NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

SUPPLEMENTAL TO DEFENSE ANALYSIS CAPSTONE REPORT

(5 OF 12: APPENDIX E)

USSF CAPABILITY GAP IN THE ARCTIC

by

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December 2022

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National Strategy for the Arctic Region

OCTOBER 2022

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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Executive Summary

The United States seeks an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative. The National Strategy for the Arctic Region articulates an affirmative U.S. agenda over the next ten years, from 2022 to 2032, to realize this vision. This strategy, an update of its 2013 predecessor, addresses the climate crisis with greater urgency and directs new investments in sustainable development to improve livelihoods for Arctic residents, while conserving the environment. It also acknowledges increasing strategic competition in the Arctic since 2013, exacerbated by Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine, and seeks to position the United States to both effectively compete and manage tensions.

Realizing our vision during this dynamic and challenging period will require U.S. leadership at home and abroad. We will advance U.S. interests across four mutually reinforcing pillars spanning both domestic and international issues.

- **Pillar 1—Security**: We will deter threats to the U.S. homeland and our allies by enhancing the capabilities required to defend our interests in the Arctic, while coordinating shared approaches with allies and partners and mitigating risks of unintended escalation. We will exercise U.S. government presence in the Arctic region as required to protect the American people and defend our sovereign territory.
- **Pillar 2—Climate Change and Environmental Protection**: The U.S. government will partner with Alaskan communities and the State of Alaska to build resilience to the impacts of climate change, while working to reduce emissions from the Arctic as part of broader global mitigation efforts, to improve scientific understanding, and to conserve Arctic ecosystems.
- **Pillar 3—Sustainable Economic Development**: We will pursue sustainable development and improve livelihoods in Alaska, including for Alaska Native communities, by investing in infrastructure, improving access to services, and supporting growing economic sectors. We will also work with allies and partners to expand high-standard investment and sustainable development across the Arctic region.
- **Pillar 4—International Cooperation and Governance**: Despite the challenges to Arctic cooperation resulting from Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the United States will work to sustain institutions for Arctic cooperation, including the Arctic Council, and position these institutions to manage the impacts of increasing activity in the region. We also seek to uphold international law, rules, norms, and standards in the Arctic.

This strategy is intended to serve as a framework to guide the U.S. government's approach to tackling emerging challenges and opportunities in the Arctic. Our work will be guided by five principles that will be applied across all four pillars.

- **Consult, Coordinate, and Co-Manage with Alaska Native Tribes and Communities**: The United States is committed to regular, meaningful, and robust consultation, coordination, and co-management with Alaska Native Tribes, communities, corporations, and other organizations and to ensuring equitable inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge.

- **Deepen Relationships with Allies and Partners**: We will deepen our cooperation with Arctic Allies and partners: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark (including Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. We will also expand Arctic cooperation with other countries that uphold international law, rules, norms, and standards in the region.
- **Plan for Long-Lead Time Investments**: Many of the investments prioritized in this strategy will require long lead times. We will be proactive, anticipating changes coming to the Arctic over the next several decades and making new investments now to be prepared.
- **Cultivate Cross-Sectoral Coalitions and Innovative Ideas**: The challenges and opportunities in the Arctic cannot be solved by national governments alone. The United States will strengthen and build on coalitions of private sector; academia; civil society; and state, local, and Tribal actors to encourage and harness innovative ideas to tackle these challenges.
- **Commit to a Whole of Government, Evidence-Based Approach**: The Arctic extends beyond the responsibility of any single region or government agency. U.S. Federal departments and agencies will work together to implement this strategy. We will deploy evidence-based decision-making and carry out our work in close partnership with the State of Alaska; Alaska Native Tribes, communities, corporations, and other organizations; and local communities, as well as with the U.S. Congress.

Introduction: Our Vision for the Arctic

The Arctic—home to more than four million people, extensive natural resources, and unique ecosystems—is undergoing a dramatic transformation. Driven by climate change, this transformation will challenge livelihoods in the Arctic, will create new economic opportunities, and could intensify strategic competition among countries. Alaska makes the United States an Arctic nation, which instills authority and responsibility for the stewardship and protection of this region, especially during this period of change.

