JSOU Quick Look

ArcticNEXT: Compound Security Threats in Strategic Competition

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DATES IN ALASKAN HISTORY

1867
Alaska purchase

1867-1877
Alaska occupied and administered by U.S. Army

1877-1897
Withdrawal of U.S. Army, de facto civil rule by U.S. Navy and U.S. Internal Revenue Service

1884
Alaska's first civilian governor

1897-1920
Return of U.S. Army to provide law and order during Gold Rush

1920-1940
Decline of military presence and recognition of Alaska's strategic importance

1939
Fort Wainwright established

1940
Elmendorf Air Force Base established

1940
Fort Richardson established

1940-1945
Buildup of forces/World War II

1942
Alaska Territorial Guard (a.k.a. "Eskimo Scouts") organized

1945-1990
Cold War defense of Alaska, Arctic training, and humanitarian services

What is ArcticNEXT?

ArcticNEXT is a collaborative effort designed to provide the Nation with the best available approaches for compound security threats in strategic competition and is set in a priority defense region. It is part of a Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) full-spectrum doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P)[1] program serving the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) enterprise working across joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multinational, and commercial (JIIM-C) partnerships in service to the Joint Force. ArcticNEXT spans research and analysis (R&A), teaching and learning (T&L), and service and outreach (S&O) activities, bringing together partners from across the interagency, academia, NATO,[2] and the Services together to tackle preparedness, operational, intelligence, and emergent technological challenges in the High North. It is generating collaborative solutions that are transferable elsewhere in the world while emphasizing the first Special Operations Forces (SOF) Truth, "Humans are more important than hardware."[3]

Preamble

The Department of Defense (DOD) and USSOCOM lack a cohesive and adaptive Arctic narrative focused on the operational needs of the DOD in a world challenged by compound security threats in strategic competition and climate change. The development of an operational and SOF-peculiar set of requirements and strategies will help USSOCOM acquire appropriate technologies and inform force preparedness, modernization, and planning through improved resilience and adaptation. ArcticNEXT is not geography bound; instead, the region provides an unparalleled test bed from which lessons learned can be applied to other austere and extreme environments globally. ArcticNEXT focuses on the roles of SOF by articulating what is needed to move past historic discourse[4] and tactics that may be maladaptive to defense supremacy.

The Arctic region provides an unparalleled setting to understand the elements and dynamics of compound security threats in strategic competition as it relates to evolving definitions and applications of irregular warfare (IW) and unconventional warfare (UW).[5] It is also a region that incurs high operations costs and where titles and authorities relevant to shared defense and security are underutilized. Contributing to the ambiguity of DOD approaches to the Arctic are the lack of rigorous and applied integration of the social and physical sciences and poorly defined requirements for data and technology needs for the SOF enterprise.

While academic and nongovernmental organization Arctic narratives have a long history, they have remained relatively homogeneous and can be grouped into five general categories:

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DATES IN ALASKAN HISTORY (cont.)

1947
Alaska Territorial Guard disestablished

1948
Mile 26 Satellite Field renamed Eielson Air Force Base

1957
North American Air Defense Command established

1959
Alaska statehood

1989
Alaska Command established

2010
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson established

2015
National Security Council Arctic Executive Steering Committee/ Executive Order 13689

1. International Relations and Geopolitics: Strategies and Policies
2. Shared Public Safety: Search and Rescue, Humanitarian Assistance, and Disaster Response
3. Economics
4. Climate Change
5. Indigenous Peoples

Conversely, U.S. Government (USG) Arctic-relevant strategic outlooks, blueprints, approaches, and strategies are relatively recent, with the first post-Cold War mention of Arctic security occurring in the 2008 national defense strategy (NDS). Subsequently, there has been little coordination across the DOD for force multiplication, and only the U.S. Army's Regaining Arctic Dominance strategy addresses some of the adaptations needed for compound security threats in strategic competition approaches outside conventional warfare.

JSOU's ArcticNEXT has three lines of effort (LOE):

LOE 1. Teaching and Learning: Education for Force Readiness and Modernization. New curriculum enables SOF professionals to quickly assess scenarios to develop strategies and tactics based on understanding of compounding risk factors that include social, technological, political, and biophysical dynamics as part of a compound security threats in strategic competition complex system. Modernization refers to sharpening America's competitive edge in all aspects of the DOD mission set across DOTMLPF-P but especially by investing in SOF's greatest asset—their people.

