



TRUE NORTH

Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies Monthly Bulletin

SEPTEMBER 2025



2025 HNSD builds strategic defense networks to reinforce deterrence in the High North

From Sept. 9-12, 2025, more than 40 senior military leaders, policymakers, and subject-matter experts from across the Arctic region convened virtually for the 2025 High North Security Dialogue, demonstrating a continued commitment to working collaboratively on defense in the Arctic. Co-hosted by the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies and the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the HNSD is a strategic forum to advance deterrent mechanisms in the High North.

“Continuous engagement, reflection, analysis, honesty, and discussion – as we do at HNSD – is necessary to prepare for current and future threats and opportunities” explained Matt Hickey, associate director of strategic engagement and TSC’s HNSD lead.

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New course bridges NATO and Arctic expertise to prepare warfighters for High North challenges

As strategic competition intensifies in the High North, the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies launched its newest educational course, NATO in the North, Sept. 16–18. The virtual course, hosted in partnership with the Norway-based NATO Centre of Excellence for Cold Weather Operations, focused on preparing mid- to senior-level warfighters and security practitioners to address emerging Arctic threats through a NATO framework.

The course marks the first time the TSC jointly developed and delivered an educational course with an international partner. The inaugural session brought together 117 participants from 17 nations, nearly half of whom were from non-U.S. NATO Allied and partner countries, to build common understanding and

enhance interoperability in the world’s most demanding strategic environment.

“This collaboration with the Center of Excellence was critical to the success of the course,” said Dr. Matthew Rhodes, professor of international security at the TSC. “It brought both deep operational expertise and bi-continental perspective on the topics under discussion.”

Meeting the moment

The NATO in the North Course was developed in response to evolving operational and geopolitical challenges in the Arctic. Russia’s war against Ukraine, increasing Chinese interest in the region, and the accession of Finland and Sweden to

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NATO have dramatically reshaped Arctic security considerations. As the Department of War prioritizes homeland defense and revitalizes deterrence through allied integration, education becomes an essential tool.

A shared operating picture

Course organizers said one of the key goals was to bridge NATO expertise with deep Arctic operational knowledge.

“This course was a first of its kind because it linked two communities that don’t always overlap — NATO security practitioners and Arctic operators,” explained Dr. Brian K. Houghton, deputy dean of the School for Arctic Security Studies. “The High North is no longer just a region of interest. It is a priority theater for homeland defense and strategic competition.”

To meet that challenge, the course curriculum encouraged participants to consider how NATO’s evolving posture and new northern members are transforming Arctic defense. Discussions focused on logistics, domain awareness, infrastructure, information sharing, and cold weather operations.

The final day of the course featured a scenario-based exercise, in which participants applied lessons learned to a fictional but realistic Arctic crisis. The activity underscored how NATO’s strategic responsibilities, and its vulnerabilities, extend into polar regions.

“This course underscores that deterring threats in the Arctic requires both capability and unity,” said Matthew Bell, dean of the School for Arctic and Security Studies. “It’s about building the relationships, the knowledge, and the resolve to operate effectively with our Allies and partners.”

Investing in Arctic-minded leadership

TSC leadership emphasized that NATO in the North is part of broader efforts to develop Arctic-minded leaders for 21st century security challenges.

Randy “Church” Kee, director of the TSC, said the course reflects the Department of War’s push to restore the warrior ethos, reestablish deterrence, and prepare for conflict in contested environments.

“We are not just checking boxes with this course,” Kee said. “We are investing in the strategic education of professionals who will operate in this region. The Stevens Center is proud to lead that effort with our NATO partners.”

He added that education is a form of strategic signaling — a way to show commitment, resolve, and capability to potential adversaries. “Peace through strength is not just rhetoric. It’s a reality that begins with understanding the terrain, the threats, and the alliance,” Kee said.

Feedback from participants reinforced the course’s value.

“The NATO in the North Course provides security practitioners the ability to visualize the Arctic Commons and how NATO can secure its polar frontier,” one attendee

shared in a post-course survey. “A 5 out of 5 educational experience.”

Looking ahead, the TSC plans to offer the course twice a year. Future iterations will continue to be co-led with the NATO Center of Excellence for Cold Weather Operations, reinforcing the transatlantic link that underpins deterrence in the North.