Despite current tensions stemming from Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the United States seeks an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative. A peaceful Arctic will have guardrails to manage competition and resolve disputes without force or coercion. Stability results from countries acting responsibly and in accordance with international law, rules, norms, and standards, including freedom of navigation. A prosperous Arctic features healthy and vibrant Arctic communities and sustainable economic growth. We aim to secure these objectives in the U.S. Arctic and throughout the region, working primarily with our allies and partners to solve shared challenges. Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine has rendered government-to-government cooperation with Russia in the Arctic virtually impossible. Over the coming decade, it may be possible to resume cooperation under certain conditions. Russia's continued aggression makes most cooperation unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Our vision for the Arctic protects and advances U.S. interests in the region, including providing for homeland security and defense; mitigating and building resilience to climate change and ecosystem degradation; expanding U.S. economic opportunities; protecting and improving livelihoods, including for Alaska Native communities; and upholding international law, rules, norms, and standards across Arctic countries.

This National Strategy for the Arctic Region updates its 2013 predecessor and builds on established U.S. Arctic region policy[1] to reflect changes to the strategic environment and to set forth the U.S. government's approach to realizing this vision. This strategy addresses the climate crisis with greater urgency and directs new investments in responsible economic development to improve livelihoods for Arctic residents, while conserving the environment. It also acknowledges increasing strategic competition in the Arctic since 2013 and seeks to position the United States to both effectively compete and manage tensions. The strategy articulates an affirmative U.S. agenda for the Arctic over the next ten years and provides a framework for how the U.S. government will respond to emerging challenges and opportunities in the region.

Changing Conditions in the Arctic

Climate change in the Arctic—and the resulting diminishing sea ice, thawing permafrost, and ice sheet degradation—creates a cascade of difficulties, as well as some new possibilities. The Arctic Council affirmed in 2021 that the Arctic is warming three times faster than the rest of the

[1] National Security Presidential Directive-66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive-25, "Arctic Region Policy," January 2009.

world. Climate change is making the Arctic more accessible than ever before, while contributing to rising global sea levels, coastal erosion, more frequent and severe wildfires, and damaged ecosystems. These consequences threaten the livelihoods of Arctic residents and the traditional lifestyles of Alaska Native communities. Changing fish and wildlife migration patterns, combined with the high cost of non-subsistence foods, have exacerbated food insecurity and made cultural traditions more difficult to carry on. Coastal erosion, permafrost thaw, and flooding in Alaska are damaging infrastructure and will force some communities to relocate or invest heavily in infrastructure resilience.

A more accessible Arctic could also create new economic opportunities. Low population densities over a vast geography, high cost of doing business, and lack of financial resources have contributed to long-standing challenges, including limited infrastructure and a reliance on the oil and gas and commercial fishing sectors. These constraints have, in turn, kept cost of living high and stifled opportunities to develop other industries. Diminishing sea ice is gradually opening new shipping routes and could spur economic development. The Arctic's significant deposits of in-demand minerals essential to key technology supply chains have piqued the interest of governments and businesses across the world. As ice in the Arctic Ocean diminishes and as fish migration patterns shift, commercial fisheries may move into new areas. These changes could generate economic benefits for Arctic residents if appropriately managed, in consultation with those populations. New opportunities will also bring additional challenges, from the potential for new illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and greater environmental degradation to risks to maritime navigation, a greater likelihood of accidents, and changes to traditional lifestyles.

The Arctic's growing strategic importance has intensified competition to shape its future as countries pursue new economic interests and prepare for increased activity. Russia has invested significantly in its military presence in the Arctic over the last decade. It is modernizing its military bases and airfields; deploying new coastal and air defense missile systems and upgraded submarines; and increasing military exercises and training operations with a new combatant-command-equivalent for the Arctic. Russia is also developing new economic infrastructure in its Arctic territories to develop hydrocarbons, minerals, and fisheries and is attempting to constrain freedom of navigation through its excessive maritime claims along the Northern Sea Route.

