to ensure that strategic priorities are met. The three lines of effort, as well as the guiding principles are meant to be acted upon as a coherent whole.

## **Changing Conditions**

While the Arctic region has experienced warming and cooling cycles over millennia, the current warming trend is unlike anything previously recorded. The reduction in sea ice has been dramatic, abrupt, and unrelenting. The dense, multi-year ice is giving way to thin layers of seasonal ice, making more of the region navigable year-round. Scientific estimates of technically recoverable conventional oil and gas resources north of the Arctic Circle total approximately 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil and 30 percent of the world's undiscovered gas deposits, as well as vast quantities of mineral resources, including rare earth elements, iron ore, and nickel.<sup>4</sup> These estimates have inspired fresh ideas for commercial initiatives and infrastructure development in the region. As portions of the Arctic Ocean become more navigable, there is increasing interest in the viability of the Northern Sea Route and other potential routes, including the Northwest Passage, as well as in development of Arctic resources.

For all of the opportunities emerging with the increasing accessibility and economic and strategic interests in the Arctic, the opening and rapid development of the Arctic region presents very real challenges. On the environmental front, reduced sea ice is having an immediate impact on indigenous populations as well as on fish and wildlife. Moreover, there may be potentially profound environmental consequences of continued ocean warming and Arctic ice melt. These consequences include altering the climate of lower latitudes, risking the stability of Greenland's ice sheet, and accelerating the thawing of the Arctic permafrost in which large quantities of methane – a potent driver of climate change – as well as pollutants such as mercury are stored. Uncoordinated development – and the consequent increase in pollution such as emissions of black carbon or other substances from fossil fuel combustion – could have unintended consequences on climate trends, fragile ecosystems, and Arctic communities. It is imperative that the United States proactively establish national priorities and objectives for the Arctic region.

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Geological Survey, "Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle," fact sheet, 2008, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf>.

## Lines of Effort

To meet the challenges and opportunities in the Arctic region, and in furtherance of established Arctic Region Policy<sup>5</sup>, we will pursue the following lines of effort and supporting objectives in a mutually reinforcing manner that incorporates the broad range of U.S. current activities and interests in the Arctic region.

### 1. Advance United States Security Interests

Our highest priority is to protect the American people, our sovereign territory and rights, natural resources, and interests of the United States. To this end, the United States will identify, develop, and maintain the capacity and capabilities necessary to promote safety, security, and stability in the region through a combination of independent action, bilateral initiatives, and multilateral cooperation. We acknowledge that the protection of our national security interests in the Arctic region must be undertaken with attention to environmental, cultural, and international considerations outlined throughout this strategy. As many nations across the world aspire to expand their role in the Arctic, we encourage Arctic and non-Arctic states to work collaboratively through appropriate fora to address the emerging challenges and opportunities in the Arctic region, while we remain vigilant to protect the security interests of the United States and our allies.

To accomplish this line of effort, the United States Government will seek to:

- **Evolve Arctic Infrastructure and Strategic Capabilities** – Working cooperatively with the State of Alaska, local, and tribal authorities, as well as public and private sector partners, we will develop, maintain, and exercise the capacity to execute Federal responsibilities in our Arctic waters, airspace, and coastal regions, including the capacity to respond to natural or man-made disasters. We will carefully tailor this regional infrastructure, as well as our response capacity, to the evolving human and commercial activity in the Arctic region.
- **Enhance Arctic Domain Awareness** – We seek to improve our awareness of activities, conditions, and trends in the Arctic region that may affect our safety, security, environmental, or commercial interests. The United States will endeavor to appropriately enhance sea, air, and space capabilities as Arctic conditions capabilities94bilit94bilnese3(n

The law recognizes these rights, freedoms, and uses for commercial and military vessels and aircraft. Within this framework, we shall further develop Arctic waterways management regimes, including traffic separation schemes, vessel tracking, and ship routing, in collaboration with partners. We will also encourage other nations to adhere to internationally accepted principles. This cooperation will facilitate strategic partnerships that promote innovative, low-cost solutions that enhance the Arctic marine transportation system and the safe, secure, efficient and free flow of trade.

- **Provide for Future United States Energy Security** – The Arctic region’s energy resources factor into a core component of our national security strategy: energy security. The region holds sizable proved and potential oil and natural gas resources that will likely continue to provide valuable energy resources.





international law. The United States supports peaceful management and resolution of disputes, in a manner free from coercion. While the United States is not currently a party to the Convention, we will continue to support and observe principles of established customary international law reflected in the Convention.

- **Cooperate with other Interested Parties** – A growing number of non-Arctic states and numerous non-state actors have expressed increased interest in the Arctic region. The United States and other Arctic nations should seek to work with other states and entities to advance common objectives in the Arctic region in a manner that protects Arctic states' national interests and resources. One key example relates to the promotion of safe, secure, and reliable Arctic shipping, a goal that is best pursued through the International Maritime Organization in coordination with other Arctic states, major shipping states, the shipping industry and other relevant interests.

## **Guiding Principles**

The U.S. approach to the Arctic region must reflect our values as a nation and as a member of the global community. We will approach holistically our interests in promoting safety and security, advancing economic and energy development, protecting the environment, addressing climate change and respecting the needs of indigenous communities and Arctic state interests. To guide our efforts, we have identified the following

