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**Statement by**

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**on**

**Implementing U.S. Policy in the Arctic**

**Submitted to the**

**Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives**

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Chairman Hunter, Ranking Member Garamendi, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Navy's efforts to implement U.S. policy in the Arctic. I join my colleagues in supporting the President's National Strategy for the Arctic Region and its corresponding Implementation Plan.

This past February, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, approved the U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap which aligns with the National Strategy for the Arctic Region. While the Arctic Region is an area that is expected to remain peaceful, stable, and free of conflict, the U.S. Navy's primary responsibility is to protect our nation's interests around the world. The Navy's challenge over the coming decades will be to balance the demands of current requirements with investments in the development of future capabilities.

In support of the National Strategy for the Arctic Region and the Department of Defense Arctic Strategy, the Navy will undertake deliberate and measured steps to achieve the following four strategic objectives in the Arctic Region over the near-term (2014-2020), mid-term (2020-2030), and far-term (beyond 2030) timeframes:

- 1) Ensure United States Arctic sovereignty;
- 2) Provide ready naval forces;
- 3) Preserve freedom of the seas; and
- 4) Promote partnerships

The Navy's existing posture is appropriate to address the near-term defense requirements of the United States in the Arctic Region. Over the course of the next few years the Navy will continue to develop our strong, cooperative partnerships with the Coast Guard, in addition to other interagency and international Arctic Region stakeholders to

address the emerging opportunities caused by the seasonal opening of the Arctic Ocean waters.

The Navy will continue to take deliberate steps to develop Arctic expertise through exercises, scientific missions, and personnel exchanges that provide Sailors with opportunities to learn best practices. In the near-term, the Navy will continue to provide capability and presence primarily through undersea and air assets. The Navy will limit surface ship operations to periods of projected peak activity associated with open water conditions. Even during open water operations, weather and ocean factors, including sea ice, must be considered when conducting operational risk assessments. The Navy will emphasize low-cost, long-lead time activities to match capability and capacity to future demands. The Navy will continue to study and make informed decisions on operating requirements and procedures for personnel, ships, and aircraft with interagency partners and allies. Through ongoing exercises, such as the Navy's Ice Exercise (ICEX), Scientific Ice Expeditions (SCICEX), as well as research and transits through the region by Navy submarines, aircraft and surface vessels, the Navy will continue to learn more about the evolving operating environment.

Current projections indicate that the reduction of sea ice cover in the Arctic will persist, resulting in the Arctic Region becoming increasingly accessible. As a result, exploitation of untapped natural resources may become more commercially attractive. However, the financial, technical, and environmental risks of operating in the Arctic Region create substantial challenges. In the mid-term (2020 to 2030), the Navy will likely be called upon to support the U.S. Coast Guard and other U.S. Government agencies by providing marine data collection, sea ice forecasting and predictions, and the forecasting of hazardous weather and

ocean conditions. The Navy may also be called upon to support the Coast Guard in search and rescue or disaster response missions, or to ensure freedom of navigation in Arctic waters. In the far-term, the Navy, based on informed requirements, may transition its periodic presence in the Arctic Ocean to operating deliberately in the Region for sustained periods in order to meet national security priorities.

By 2030, while balancing all of its global defense responsibilities, the Navy intends to have the requisite trained and equipped personnel, along with surface, subsurface, and air assets, to respond to national security contingencies and emergencies. The Navy will strive to improve its capabilities by participating in increasingly complex exercises and training with its regional partners. The Navy's Arctic Roadmap prepares the Navy to respond effectively to future Arctic Region contingencies and directs the actions to develop Arctic far-term capabilities and capacity in step with changing environmental conditions. The Navy will continually update its preparedness in response to changes in the Arctic environment or changes in the security environment.

The Arctic Region, with its vast expanse, severe climate, and rich natural resources, is a challenge and an opportunity for the Navy. Naval security and international naval cooperation have always been critical components of U.S. Arctic policy. The Navy's approach underscores the need to develop strong cooperative partnerships with interagency, especially the U.S. Coast Guard and international Arctic Region stakeholders. It acknowledges that changes in the environment must be continuously examined and taken into account. The key will be to balance potential investments with other Service priorities and leveraging partnerships extensively. By taking a proactive, flexible approach the Navy can keep pace with an evolving Arctic Region while continuing to serve as the vanguard of our global national security interests.