Russia's war in Ukraine has raised geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, as it has globally, creating new risks of unintended conflict and hindering cooperation. The war has focused Russian military attention on Ukraine, and sanctions levied against Russia following its invasion could complicate Russia's Arctic economic development and military modernization efforts. Russia's war in Ukraine redoubled NATO's unity and resolve and spurred efforts to expand NATO resourcing. It has also enhanced unity with our Arctic partners, as evidenced by Finland and Sweden's prospective NATO accession.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) seeks to increase its influence in the Arctic through an expanded slate of economic, diplomatic, scientific, and military activities. It has also emphasized its intention to play a larger role in shaping regional governance. Over the last decade, the PRC has doubled its investments, with a focus on critical mineral extraction; expanded its scientific activities; and used these scientific engagements to conduct dual-use research with intelligence or military applications in the Arctic. The PRC has expanded its icebreaker fleet and sent naval vessels into the Arctic for the first time. Other non-Arctic countries have also increased their presence, investments, and activities in the Arctic.

Our Approach: Strategic Pillars and Guiding Principles

Realizing our vision of a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative Arctic during this dynamic and challenging period will require U.S. leadership at home and abroad. We will advance U.S. interests across four mutually reinforcing pillars spanning both domestic and international issues. Many of the investments we undertake in the U.S. Arctic will benefit not only residents in Alaska, but also our ability to pursue economic and environmental opportunities and project influence and security across the region. Together, these pillars guide the United States' affirmative agenda in the Arctic region for the next decade.

- **Pillar 1—Security**: We will deter threats to the U.S. homeland and our allies by enhancing the capabilities required to defend our interests in the Arctic, while coordinating shared approaches with allies and partners and mitigating risks of unintended escalation. We will exercise U.S. Government presence in the Arctic region as required to protect the American people and defend our sovereign territory.
- **Pillar 2—Climate Change and Environmental Protection**: The U.S. Government will partner with Alaskan communities and the State of Alaska to build resilience to the impacts of climate change, while working to reduce emissions from the Arctic as part of broader global mitigation efforts, to improve scientific understanding of climate change, and to conserve Arctic ecosystems.
- **Pillar 3—Sustainable Economic Development**: We will pursue sustainable development and improve livelihoods in Alaska, including for Alaska Native communities, by investing in infrastructure, improved access to services, and support for growing economic sectors. We will also work with allies and partners to expand high-standard investment and sustainable development across the Arctic region.
- **Pillar 4—International Cooperation and Governance**: Despite the challenges to Arctic cooperation resulting from Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the United States will work to sustain institutions for Arctic cooperation, including the Arctic Council, and position these institutions to manage the impacts of increasing activity in the region. The United States will also work with Arctic Allies and partners to pursue a common approach to advance shared interests and to uphold international law in the region.

This strategy is intended to serve as a framework to guide the U.S. Government's approach to confronting the new challenges and opportunities in the Arctic. As we turn this strategy into a reality, our work will be guided by five principles, which we will apply across all four pillars.

- **Consult, Coordinate, and Co-Manage with Alaska Native Tribes and Communities**: The United States is committed to regular, meaningful, and robust consultation, coordination, and, as appropriate, co-management with Alaska Native Tribes, communities, corporations, and other organizations—both to ensure Alaska Native communities are partners in decisions affecting them and also because we recognize that Alaska Native experience and knowledge is essential to the success of this strategy. We will support an equitable partnership, including by integrating co-production of

knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge into federal processes and by supporting Tribal self-determination and opportunity.

- **Deepen Relationships with Allies and Partners**: The Arctic is home to some of the United States' closest allies and partners. Our North American neighbor and Ally, Canada and our European Allies and partners, the Kingdom of Denmark (including Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are essential counterparts in realizing our shared vision for the Arctic. We will continue to deepen our cooperation and improve interoperability and information-sharing. We will also expand Arctic cooperation with other countries that uphold international law, rules, norms, and standards in the region.
- **Plan for Long-Lead Time Investments**: Many of the investments prioritized in this strategy will require long lead times. We will be proactive, anticipating changes coming to the Arctic over the next several decades and making new investments now to be prepared. Among other investments, we will procure additional icebreakers, enhance communications and maritime transportation infrastructure, support communities to build climate resilience, and invest in scientific research.
- **Cultivate Cross-Sectoral Coalitions and Innovative Ideas**: The challenges and opportunities in the Arctic cannot be solved by national governments alone. The United States will strengthen and build on coalitions of private sector; academia; civil society; and state, local, and Tribal actors to encourage and harness innovative ideas to tackle these challenges. We will capitalize on institutions, such as the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies, to build strong networks of domestic and international leaders to advance expertise and cooperation in the Arctic. We will also work with stakeholders across the Arctic to facilitate economic, environmental, and cultural linkages.
- **Commit to a Whole-of-Government, Evidence-Based Approach**: The Arctic region extends beyond the responsibility of any single region or government agency. U.S. Federal departments and agencies will work together, through coordinating bodies like the Arctic Executive Steering Committee and the National Security Council, to provide the resources, support, and expertise required to implement this strategy. We will deploy evidence-based decision-making and carry out our work in close partnership with the State of Alaska; Alaska Native Tribes, corporations, and other organizations; and local communities, as well as with the U.S. Congress.

