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1ST SESSION

S. 3080

To state the policy of the United States regarding the need for strategic placement of military assets in the Arctic, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 18, 2019

Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself, Mr. KING, and Ms. MURKOWSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To state the policy of the United States regarding the need for strategic placement of military assets in the Arctic, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Strategic Arctic Naval
5 Focus Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) The strategic importance of the Arctic con-
9 tinues to increase as the United States and other

1 countries recognize the military significance of the
2 sea lanes and choke points within the region and un-
3 derstand the potential for power projection from the
4 Arctic into multiple regions.

5 (2) On January 19, 2018, Secretary of Defense
6 James Mattis released the “2018 National Defense
7 Strategy of the United States of America” in which
8 the Secretary outlined the reemergence of long-term,
9 strategic competition by countries classified by the
10 National Security Strategy as revisionist powers
11 such as China and Russia.

12 (3) Russia and China have conducted military
13 exercises together in the Arctic, have agreed to con-
14 nect the Northern Sea Route, claimed by Russia,
15 with China’s Maritime Silk Road, and are working
16 together in developing natural gas resources in the
17 Arctic.

18 (4) The Government of the Russian Federa-
19 tion—

20 (A) has prioritized the development of Arc-
21 tic capabilities and has made significant invest-
22 ments in military infrastructure in the Arctic,
23 including the creation of a new Arctic Com-
24 mand and the construction or refurbishment of

1 16 deepwater ports and 14 airfields in the re-
2 gion;

3 (B) has approximately 40 icebreakers as of
4 May 2019, including several nuclear-powered
5 icebreakers, is currently constructing four ice-
6 breakers, and is planning to build an additional
7 eight icebreakers; and

8 (C) conducted the largest military exercise
9 since the 1980s, Vostok 2018, which included—

10 (i) 300,000 troops;

11 (ii) 1,000 aircraft;

12 (iii) 80 ships;

13 (iv) 36,000 vehicles; and

14 (v) notably, 3,200 Chinese troops, 30
15 Chinese rotary and fixed-wing aircraft, and
16 900 Chinese tanks.

17 (5) The Government of the People’s Republic of
18 China—

19 (A) released, in January 2018, its new
20 Arctic Strategy, the Polar Silk Road, in which
21 it declares itself as a “near-Arctic state”, even
22 though its nearest territory to the Arctic is 900
23 miles away;

24 (B) has publicly stated that it seeks to ex-
25 pand its “Belt and Road Initiative” to the Arc-

1 tic region, including current investment in the
2 natural gas fields in the Yamal Peninsula in
3 Russia, rare-earth element mines in Greenland,
4 and the real estate, alternative energy, and fish-
5 eries in Iceland; and

6 (C) has shown great interest in expanding
7 its Arctic presence, including through—

8 (i) the operation of research vessels in
9 the region;

10 (ii) the recent construction of the
11 Xuelong 2, or Snow Dragon II, the only
12 polar research boat vessel in the world that
13 can break ice while going forward or back-
14 ward;

15 (iii) a freedom of navigation operation
16 in the Aleutian Islands in 2015; and

17 (iv) its recent plans to develop a
18 33,000 ton nuclear-powered icebreaker.

19 (6) The economic significance of the Arctic con-
20 tinues to grow as countries around the globe begin
21 to understand the magnitude of the natural re-
22 sources in the Arctic, the potential for maritime
23 transportation through, and economic and trade de-
24 velopment in, the region.

1 (7) The Arctic is home to 13 percent of the
2 world's undiscovered oil, 30 percent of its undis-
3 covered gas, an abundance of uranium, rare earth
4 minerals, gold, diamonds, and millions of square
5 miles of untapped resources, including abundant
6 fisheries.

7 (8) The Bering Strait is experiencing signifi-
8 cant increases in international traffic from vessels
9 transiting the Northern Sea Route, increases which
10 are projected to continue if decreases in sea ice cov-
11 erage continue.

12 (9) Along a future ice-free Arctic shipping
13 route, a ship sailing from South Korea to Germany
14 would have an average travel time of just 23 days,
15 compared to 34 days via the Suez Canal and 46
16 days via the Cape of Good Hope.