The NATO Centre of Excellence - Cold Weather Operations is a Norwegian-sponsored organization that acts as the main provider and coordinator of expertise and capabilities in the area of Cold Weather Operations in NATO.

They provide NATO and partner nations the necessary competence in order to operate under Arctic, sub-Arctic and Cold Weather conditions. This is done through utilizing the full spectrum of competence in the Norwegian Armed Forces, coordinated with other nations' competence in cold weather environment.



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Grey zone competition in the Arctic: TSC alumni event highlights hybrid threats and homeland defense response

Irregular warfare is no longer a peripheral concern in the Arctic; it's central to how competitors are shaping the region's future. That was the focus of "Grey Zone Competition in the Arctic," the latest Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies alumni event, held virtually Sept. 23. The session examined how hybrid tactics are undermining governance, testing resilience, and challenging U.S. influence in the Arctic.

Featuring guest speaker, Dr. James Derleth, who previously served as the founding director of the Irregular Warfare and Hybrid Threats Program at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the session explored how adversaries are leveraging cyber intrusions, disinformation campaigns, legal manipulation, and economic coercion

to operate in the "grey zone," the ambiguous space between peace and war where attribution is difficult and conventional deterrence tools are often ineffective.

"The Arctic is emerging as one of the most strategically contested regions in the world," said U.S. Army Maj. Stephen Gagnon, the event's moderator and a TSC Arctic Fellow. "Great power competition is increasingly employing coercive tactics below the threshold of armed conflict."

Although the Arctic remains free from direct military conflict, competitors are using irregular methods to shape strategic conditions. Examples include targeting Arctic communities

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ANCHORAGE SECURITY AND DEFENSE DIALOGUE

NOVEMBER 18-20, 2025
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA AT THE HOTEL CAPTAIN COOK

2025 Theme

"Peace Through Strength: Deterrence in the North"



Save the date for the Anchorage Security and Defense Dialogue

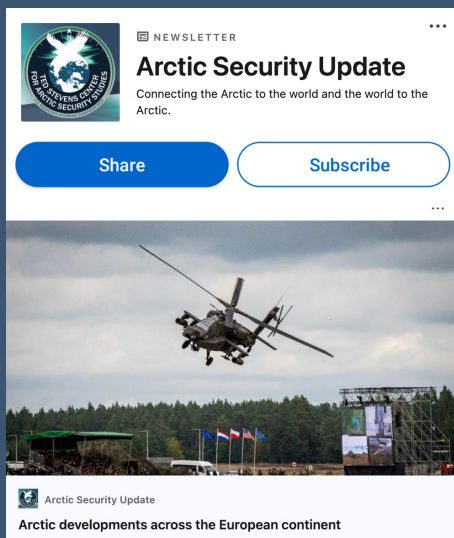
Join us for the Anchorage Security and Defense Dialogue (ASDD), taking place **Nov. 18-20, 2025**, where military leaders, policymakers, and experts will gather to address the evolving strategic challenges in the Arctic region. With this year's theme, "Peace through Strength: Deterrence in the North," we aim to strengthen deterrence in the Arctic through enhanced strategy, policy, innovation, and operational readiness.

Registration Details

Registration for this event is now open. Attendance is by invitation or approval. This event is not open to the media.

Contact Information

To access the registration link or for further inquiries please contact :
TSC-Engagements@groups.af.mil.



Continued from Page 3 Grey Zone story

cyberattacks on systems, conducting surveillance disguised as science or tourism, and contesting control of resources and sea lanes through legal grey areas.

These hybrid tactics are low-cost and difficult to attribute but can have significant strategic effects—disrupting infrastructure, degrading public trust, and shaping public perception without triggering a military response.

The discussion highlighted the limits of traditional deterrence when confronting non-kinetic threats and emphasized need for a comprehensive approach to Arctic security. This includes not just military readiness, but civil preparedness, public-private coordination, and integration of local partners into broader resilience strategies.

“In Arctic defense, Indigenous and local partnerships can serve as resilience enablers,” Gagnon said. “These networks can enable domain awareness and act as early warning systems—particularly in regions where infrastructure is limited and distances are vast.”