Pillar 1—Security: Develop Capabilities for Expanded Arctic Activity

Our highest priority is to protect the American people and our sovereign territory and rights. We are committed to the security of our treaty allies and to supporting our partners in the region. Our security in the Arctic is inclusive of many interests, from national defense and homeland security to safe commercial and scientific activities. However, the Arctic environment poses region-specific challenges that require tailored technology, assets, infrastructure, training, and planning. To secure our interests as attention, investments, and activity grow in the Arctic over the coming decades, the United States will enhance and exercise both our military and civilian capabilities in the Arctic as required to deter threats and to anticipate, prevent, and respond to both natural and

human-made incidents. We will improve our understanding of the Arctic environment and develop whole-of-government capabilities to support expanding activity in the U.S. Arctic region. We will deepen cooperation with Arctic Allies and partners in support of these objectives and to manage risks of further militarization or unintended conflict, including those resulting from geopolitical tensions with Russia. These improvements will contribute to both national security and safety and livelihoods in the State of Alaska.

Strategic Objective 1.1: Improve Our Understanding of the Arctic Operating Environment

A deeper understanding of the Arctic operating environment is needed to inform real-time decision-making and respond to changing conditions. We will invest in modernized domain awareness to detect and track potential airborne and maritime threats and improve sensing and observational capabilities, including for sea ice, ship traffic, and weather. For example, we will collaborate with Canada on North American Aerospace Defense Command modernization. We will support expanded observations, modeling, and analytic capabilities to enhance our ability to use gathered data to predict the changing operational environment. We will also improve communications and positioning, navigation, and timing capabilities by developing communications and data networks capable of operating in the northern latitudes. We will work to improve Arctic observing, mapping, and charting; weather, water, and sea ice forecasting; subseasonal and seasonal prediction; emergency preparedness posture; and satellite coverage to enable efficient commerce and to ensure maritime and air safety.

Strategic Objective 1.2: Exercise Presence to Support Priority Goals

The United States will maintain and, as driven by requirements, refine and advance military presence in the Arctic in support of our homeland defense, global military and power projection, and deterrence goals. We will continue to conduct regular, transparent, and consistent training, exercises, and episodic deployments with our allies and partners, as well as independently. We will enhance homeland security through measures such as effective maritime security, law enforcement, search and rescue, and emergency response. This includes expanding the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker fleet to support persistent presence in the U.S. Arctic and additional presence as needed in the European Arctic. We will make targeted investments to strategically enhance security infrastructure as required to enable these aims, while building the resilience of critical infrastructure to protect against both climate change and cyberattacks.

Strategic Objective 1.3: Maximize Unity of Effort with Allies and Partners

We will maximize our cooperation with Arctic Allies and partners to enhance our shared security and deter aggression in the Arctic, especially from Russia. We will coordinate closely with our allies and partners to deepen our understanding of Arctic security challenges, improve our collective deterrent and ability to respond to contingencies, and jointly develop and lead shared approaches to address security challenges together, including through expanded information sharing in the region. To improve operational familiarity with the Arctic region, including cold weather operations and interoperability, we will increase our focus on combined exercises and training. We will undertake calibrated and coordinated activities with NATO Allies and Arctic partners with the aim of both defending NATO's security interests in the region while also reducing risks and preventing unintended escalation, especially during this period of heightened tension with Russia. We will also continue to partner with the State of Alaska and Alaska Native and rural communities on activities such as combined exercises and training on cold weather operations and interoperability.