17 (10) In a speech at the Arctic Forum in Sep-
18 tember 2011, Russian Federation President Vladi-
19 mir Putin highlighted the Northern Sea Route as a
20 potential alternative to the Suez Canal and has pub-
21 licly stated plans to invest \$11,400,000,000 along
22 the Northern Sea Route by 2024.

23 (11) Increases in human, maritime, and re-
24 source development activity in the Arctic region cre-
25 ate additional mission requirements for the Depart-

1 ment of Defense and the Department of Homeland
2 Security, given—

3 (A) the strategic focus of the Government
4 of the Russian Federation and the Government
5 of the People’s Republic of China on the Arctic;

6 (B) overlapping territorial claims; and

7 (C) the potential for maritime accidents,
8 oil spills, and illegal fishing near the exclusive
9 economic zone of the United States.

10 (12) The increasing role of the United States in
11 the Arctic has been highlighted in each of the last
12 four National Defense Authorization Acts.

13 (13) Section 1068 of the National Defense Au-
14 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law
15 114–92; 129 Stat. 992) required a new Department
16 of Defense strategy to protect United States na-
17 tional security interests in the Arctic region.

18 (14) Section 1095 of the National Defense Au-
19 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law
20 114–328; 130 Stat. 2438) required the Department
21 of Defense to create criteria to designate a Depart-
22 ment of Defense Strategic Arctic Port.

23 (15) Section 122 of the National Defense Au-
24 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (Public Law

1 115–91; 131 Stat. 1310) authorized the procure-
2 ment of one polar-class heavy icebreaker vessel.

3 (16) Section 151 of the John S. McCain Na-
4 tional Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year
5 2019 (Public Law 115–232; 132 Stat. 1671) author-
6 ized the procurement of five additional polar-class
7 icebreaker vessels and expressed that the Coast
8 Guard should—

9 (A) maintain an inventory of not fewer
10 than six polar-class icebreaker vessels;

11 (B) award a contract for the first new
12 polar-class icebreaker not later than fiscal year
13 2019 and deliver the icebreaker not later than
14 fiscal year 2023; and

15 (C) deliver the second through sixth polar-
16 class icebreakers at a rate of one vessel per
17 year in fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

18 (17) In January 2017, the Department of De-
19 fense released a report entitled “Report to Congress
20 on Strategy to Protect United States National Secu-
21 rity Interests in the Arctic Region” to update “the
22 ways and means” the Department of Defense in-
23 tends to use to achieve its objectives as it imple-
24 ments the 2013 National Strategy for the Arctic Re-
25 gion, including—

1 (A) enhancing the capability of United
2 States forces to defend the homeland and exer-
3 cise sovereignty;

4 (B) strengthening deterrence at home and
5 abroad;

6 (C) preserving freedom of the seas in the
7 Arctic; and

8 (D) evolving the infrastructure and capa-
9 bilities of the Department in the Arctic con-
10 sistent with changing conditions and needs.

11 (18) The United States Coast Guard Arctic
12 Strategic Outlook released in April 2019 states that
13 “[d]emonstrating commitment to operational pres-
14 ence, Canada, Denmark, and Norway have made
15 strategic investments in ice-capable patrol ships
16 charged with national or homeland security missions.
17 [The United States] is the only Arctic State that
18 has not made similar investments in ice-capable sur-
19 face maritime security assets. This limits the ability
20 of the Coast Guard, and the Nation, to credibly up-
21 hold sovereignty or respond to contingencies in the
22 Arctic”.

23 (19) On July 16, 2019, Secretary of Defense
24 Mark Esper stated that “[t]he Arctic is strategic
25 terrain for the United States. The region has signifi-

1 cant economic opportunity, and must remain free
2 and open. It is also growing more complicated as
3 strategic competitors—Russia and, increasingly,
4 China—seek to enhance their position in the region.
5 It is critical that the Arctic remain a secure and sta-
6 ble region where U.S. national interests are safe-
7 guarded, the U.S. homeland is defended, and nations
8 work together to address challenges”.

9 (20) On January 9, 2019, Secretary of the Air
10 Force Heather Wilson and Chief of Staff of the Air
11 Force General David Goldfein wrote that “. . . the
12 Arctic has become even more important to the na-
13 tion. Both a northern approach to the United
14 States, as well as a critical location for projecting
15 American power, its geo-strategic significance is dif-
16 ficult to overstate”.