Conducted under Chatham House Rule, the event allowed for open dialogue among U.S. and allied alumni across the defense, government, and academic sectors. Participants discussed the strategic

challenges posed by hybrid threats in the Arctic, including how to build resilience, integrate nonmilitary actors, and adapt deterrence frameworks to counter coercive actions below the threshold of armed conflict.

The event underscored the value of the TSC Alumni Program as a platform for professional military education and knowledge-sharing among Arctic-focused security practitioners and warfighters.

“We really appreciate you all being here, and we hope to keep this conversation going,” said Wesley Moerbe, the center’s alumni relations specialist. “This is exactly the kind of professional dialogue and exchange we’re aiming to promote through the Alumni Program.”

The session is part of the center’s growing alumni engagement program, which provides continuing education opportunities for security practitioners operating in or focused on the Arctic region. It also aligns with the Department of War’s broader priorities of reestablishing deterrence, rebuilding our military, and defending the homeland in the face of emerging threats.

The next virtual alumni event is tentatively scheduled for December 2025. For updates, resources, and future event details, visit the TSC website and alumni page at: <https://tedstevensarcticcenter.org/alumni/> or log into GlobalNET.

Stay informed with our new Arctic Security Update

Arctic Security Update offers timely insights on global events through the lens of Arctic security. Each edition delivers concise, mission-focused analysis tailored for warfighters, planners, policymakers, Arctic practitioners, and our Allies and partners. Unlike institutional recaps, Arctic Security Update looks outward, connecting developments in international security, defense policy, and strategic competition to the evolving Arctic landscape. Subscribe on LinkedIn today to stay informed and ready.



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Continued from Page 1 HNSD story

The 2025 HNSD was the first of its kind for any Department of War Regional Center, with participants joining across seven different time zones to discuss topics like Arctic warfighting, technology and innovation, and protecting critical infrastructure. From early mornings in Alaska, to late evenings in Finland, participants were able to leverage the power of technology to convene online while remaining ready at their respective duty stations. The 2025 HNSD provided a new benchmark for the center's ability to collaborate effectively across the Arctic.

The HNSD delivered a condensed three days of rigorous programming designed for the Arctic practitioner. The dialogue brought together key Arctic stakeholders and experts under a Chatham House rule format to exchange perspectives and develop actionable recommendations. Daily plenary sessions presented innovative analysis, while keynote remarks from Ambassador Matthew Whitaker, Permanent Representative of the United States

to NATO, and U.S. Senator Angus King, provided strategic insights from the highest level. Seminar groups leveraged these insights in small group discussions that would later inform their final policy recommendations presented during the event and incorporated into a HNSD report.

This year's dialogue placed a sharp focus on transforming U.S. and Allied Arctic military capability in an evolving threat environment. Participants examined emerging Allied and national initiatives to improve deterrence and defense along NATO's northern flank, including joint exercises, enhanced domain awareness, and investments in critical capabilities to counter potential adversaries.

Discussions addressed the growing strategic influence of Russia and China in the Arctic and considered implications for regional stability and defense planning. Experts underscored the importance of integrated air and missile defense, resilient logistics networks, and the ability to project credible combat power in extreme conditions.

Senior leaders highlighted the value of strengthening burden-sharing arrangements and expanding public-private partnerships to secure critical infrastructure and sustain military readiness. They also explored how innovation can enhance collective deterrence.

"No single nation can secure the Arctic alone. Defense and deterrence in the region require burden sharing—it is an operational necessity. Interoperability, shared awareness, and unity of effort are essential to credible deterrence" said Randy "Church" Kee, director of the TSC. "Every step we take together signals readiness and resolve," he added.

By convening this dialogue virtually, the Ted Stevens Center and the Marshall Center reinforced their shared commitment to sustaining robust transatlantic cooperation despite geographic distance. The event fostered enduring defense relationships and actionable policy recommendations, ensuring Arctic allies and partners remain prepared to deter aggression and maintain a safe and secure region.