Pillar 2—Climate Change and Environmental Protection: Build Resilience and Advance Adaptation, while Mitigating Emissions

Climate change generates greater impacts in the Arctic than in many more temperate regions, yielding unstable terrain, vulnerable coasts, changing ecosystems, and a worsening biodiversity crisis. More than 60 percent of Alaska Native communities are considered environmentally threatened[2] due to climate change. Historically, these communities have faced barriers to accessing federal resources. We will support efforts to build Alaskan communities' resilience in the face of dramatic changes on the Arctic's horizon. We will also reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from the Arctic as part of global mitigation efforts, invest in scientific research, and protect and conserve Arctic ecosystems. In so doing, we will partner with Alaska Native Tribes, communities, corporations, and other organizations; the State of Alaska; and public, private, academic and non-governmental sectors at home and abroad to harness the full range of knowledge and resources required to meet these goals.

Strategic Objective 2.1: Advance Community Adaptation and Climate Resilience

Climate change is forcing some Alaskan communities to relocate entirely, move multiple buildings and homes, or protect vulnerable infrastructure while remaining in place. Communities also face other climate challenges, including adverse impacts on food security due to changes in the availability of and access to subsistence resources and increased vulnerability to drought and wildfires. We will support communities as they face these challenges, providing data and financial and technical assistance to enable community adaptation and resilience planning. We will collaborate with Alaska Native communities to determine preferred solutions for these and other climate challenges, and we will coordinate across federal, state, and local agencies to define dedicated roles and responsibilities to deliver whole-of-government support.

Strategic Objective 2.2: Pursue International Initiatives to Mitigate Emissions in the Arctic

The United States will work to reduce localized emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and black carbon, through both existing and new bilateral and multilateral initiatives as appropriate to complement our global mitigation efforts. Mitigation should also include protection of habitats that store carbon, such as forests, tundra, and coastal marshes.

Strategic Objective 2.3: Expand Research to Better Understand Climate Change and Inform Policy Decisions

It is essential to better understand the ways the Arctic environment is rapidly changing, to anticipate future changes, and to understand the Arctic's impact on climate change globally and extreme events regionally. The United States will advance our monitoring and predictive capacity with better data collection and integration, new observational tools and data, and

[2] "Environmentally threatened" communities are defined by the Denali Commission's Village Infrastructure Protection program as communities experiencing significant impacts to infrastructure from erosion, flooding, and/or permafrost degradation.

improved regional and global climate models. We will also support research on marine ecosystems, wildlife, and fisheries; the design and construction of Arctic infrastructure; and health crises afflicting Arctic populations. To support science-based decisions, we will also explore research to improve our understanding of issues such as the potential emissions and health threats resulting from permafrost thaw. International scientific partnerships and co-production of knowledge with Alaska Native communities will have a multiplier effect on this research. Coordinated research on the environmental and societal impacts of climate change in the Arctic and the Arctic's role in global climate dynamics should be guided by the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee's (IARPC) and the U.S. Arctic Research Commission's (USARC) research plans.[3]

Strategic Objective 2.4: Conserve and Protect Arctic Ecosystems, including through Indigenous Co-Production and Co-Management

The United States must continue to pursue multilateral initiatives and research to conserve and protect Arctic biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats, and wildlife, expanding on concepts like the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area.[4] Conservation in the Arctic is consistent with the America the Beautiful Initiative[5], which sets out our national goal of conserving 30 percent of America's lands and waters by 2030, as well as our international commitments to conservation and climate. We will work to preserve essential habitats, halt biodiversity loss, and manage natural resources using an ecosystems-based approach. We will accelerate work to clean up contaminated lands in Alaska. We will also explore nature-based solutions to reduce flood and erosion risk, increase ecosystem resilience, store carbon, and deliver co-benefits such as habitat protection. To carry out this work, we will support co-production of knowledge to develop, as appropriate, co-managed conservation initiatives. We will ensure we have the capabilities required to prepare for, prevent, and respond to oil spills and other environmental disasters in the Arctic and to reduce harmful pollutants and improve waste and water management.

