MEMORANDUM FOR THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: Policy Recommendations for U.S. Arctic Posture

1. **Issue**: The purpose of this memorandum is to identify existing and escalating natural and strategic threats in the High North and propose policy recommendations to safeguard the economic and national security of the U.S. and its partner nations.

2. **Strategic Analysis:**

   a. **Russia’s geographic hold over the Arctic**: Russia controls over 45 percent of the Arctic and is seeking control over the unclaimed land. Russian facilities throughout the Arctic are increasing as naval and nuclear forces are growing close to the border with NATO. Their Arctic ambitions are secured by the Northern Fleet, composed of over 40 icebreakers, torpedo submarines, and Ground Forces, with the potential for hypersonic capabilities.

   b. **China is positioning itself as a near-Arctic state, asserting claims through various white papers and gaining observer status on the Arctic Council**: China has leveraged heavy investment and influence in the region in the form of a self-classified status as a near-Arctic state, as well as gaining observer status on the Arctic council, further accelerating Chinese influence in the Arctic.

3. **Relevant National Interests:**

   a. **Resources**: The Arctic is warming fast. The ramifications of this phenomenon are wide and continuously shifting, opening new trade routes, and exacerbating disputes over natural resources in the region. There is a wealth of rare mineral resources and sustainable resources in the region, many of which are located under the ocean. These natural resources, in turn, have the potential to grow the U.S. economy in crucial industries. Additionally, other Arctic nations will likely look to develop resources in the region including renewable energy sources.

   b. **Great Power Competition**: The partnership between Russia and China is a national security concern that has the potential to create a possible realignment in world alliances. The emergence of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) as an alternate world order is a serious threat that should not be ignored in the U.S. It is a concern for America and its allies to not fall behind in influence. In the Arctic, the growing interests of Russia and China challenge America’s ability to stay ahead while also focusing on security objectives in Israel, Ukraine, and the South China Sea. It is important for America to demonstrate initiative in the region, so allied nations trust in enduring American engagement.

   c. **Indigenous Rights**: It is essential to ensure that Indigenous people are being represented, their voices and opinions are heard, and they can contribute to different policies that are being created that will affect the quality of life of their communities. There is an immediate need to act on U.S. investment and involvement in the Arctic region for the sake of economic development, national security in the face of threats, and a sustainable future in the High North. The points as
stated before should push U.S. policymakers to get this issue on agendas more now than ever as there are new questions in the region.

4. **Strategic Options:**
   a. **Option One: Critical Steps**
      i. **Incentivize Private Sector:** To gain economic activity in the Arctic, the US should incentivize their private sector. It could use tax cuts, grants, or subsidies for creating businesses and developing infrastructure in the region. In addition, it's important to give these organizations clear limits. Thus, Congress should task the EPA with giving the region clear regulatory guidance.
      ii. **Climate-Proofing Military Facilities:** Climate change presents the risk to decrease the U.S. military's Arctic capabilities. The melting of permafrost could result in ground shifts creating the loss of critical infrastructure causing billions of dollars in damage. To alleviate the already corroding infrastructure, improved engineering methods need to be employed to ensure U.S. military Arctic capabilities.
      iii. **Leadership Role:** It is essential for the U.S. to presume a greater leadership role within the Arctic community in interest of National Security. With the presumption of leadership by the U.S., they would have the ability to create and enforce new policies that would regulate countries in economic and militaristic developments. The U.S. would have the ability to enforce these regulations and hold countries accountable for their actions.
      iv. **Confirm appointment of Arctic Ambassador:** An important component towards achieving the U.S. strategic goals in the Arctic is the establishment of a permanent arctic leadership position. The position of an Arctic ambassador-at-large was established in 2022 but remains unfilled. Confirmation of the ambassador could facilitate further cooperation and achievements in the high north.
   b. **Option Two:** The following options will be in addition to the actions suggested in Option One.
      i. **Support Bringing Russia Back into the Arctic Council Discussion Forum:** As the nation with the largest territory in the region, Russia remains a key actor in the Arctic. The current sanctions because of the war in Ukraine have had an adverse effect on collaboration between the U.S and Russia. By allowing Russia back into the Arctic Council, the U.S can regain access to critical data sets and benefit from joint academic endeavors.
      ii. **Foster Collaborative Partnerships with Indigenous Communities in the Arctic:** This involves directly collaborating to co-create and implement sustainable infrastructure projects, ensuring their active participation in decision making processes, and leveraging their traditional knowledge for environmentally responsible development initiatives.
   c. **Option Three:** Global Governance
      i. **International Cooperation on Oceans:** Make diplomatic overtures with the aim of joining international agreements and frameworks on the oceans and their resources. This would define American coastal jurisdiction over the continental shelf and its resources. An Exclusive Economic Zone and potential continental shelf claims would be beneficial to both commercial and foreign relations, as well as general global stability.
      ii. **Establishment of an Arctic Combatant Command:** Given the strategic importance of the Arctic to the US and its partners, the creation of Arctic Command
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(ARCTICOM) would remedy the current situation of shared responsibility between NORTHCOM, EURCOM, and INDOPACOM over the Arctic and signal to our partners the increased focus the U.S. has on the region. A dedicated combatant command would also dedicate more resources to the Arctic, given the limited bandwidth of EURCOM and INDOPACOM with their focus on Ukraine and China.

5. **Recommendation**: The United States should take the Critical First Steps approach to prioritize economic and national security in the Arctic Region. This includes collaboration with strategic allies in the Arctic, incentivizing private sector development, improving the resilience of military infrastructure against the threats of climate change, taking an active leadership role in ensuring a rules-based order in the Arctic, and confirming Dr. Mike Sfraga as Arctic ambassador. This should be a transparent, facts-based approach, drawing from experts in academic, private, and government sectors to ensure open discussion, feasible implementation, and cross-sector buy-in.

6. **Implementation**: The importance of the Arctic and recent actions by Russia and China necessitates a concerted response.
   I. Encourage the Senate to fully confirm Dr. Mike Sfraga to the post of Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic Region.
   II. Encourage Congress to pass favorable tax incentives and subsidies for businesses to invest in scientific research, green energy, and telecommunication infrastructure.
   III. Congress should task the EPA with creating clear regulatory guidance for private ventures in the Arctic.
   IV. Modernize U.S. military installations at Pituffik Space Base in Greenland, Eielson Air Force Base, Marks Air Force Base, and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska. Prioritize aircraft facilities, air defense, and transportation infrastructure.
   V. Repair or replace The North Warning System (NWS) with our Canadian allies to be able to deter potential action from over the North Pole.
   VI. Build and maintain at least one deep-water port and naval base along Alaska’s Arctic coastline, near the Beaufort Sea.

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