17 (21) On February 26, 2019, General John
18 Hyten, Commander of the United States Strategic
19 Command, stated that “[i]n particular, the Arctic is
20 an area that we really need to focus on and really
21 look at investing. That is no longer a buffer zone.
22 We need to be able to operate there. We need to be
23 able to communicate there. We need to have a pres-
24 ence there that we have not invested in in the same
25 way that our adversaries have. And they see that as

1 a vulnerability from us, whereas it is becoming a
2 strength for them and it is a weakness for us, we
3 need to flip that equation”.

4 (22) On February 26, 2019, General Terrence
5 O’Shaughnessy, Commander of the United States
6 Northern Command stated that “[i]t has become
7 clear that defense of the homeland depends on our
8 ability to detect and defeat threats operating both in
9 the Arctic and passing through the Arctic. Russia’s
10 fielding of advanced, long-range cruise missiles capa-
11 ble of flying through the northern approaches and
12 striking targets in the United States and Canada
13 has emerged as the dominant military threat in the
14 Arctic. . . . Meanwhile, China has declared that it
15 is not content to remain a mere observer in the Arc-
16 tic and has taken action to normalize its naval and
17 commercial presence in the region in order to in-
18 crease its access to lucrative resources and shipping
19 routes. I view the Arctic as the front line in the de-
20 fense of the United States and Canada . . .”.

21 (23) On May 6, 2019, Admiral Karl Schultz,
22 Commandant of the Coast Guard stated that “[w]e
23 talk about the Arctic as a competitive space. We’ve
24 seen China, we see Russia investing extensively.
25 China built icebreakers in the time since we updated

1 our strategy. China’s been operating off the Alaskan
2 Arctic for a good part of the last six years on an an-
3 nual basis. [The Coast Guard is] championing in-
4 creased capabilities in the Arctic . . . better commu-
5 nications, better domain awareness . . . I want to
6 see the Arctic remain a peaceful domain. China’s a
7 self-declared Arctic state. They’re not one of the
8 eight Arctic nations, so for me, for the service, its
9 presence equals influence”.

10 (24) On May 6, 2019, Secretary of State Mike
11 Pompeo stated that—

12 (A) the Arctic “has become an arena for
13 power and for competition”, and the United
14 States is “entering a new age of strategic en-
15 gagement in the Arctic, complete with new
16 threats to the Arctic and its real estate, and to
17 all of our interests in that region”;

18 (B) “Arctic sea lanes could become the
19 21st century Suez and Panama Canals”;

20 (C) “[w]e’re concerned about Russia’s
21 claim over the international waters of the
22 Northern Sea Route, including its newly an-
23 nounced plans to connect it with China’s Mari-
24 time Silk Road”;

1 (D) “[i]n the Northern Sea Route, Moscow
2 already illegally demands other nations request
3 permission to pass, requires Russian maritime
4 pilots to be aboard foreign ships, and threatens
5 to use military force to sink any that fail to
6 comply with their demands”;

7 (E) there is a “pattern of aggressive Rus-
8 sian behavior here in the Arctic” and “we know
9 Russian territorial ambitions can turn violent”;
10 and

11 (F) we do not want “the Arctic Ocean to
12 transform into a new South China Sea, fraught
13 with militarization and competing territorial
14 claims”, nor do we want “the fragile Arctic en-
15 vironment exposed to the same ecological devas-
16 tation caused by China’s fishing fleet in the
17 seas off its coast, or unregulated industrial ac-
18 tivity in its own country”.

19 (25) On December 6, 2018, Secretary of the
20 Navy Richard Spencer stated that “[w]e need to
21 have a strategic Arctic port up in Alaska. We need
22 to be doing FONOPs in the northwest—in the
23 northern passage . . . peace through presence with
24 a submarine is a little tough”.

1 (26) Meanwhile, the two closest strategic sea-
2 ports, as designated by the Department of Defense,
3 to the Arctic Circle are the Port of Anchorage and
4 the Port of Tacoma, located approximately 1,500
5 nautical miles and 2,400 nautical miles away, re-
6 spectively, and approximately 1,900 nautical miles
7 and 2,800 nautical miles respectively from Barrow,
8 Alaska.