Pillar 3—Sustainable Economic Development: Improve Livelihoods and Expand Economic Opportunity

While diminishing sea ice is a stark indicator of accelerating climate change, it will offer increased accessibility in the Arctic and could create new economic opportunities. We will pursue these potential opportunities, while also protecting the environment. We will work closely with allies and partners to support high-standard investment and sustainable development across the region. The U.S. government will help create the conditions to catalyze responsible, inclusive, and transparent economic development in Alaska and across the Arctic. In particular, we will invest in infrastructure, improve access to services, and support the development of industries that expand economic opportunity for local communities, support the energy

[3] IARPC, "Arctic Research Plan 2022–2026," December 2021; USARC, "Report on the Goals and Objectives for Arctic Research 2019-2020," May 2019.
[4] Executive Order 13754, "Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience," December 9, 2016.
[5] "Report: Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful," May 2021.

transition, and build the resilience of U.S. supply chains. We will carry out this work without compromising sensitive Arctic ecosystems and in partnership with Indigenous and local communities. We recognize that the Alaskan economy, like the economies of several other areas in the Arctic, still depends heavily on revenue from hydrocarbon development. We will work with the State of Alaska to support efforts to diversify its economy; create a just energy transition, including for impacted workers; and ensure energy security and affordability during this transition. We will make inclusive economic growth a priority and work to improve livelihoods in Alaska, including for Alaska Native communities.

Strategic Objective 3.1: Invest in Infrastructure

In 2021, the United States enacted the largest investment in physical infrastructure in nearly a century, including historic investments in transportation, broadband, clean water, energy infrastructure, and resilience. These investments will boost economic capacity and productivity and support millions of jobs and trillions of dollars in economic activity over the next decade, including in Alaska. We will support development of much-needed infrastructure in Alaska that serves responsible development, food security, stable housing, climate resilience, and national defense needs as driven by requirements. In particular, we will invest in advanced telecommunications infrastructure in Alaska, including broadband and 5G for Alaska Native and rural communities, recognizing this technology will serve as a platform for a range of needs, from the expansion of the knowledge economy to remote education and telemedicine. We will support development of a deep draft harbor in Nome, as well as development of smaller ports, airfields, and other infrastructure, in consultation with the State of Alaska and Alaska Native communities, to tackle the high cost of living, facilitate responsible development, and improve incident response and recovery while minimizing impacts to the surrounding environment and local communities. As we pursue these infrastructure investments, we will explore opportunities to leverage public-private partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms. We will seek multiplier effects through investments that benefit Alaskan communities while also enabling the United States to project presence and influence across the region. We will work with Arctic Allies and partners to protect critical infrastructure and improve investment screening for national security purposes.

Strategic Objective 3.2: Improve Access to Services and Protect Subsistence Lifestyles and Cultural Traditions

In pursuing sustainable development that is equitable and aligned with Alaska Native communities' needs, we will protect subsistence lifestyles and improve access to reliable and affordable services, including healthcare, education, energy, housing, water and sanitation, and public safety. We will renew efforts to provide climate-resilient water and sanitation infrastructure for the 31 Alaska Native communities still without dependable in-home running water. We will also work to improve access to affordable energy by developing renewable energy generation, storage, transmission, and distribution. We will explore opportunities to expand Indigenous cooperative and co-management agreements and to fight the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples. Indigenous Knowledge will inform decisions about Alaska's fish and wildlife resources and help navigate the threats posed to Alaska's subsistence lifestyles.

Strategic Objective 3.3: Develop Emerging Economic Sectors in Alaska

U.S. Government agencies will expand support for sustainable development of renewable energy, critical minerals production, tourism, and knowledge economy sectors in Alaska with the aim of creating sustainable growth and well-paying jobs in Alaska and responsibly developing alternative industries in Alaska to support a just energy transition, while protecting biodiversity and promoting co-ocean use. We will explore new programs to catalyze private sector investment in Alaska. We will seek to strengthen the resilience of U.S. supply chains by exploring the potential for sustainable and responsible critical mineral production in Alaska while adhering to the highest environmental, labor, community engagement, and sustainability standards. Development efforts will be carried out in partnership with the private sector; State of Alaska; Alaska Native communities; and stakeholders, including representatives of labor, impacted communities, and environmental justice leaders, and will be accompanied by assessments of their associated environmental impacts.