UPCOMING COURSES

Arctic Regional Security Orientation Course (ARSOC)

- Virtual, Oct. 27-31, 2025

Arctic Multi-Domain Legal Course (AMLC)

- Virtual, Nov. 12-14, 2025, from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. (AKST)

UPDATED COURSE

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ARCTIC MULTIDOMAIN LEGAL COURSE (AMLC)

COURSE OVERVIEW

The Arctic Multidomain Legal Course (AMLC) is a three-day, 20-hour executive education program designed for mid- to senior defense practitioners and legal professionals to work at the operational and military-strategic levels. This course cultivates a strategic community focused on identifying, understanding, and managing legal challenges that arise in the Arctic environment. This course fosters interoperability and collaboration across Arctic nations by focusing on the application of international rules in different operating environments and the reasonable differences that exist among Allies and Partners in interpreting these rules. Hosted by the Ted Stevens Center (TSC), the course aligns with the Department of Defense Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance to ensure safe and effective operations in the Arctic.

Course Objectives

Participants will:

- Identify legal issues impacting warfighting in the Arctic operating environment.
- Understand international law across relevant Arctic domains, from multiple perspectives.
- Analyze international law and apply these rules to contemporary Arctic challenges, including freedom of navigation, aircraft interception, undersea cables, unmanned systems, lawfare, and cyber-attacks.



Learning Experience

This virtual course features:

- Expert-led panel discussion and case studies.
- Asynchronous learning activities.
- Capstone scenario for applied learning.
- Networking opportunities with Arctic defense practitioners and legal professionals.



Who Should Attend:

- U.S. legal or military personnel involved in Arctic strategic or operational planning.
- Legal or military professionals from Allied and Partner nations involved in Arctic strategic or operational planning.
- Graduates from ARSOC or other TSC courses.
- Defense practitioners and legal professionals seeking an advanced understanding of legal issues in the Arctic.

WHY IT MATTERS

International law provides principles and rules that govern Arctic security and defense across maritime, air, space, land, and cyber domains. This course provides an understanding of legal issues in relevant Arctic domains, across different operating environments. It also provides a nuanced understanding of differences in interpreting these rules of the game in the Arctic. Deeper understanding will foster interoperability, lower risk, and strengthen deterrence, defense, and stability in the Arctic. No other university-based or executive education course takes this comprehensive approach.

The Arctic Multi-Domain Legal Course is now open for enrollment

Recently updated, AMLC is a three-day virtual course that examines the most relevant Arctic legal frameworks, instruments, and concepts in relevant domains from U.S. and Allied perspectives. It situates the discussion in the context of current challenges, including freedom of navigation, aircraft interception, search and rescue, undersea cables, unmanned systems, lawfare, and cyber-attacks. This course prepares mid- to senior-level security practitioners and legal professionals for work at the operational and military-strategic levels. Deeper understanding and enhanced knowledge will help to integrate operations, lower risk, and add to deterrence, defense, and stability in the Arctic. There is no other executive education course offered in the United States or among Arctic allies and partners that takes this comprehensive approach.

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TSC shapes strategic dialogue during the 2025 Alaska Defense Forum

The Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies contributed to the 2025 Alaska Defense Forum, held last month in Fairbanks. TSC leaders moderated the forum's cornerstone panels on global context and Alaska's joint military leadership, guiding discussions on infrastructure resilience, Arctic security, and the region's connection to Indo-Pacific operations. Centered on the theme "Ready Mission, Powered by Community," this year's forum emphasized aligning defense priorities with regional partnerships to strengthen readiness across the state. TSC's continued engagement directly supports the Department of War's efforts to restore deterrence and defend the homeland in the Arctic.



TSC advances Indo-Pacific security cooperation through Arctic education

Earlier this month, the Dean of the School for Arctic Security Studies, Matthew Bell, delivered an Arctic-focused briefing to four Mongolian noncommissioned officers visiting Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson's Professional Military Education Center. The engagement supported U.S. efforts to strengthen international PME participation and deepen security cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners operating in or near the Arctic. By providing tailored Arctic education, TSC reinforces the strategic alignment of regional allies and partners in deterring threats, including those posed by China. The session reflects the Department of War's priorities to build partner capacity, expand high-latitude understanding, and defend the homeland through integrated deterrence.



Strategic literacy powers the mission: TSC briefs 11th Airborne Division

TSC faculty and staff delivered an Arctic orientation brief to leaders from the 11th Airborne Division during senior leader professional development sessions held last month on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Focused on strategic literacy and the operational demands of Arctic warfare, the session reinforced how education strengthens hard power by preparing soldiers to operate in extreme conditions across vast and logistically complex terrain. TSC's engagement helps ground forces understand the region's strategic relevance to homeland defense, deterrence, and future operations in the Arctic region.



ALUMNI NEWS AND UPDATES



Alumni in the spotlight: Master Sgt. Emerson Sullivan, championing Arctic security

This month, we are honored to spotlight a highly committed alumnus, Master Sgt. Emerson Sullivan. After a distinguished 20-year career in the U.S. Army, Sullivan is transitioning to a new chapter, pursuing a PhD to further his contributions to defense and security studies, with a special focus on the Arctic region.

A graduate of the Military College of Vermont, Sullivan recently completed his master's degree. His deep interest in Arctic policy and defense emerged early in his career. While serving with the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFA), he recognized the increasing strategic importance of the Arctic. This made his later assignment to the re-established 11th Airborne Division, the "Arctic Angels" in Alaska, a particularly fitting new role. During his time in Alaska, he became a knowledgeable and enthusiastic participant in initiatives like ICE-PPR, the Maritime Risk Symposium, and Arctic Operational Risk.

As the senior enlisted advisor for the protection warfighting function, Sullivan applied his research and insights from the Ted Stevens Center's courses to operational planning. His contributions were particularly notable during exercises like JPMRC and Swift Response. Sullivan commends the TSC for its wide-ranging approach to education, which actively engages non-commissioned officers across all joint force ranks—a level of engagement he had not previously experienced.

Even with his retirement from active service approaching, Sullivan recently participated in our NATO in the North course to deepen his expertise. We congratulate Sullivan on his remarkable achievements and are pleased to confer upon him the TSC Alumni laudatory seal for his outstanding contributions. We eagerly anticipate his continued impact on Arctic security in his future endeavors.



Alumni Colleagues,

We've added a number of colleagues to our ranks with the completion of NATO in the North this month. As a facilitator during the course, it was a privilege to welcome several of you to the TSC family. I'd also like to thank those who joined us on Sept. 23 for the Grey-Zone Competition in the Arctic event. Our speaker and moderator set a high bar for expert and valuable discourse. Be looking for our survey soon and please share with us your recommendations and thoughts on the next Alumni Outreach Event topic or speaker. You can also share at tsc-alumni@groups.af.mil.

Respectfully yours,
Wes "Yukon" Moerbe
Alumni Relations Specialist

SUBMISSION DEADLINE EXTENDED



Journal of Arctic Security, Special STEM Edition 2025 Call for Papers

The Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies announces an article submission deadline of **October 31, 2025** for contributions to JAS Vol. 5, a special STEM edition for release in spring 2026.

Increasing focus on meeting the strategic, operational, and tactical challenges of the Arctic operating environment has led to new and promising research. Foundational scientific research improves understanding of the remote and rapidly changing region while development and testing of emerging technologies promises to provide near term solutions. Researchers are invited to submit papers on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) solutions to Arctic challenges:

1. **The Arctic Operating Environment:** We welcome submissions that explore the Arctic operating environment in all the warfighting domains. This includes, but is not limited to, studies on sea ice dynamics, meteorology, bathymetry, or permafrost thaw with implications for national security, defense, and military operations. Papers may also cover advancements in remote sensing and modeling that highlight their relevance to security strategies and policies.
2. **Arctic Engineering:** Submissions should focus on innovative engineering solutions tailored to the Arctic's extreme conditions with implications for national security. Topics of interest include the development of cold-resistant materials, ice-resistant structures, and the adaptation of infrastructure to the changing Arctic environment, which are critical for ensuring the safety and operational capabilities of national assets in the region.
3. **Renewable Energy and Sustainability:** This section seeks papers on the adaptation and implementation of renewable energy technologies in the Arctic, underscoring their strategic importance for energy security. Research on improving the efficiency, sustainability, and reliability of renewable sources such as wind, solar, and tidal energy in cold climates is particularly encouraged, with a focus on their role in reducing dependencies and enhancing the resilience of both military and civilian operations.
4. **Marine Biology and Ecosystems:** We invite research that addresses the shifting marine ecosystems within the Arctic Circle and their implications for national security. Studies may focus on changes in biodiversity, the effects of environmental stressors on marine organisms, and conservation strategies to protect Arctic marine life, considering their significance for sustaining fish stocks and maintaining ecological balance in strategic waters.
5. **Telecommunications and Technology Development:** We invite contributions that focus on enhancing communication technologies in the Arctic, emphasizing their strategic importance for national security. Papers may include the development of robust infrastructure, innovations in data transmission methods, and solutions for improving digital connectivity in remote and extreme environments, essential for secure and reliable communications for defense and emergency response.
6. **Below Zero Medicine- Medical Research and Health Care in the Arctic:** This section calls for papers on medical research, health care practices, and emergency response strategies specifically tailored to the harsh Arctic environment. Submissions should explore the unique medical challenges faced by inhabitants and transient populations in this region, such as issues related to hypothermia, frostbite, and vitamin D deficiencies. Papers could also discuss the development and adaptation of medical technologies and telemedicine solutions designed for remote and isolated communities, emphasizing their implications for national security by ensuring the health and readiness of military personnel and civilian populations in strategic Arctic areas.

Submissions of 4,000 – 6,500 words in APA Style with author's curriculum vitae will be accepted by the editorial staff at TSC-JACSS@groups.af.mil.

JAS is a peer-reviewed academic publication. Articles are unclassified, and readers can access articles from all over the world. Submissions will be accepted in English language, clearly written for an informed audience of defense and security affairs professionals and academics.

Scan the QR code to see the latest Journal and the JAS Writer's Guide



Director's Monthly Note



Dear and Distinguished Colleagues,

September marks the start of the colder, darker months here in Alaska. From our headquarters on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson we can see the first light snowfall in the Chugach Mountains, what we call “termination dust,” signaling the end of summer. For those of us in the North, winter isn’t far off, and so too are the many associated challenges of operating in one of the world’s most challenging environments. At the Ted Stevens Center, September marked another significant period of progress,

underscoring the Center’s role in advancing U.S. and allied understanding of the Arctic operating environment.

The High North Security Dialogue, co-hosted with the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies convened over 40 senior defense and security leaders to examine defense and deterrence in the High North. The dialogue reinforced the enduring value of transatlantic cooperation and the necessity for interoperability and burden-sharing.

We also hosted the inaugural NATO in the North course conducted in partnership with the NATO Center of Excellence for Cold Weather Operations. The course was a milestone in professional military education focused on addressing emerging Arctic threats through a NATO framework.

Finally, the Grey Zone Competition in the Arctic alumni event examined the varied coercive tactics employed by states below the threshold of armed conflict. The exchange of insights among practitioners and scholars reaffirmed the need for innovative approaches to complex security challenges.

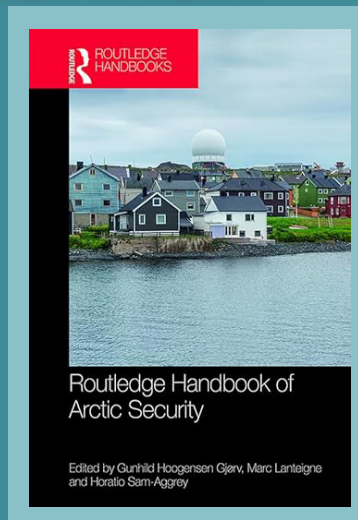
These efforts reflect the Center’s mission to develop Arctic practitioners, build partnerships, and strengthen the capabilities of the United States and its allies to address the demands of the shifting Arctic strategic and operational environment. I am truly honored to continue to advance this mission. My sincere thanks and appreciation to each of you for your support of our Center.

Very Respectfully,
Maj. Gen. (ret.) Randy "Church" Kee
Director, Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies

DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY READING RECOMMENDATION

Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security
by Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv (Editor), Marc Lanteigne (Editor), Horatio Sam-Aggrey (Editor)

Since the turn of the century, the Arctic has increasingly been in the global spotlight, resulting in the often invoked idea of “Arctic exceptionalism” being questioned. The Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security offers a comprehensive examination of security in the region, encompassing both state-based and militarized notions of security, as well as broader security perspectives reflecting debates about changes in the Arctic.



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