MEMORANDUM FOR SCUSA 73

SUBJECT: Opportunities, Challenges, and a Way Forward in the Arctic.

1. **Issue:** The purpose of this memorandum is to propose policy options for United States engagement in the Arctic amid an uncertain strategic future.

2. **Strategic Analysis:** If the current strategy continues, tensions in the Arctic will lead to miscalculation and reactionary policies. As the barriers to the Arctic disappear, recognized Arctic powers and opportunistic states will compete for new resources and influence in the region. Protecting shipping lanes and access to resources such as oil, natural gas, and rare earth elements will increase economic competition in the region.

   The U.S. holds influence within the chief bodies governing the Arctic, including the United Nations and the Arctic Council. There is a significant lack of enforcement capability since domain awareness strategies are disjointed, restricting regional capabilities leaving U.S. forces with unreliable information and a lack of infrastructure. Finally, the Arctic has been consistently overlooked in foreign policy and strategic planning, ceding strategic advantages to adversarial states with established Arctic capabilities, namely Russia and China.

3. **Relevant National Interests:** The United States’ foremost interests lie with economic development and security concerns in the Arctic. The primary economic considerations include creating and maintaining trade routes, strengthening economic alliances, expanding scientific research, and maintaining territorial sovereignty. It is paramount to U.S. security interests to increase defense capabilities and protect Indigenous communities. This is due to the potential for an increasingly militarized Arctic because of Russian and Chinese inroads in the region. Both environmental conservation and energy sector interests converge with the aforementioned interests. Each of these fundamental interests must stand at the forefront of the United States’ Arctic strategy.

4. **Strategic Options:**

   **Strategic Option 1:** Invest in Arctic governance by convening a council of seven key nations (A-7) to deliberate on matters of Arctic security. Its purpose is to provide a forum for deliberation regarding security, economic activity, and politics in the Arctic region. This is a supplemental body alongside existing governance entities, such as the Arctic Council. Its members will include the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden; the council will move to incorporate Russia once it abides by international law in Ukraine.

   **Strategic Option 2:** Develop Domain Awareness and Coast Guard presence in the Arctic. This includes support for the ongoing construction of two new Coast Guard
icebreakers and the expansion of Operation Arctic Shield. This strategy necessitates the interagency integration of existing domain awareness information capabilities in the Arctic region. The U.S. will promote transparency by sharing information pertinent to domain awareness with countries operating in the region.

**Strategic Option 3: Develop U.S. infrastructure in the Arctic by improving transportation, commerce, and telecommunications systems.** This includes ports, railroads, paved roads, broadband connection, and other infrastructure. These projects are contingent upon establishing a coherent and stable legislative regulatory framework for infrastructure development in the Arctic using both public and private means. Additionally, this will help develop sustainable, long-term ecotourism in U.S. Arctic territories.

5. **Recommendation:** All three strategic options should be pursued in-sequence so that each option builds upon the previous. Strategic Option 1 should be pursued within the first year of this policy plan as it will provide strong foundations for the subsequent policies. Strategic Option 2 follows within the next five years, which will then be used to finalize Strategic Option 3 within ten years.

6. **Implementation:** Establish intra-governmental coordination between the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Commerce, U.S. Trade Rep, and the Congressional Arctic Caucus to begin organizing the proposed A7 conference.
   - Reach out to Arctic partners and allies at the ambassadorial level to begin forming the A7 group which will help discuss security and economic issues in the Arctic.
   - Request additional funding from Congress for Operation Arctic Shield within the Coast Guard to expand regional Coast Guard forces.
   - Create a new Arctic Joint Interagency Multilateral Command to manage existing domain awareness systems around the Arctic (Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Intelligence Community, NOAA, etc.)
   - Develop a system or process to discriminate between sensitive intelligence and basic information that will be made available for public consumption.
   - Create interagency taskforce to determine the process to develop infrastructure (Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Commerce, Army Corp of Engineers, Private Sector)
   - Create a taskforce to develop a single, stable regulatory framework for infrastructure building (beginning with a five-year bill) using support from Capitol Hill (Arctic Caucus) championed by the Political Affairs Office at the White House (or similar office).
   - Appeal to Congress about tax breaks that will incentivize private sector companies to invest in the region.

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