Strategic Objective 3.4: Work with Allies and Partners to Increase Responsible Arctic Investment, including in Critical Minerals

In the broader Arctic region, we will work with our allies and partners—including through the potential use of relevant U.S. Government mechanisms and development programs, such as the Export-Import Bank, U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, and U.S. Trade and Development Agency—to expand private sector-led investment and pursue sustainable economic development in the Arctic, including in critical minerals. We will explore methods to enable enhanced U.S. government support for strategic investments and to incentivize private sector investment in the Arctic. We will strengthen capacity across the Arctic region to screen prospective investments based on national security, environmental sustainability, and supply chain resilience concerns. Across our development efforts, we will continue to employ the best practices that distinguish the United States and our partners from our competitors: transparency and accountability; high environmental, labor, community engagement, and sustainability standards; equity and ethics; and local partnerships supported by sound, sustainable financing.

Pillar 4—International Cooperation and Governance: Sustain Arctic Institutions and Uphold International Law

The United States seeks to uphold international law, rules, norms, and standards; close potential gaps in governance; preserve freedom of navigation; and protect U.S. sovereign rights, including with respect to the extended continental shelf. The United States values the unique spirit of international cooperation that has generally characterized the Arctic since the end of the Cold War. Russia's brutal war in Ukraine has made this cooperation in the Arctic virtually impossible in the Arctic at present. However, maintaining cooperation with our allies and partners in the near-term remains essential to advancing our objectives for the region. Over the past quarter century, the United States has been integral to the development of the governance architecture enabling this regional cooperation. The United States helped create the Arctic Council and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum and chaired negotiations that produced a series of international

agreements pertaining to the Arctic region, such as the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO Fisheries Agreement).

As the Arctic becomes more accessible and as strategic competition intensifies, we will maintain our leadership role in the Arctic. We will sustain the existing multilateral fora and legal frameworks dedicated to solving shared challenges in the region, recognizing that Arctic countries have the primary responsibility for addressing these challenges. While emphasizing existing frameworks, we will remain open to developing new bilateral and multilateral partnerships as needed to advance scientific cooperation and other U.S. interests in the Arctic.

Strategic Objective 4.1: Sustain the Arctic Council and Other Arctic Institutions and Agreements

The United States will seek to maintain the Arctic Council as the principal multilateral forum for the Arctic by working through the Council whenever possible, in line with broader U.S. policy on Russia, and making funding for U.S.-led Arctic Council activities more consistent. We will also work to advance implementation and enforcement of existing international agreements, including the CAO Fisheries Agreement, the International Maritime Organization's Polar Code, and the Agreement on Enhancing International Science Cooperation in the Arctic. For other Arctic institutions, such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum and the Forum of Arctic Research Operators, we will expand U.S. engagement and leadership, pursue new partnerships and arrangements that advance shared interests, and prepare for increased and evolving activity in the region, including to manage increased maritime activity, promote sustainable economic development, and advance conservation and scientific research. We will bring whole-of-government tools to bear to support this work, including by expanding our diplomatic presence across the Arctic with additional personnel and posts.

As noted above, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has rendered government-to-government cooperation with Russia in the Arctic virtually impossible at present. Over the coming decade, the United States recognizes that it may be possible for some cooperation to resume under certain conditions. In the meantime, we will work with our allies and partners and other governments that uphold the rule of law to sustain the effectiveness of the Arctic Council and other Arctic institutions and to hold all members accountable for their responsibility to uphold international law, rules, and standards globally.

Strategic Objective 4.2: Protect Freedom of Navigation and Continental Shelf Limits

The United States will protect navigation and overflight rights and freedoms across the Arctic and will delineate the outer limits of the U.S. continental shelf in accordance with international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We will also continue to support joining UNCLOS and to vigorously defend U.S. interests, which are best served by widespread adherence to the international rule of law.

The Way Forward

The Arctic is undergoing transformational change. The Arctic Ocean may see ice-free summers as soon as 2030, flooding and wildfires will increase in frequency, new economic opportunities could emerge, and geopolitical tensions may grow. The United States, must therefore prepare for and shape this transformation by taking action now to manage these challenges and pursue new

opportunities. This strategy lays out the U.S. approach for doing so. By working together with a range of partners, including Arctic Allies and partners, the State of Alaska, Alaska Native communities, local governments, businesses, and universities, we will undertake a whole-of-government endeavor to realize an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative.