

ERA OF ADVENTURE: PROTECTING OUR ARCTIC FROM RUSSIA AND CHINA

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The Arctic's remote location and challenging terrain has kept the region safe for years. That reality has changed. As climate change causes the Arctic to warm at four times the global average, growing access to Arctic resources and shipping lanes is enticing nations to the region and heightening competition. This evolving environment creates new security challenges and requires us to increase our attention on the region.

As Arctic and non-Arctic states seek to share the region's natural resource potential and exploit its strategic position, maintaining regional stability and promoting the rules-based international order is increasingly urgent. Our adversaries, principally Russia and China, are rapidly developing and strengthening their militaries' ability and capacity to operate in the Arctic region.

Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine served as a grave reminder of the Russian regime's willingness to undermine peace and stability in pursuit of its goals. Russia is investing significantly in its own Arctic military capabilities, increasing its activity in our air approaches, and developing weapons specifically designed to reach North America – including through our Arctic approaches.

China, despite not being an Arctic nation, is taking steps to position itself as a “polar great power” and calling itself a “near-Arctic state”. We are seeing a growing number of Chinese vessels and surveillance platforms in Arctic waters that are mapping and collecting data in the region. China is also developing military capabilities, and seeking to establish footholds and gain influence over Arctic governance and communities. The recent joint bomber flight

between China and Russia off the coast of Alaska, serves as a stern reminder of these ambitions.

For all democracies so well represented here in Halifax, the common set of rules and values that enable and protect our way of life are becoming increasingly threatened by our adversaries. For our part, this called-on Canada to invest in North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) modernization and increase defence spending through our updated defence policy, *Our North, Strong and Free* (ONSAF) – which places particular emphasis on the Arctic and its approaches.

We are committed to having the tools and capabilities necessary to protect our interests and our sovereignty. ONSAF invests \$73 billion over the next 20 years to ensure the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are properly equipped to deter modern security challenges, including those in the Arctic. A stronger Canadian Arctic translates to stronger collective defence. Our commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the region is best achieved when we work together.

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Interoperability is critical to working in collaboration with our Allies and partners. Our 2022 investment of over \$38 billion to modernize our contribution to NORAD supports seamless interoperability with the United States. This enhances the shared air defence of our nations as we confront 21st century threats together, including in the North. The stronger and safer we are at home, the more we are capable of engaging and acting together in the wider world, in support of a strong rules-based international order.

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Our work in the Arctic would not be possible without the communities that live there. Everything we do in the Arctic is guided by the 2019 Arctic and Northern Policy Framework's principle of "nothing about us, without us." Working with Indigenous communities in the North is essential to enhancing the defence of the region. This is precisely why we are investing in multi-purpose infrastructure that both supports CAF operations and contributes to the needs of territorial governments, Indigenous Peoples, and Northern communities. This provides the CAF with necessary tools to operate effectively in the North and Arctic, while ensuring Northern communities have access to valuable infrastructure.

Our greatest advantage against potential adversaries is the strength of our alliances and partnerships. Threats to the Arctic cannot be viewed in isolation. Security challenges in the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific are increasingly interlinked. Securing our Arctic and globally integrating our planning will help keep North America safe, allow us to support our Allies abroad, and deter global conflict.

Recently, Canada and the other six Arctic member-states of NATO participated in a Northern Defence Dialogue and emphasized our shared commitment to enhanced collaboration on security and defence in the Arctic. These types of Arctic-focused meetings are necessary as we look to strengthen collaboration in the face of unprecedented challenges to global stability.

Our adversaries are working hard to gain ground in the Arctic and we must ensure that we have the capabilities to assert our sovereignty and protect the region. This requires the collective work of all of us at Halifax International Security Forum. As democracies, we must come together to defend the Arctic, and with it our national security interests.

The logo for Halifax International Security Forum (HFx) is displayed in a large, light blue circle in the bottom right corner of the page. The letters 'HFx' are in a bold, white, sans-serif font.