9 (27) The distance from Bangor, Maine, to Key
10 West, Florida, is approximately 1,450 nautical miles.

11 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

12 It is the policy of the United States—

13 (1) to prioritize Navy and Coast Guard mis-
14 sions, infrastructure and capability development,
15 training, and stationing of assets to meet the grow-
16 ing array of challenges in the Arctic due to the re-
17 gion’s strategic importance to the national security
18 interests of the United States;

19 (2) that the increasing freedom of navigation
20 and expansion of activity in the Arctic must be met
21 with increasing deployment of Navy and Coast
22 Guard surface vessels capable of exerting influence
23 through persistent presence in the Arctic;

24 (3) that, while the recapitalization of the Coast
25 Guard’s fleet of cutters and aircraft is needed and

1 important, the Coast Guard must avoid overex-
2 tending operational assets for remote international
3 missions at the cost of dedicated focus on this do-
4 mestic area of responsibility with significant inter-
5 national interest and activity; and

6 (4) that, although some progress has been made
7 to increase awareness of Arctic issues and to pro-
8 mote increased military presence in the region, addi-
9 tional measures shall be taken to protect vital eco-
10 nomic, environmental, and national security interests
11 of the United States, and to show the commitment
12 of the United States to this emerging strategic
13 choke point of increasing great power competition,
14 including the formation of an Arctic Security Initia-
15 tive with the funding and authority to drive—

16 (A) the creation of a network of strategi-
17 cally advantageous ports in the Arctic;

18 (B) the long-term homeporting of signifi-
19 cant Coast Guard assets in the Arctic;

20 (C) the development of Navy and Coast
21 Guard ship maintenance and repair relation-
22 ships with facilities located within Alaska in or
23 near the Arctic;

24 (D) increased military training for oper-
25 ating in the Arctic environment; and

1 (E) the creation of a Department of De-
2 fense Center for Security Studies for the Arctic.

3 **SEC. 4. REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC NAVAL FOCUS IN THE**
4 **ARCTIC.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the
6 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense
7 in consultation with the Secretary of the department in
8 which the Coast Guard is operating shall submit to the
9 appropriate committees of Congress a report on the devel-
10 opment and execution of a strategic plan that focuses on
11 addressing the findings in section 2 and the policy stated
12 in section 3.

13 (b) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subsection
14 (a) shall include a detailed plan to achieve the following:

15 (1) The creation of a Department of Defense
16 Strategic Arctic Port by 2035.

17 (2) The establishment of the position of Deputy
18 Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Arctic tasked
19 with optimizing the Unified Command Plan for the
20 Arctic and other overarching strategies for the Ar-
21 ctic region.

22 (3) The procurement of not fewer than four ice-
23 hardened Navy vessels by 2030.

24 (4) Not fewer than one ice-hardened Navy ves-
25 sel on patrol in the Arctic and able to maintain mar-

1 itime domain awareness, conduct training exercises,
2 and perform national defense operations not fewer
3 than six months of every year.

4 (5) Not fewer than one major Coast Guard cut-
5 ter on patrol in the Arctic and able to execute search
6 and rescue operations, fisheries enforcement, pollu-
7 tion response, and support for national defense oper-
8 ations at all times.

9 (6) Not fewer than two icebreaking vessels per-
10 manently stationed within the Arctic by 2035.

11 (7) Sufficient icebreaking activity to keep the
12 Northwest Passage sea lanes open for commerce, na-
13 tional defense, rescue and recovery operations, and
14 scientific exploration by 2030.

15 (c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DE-
16 FINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate commit-
17 tees of Congress” means—

18 (1) the Committee on Armed Services, the
19 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-
20 tation, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the
21 Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

22 (2) the Committee on Armed Services, the
23 Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
24 the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Com-

1 mittee on Appropriations of the House of Represent-
2 atives.

3 **SEC. 5. ARCTIC DEFINED.**

4 In this Act, the term “Arctic” has the meaning given
5 that term in section 112 of the Arctic Research and Policy
6 Act of 1984 (15 U.S.C. 4111).

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