LOE 2. Research and Analysis: Enabling SOF to Provide the Competitive Advantage. This includes working with J- and G- elements across USSOCOM and the DOD, as well as with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and National Intelligence University. Together, they are already better equipped to identify which data and information sets are needed for any given scenario or mission, how they can be easily acquired at the speed of need, and which technologies and human terrain elements are necessary to operationalize them. The R&A LOE has already produced transferable methods that integrate social dynamics and community engagement for enhanced domain awareness as part of integrated deterrence. ArcticNEXT's applied program, Project Niflheim, works with vetted academic and USG organizations to produce spatially explicit indication and warning (I&W) for emergent compound security threats in strategic competition threats and opportunities. These adaptive I&W indicators allow SOF and JIIM-C to forecast emergent issues spanning the range of compound security threats in strategic competition activities and increase understanding of IW/UW. Early warnings not only help guide precise interventions with optimal timing but also refine and adapt emergent technology, intelligence, and data requirements for use by operators.

LOE 3. Service and Outreach: Ensuring a Whole-of-Government Approach. This is achieved by partnering with theater special operations commands, geographic combatant commands, and the interagency to improve Joint Force readiness. It also provides USSOCOM the elements of the NEXTNavigator, which integrates compound security threats in strategic competition inputs from across the SOF enterprise. JSOU's partner constellation is a distributed, wide-reaching, and comprehensive set of assets across the Nation, reflecting the diversity of sectors, cultures, and needs.

Outcomes and Effects

Together with JSOU's constellation of partners and participants, ArcticNEXT is providing, for the first time, cohesion and critical mass in service of SOF's mission set as well as to the Joint Force. While it uses the Arctic as a test bed, its broader focus on compound security threats in strategic competition provides tangible outcomes and products including:

1. Arctic Navigator—a research and engineering-enabled means to identify and coordinate opportunities for integrated deterrence in compound security threats in strategic competition
2. The Kitchen—consisting of USG and USG-affiliated academics who meet to address Arctic and compound security threats in strategic competition operational problems through solutions, matchmaking, and action
3. Compound security threats in strategic competition focused events through JSOU's periodic quarterly forum
4. The Arctic Technical Requirements Group concept of operations partnership with the Joint Staff Multinational Capability Development Campaign Climate Security Working Group
5. A set of compound security threats in strategic competition education modules, including Arctic specific, which are geared to the SOF professional but accessible DOD wide with university accredited certification
6. Partnerships with indigenous and other Arctic communities

Resilience and Adaptation: The SOF Approach

The security and ability for the Nation to survive relies on its ability to adapt to compound security threats and opportunities that are part of a rapidly changing planet. The Arctic, previously considered an inaccessible backwater, is now a theater for strategic competition. Arctic strategies are relatively recent with the first mention occurring in the 2008 NDS and culminating in a proliferation of strategic outlooks in the last five years. While their emphasis remains fixed on conventional approaches, the SOF enterprise is taking a more comprehensive, integrated, complex systems science approach, leveraging its ability to develop networks across the Joint Force, allies, private sector, academia, and local and indigenous peoples for the competitive edge in addressing compound security threats in strategic competition globally. ArcticNEXT is unpacking how to best understand and forecast operational needs in regions like the Arctic and reflects SOF's unique capabilities to better understand complex aspects of IW/UW. This understanding is leading the way in guiding how future strategies are developed for a more resilient, peaceful, and stable world by drawing on the entire range of the SOF enterprise skillset.

The SOF Enterprise

JSOU's ArcticNEXT efforts focus on the breadth of compound security threats in strategic competition dynamics and are connected to the broader suite of JSOU integrated programs of study, as well as the USSOCOM J5 Donovan Innovation Group. Together with interagency partners, ArcticNEXT both serves and guides the development of future strategies, policies, and implementation plans. Working with the Joint Staff; SOF Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; and the DOD MINERVA program, they can achieve better integration of social and physical sciences with technology needs and acquisition. At its core, however, ArcticNEXT serves the SOF enterprise and SOF operational needs in service of the Joint Force first.

Additional References/Recommended Reading

- "What Is Compound Security?" Joint Special Operations University, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwa-Ty2NYxvI.
- "Special Operations Bracing for Arctic Missions," https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2021/5/14/special-operations-forces-bracing-for-arctic-missions.
- "The Arctic Domain: A Niche for Joint SOF," *Joint Force Quarterly*, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-78/jfq-78_24-31_Stringer.pdf.
- "Examining China's Polar Silk Road," https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/64939/20Mar_Hedrick_Lance.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
- "U.S. Arctic Policy: A Race for the Arctic Intelligence and National Security Implications," https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259694535_US_Arctic_Policy_A_Race_for_the_Arctic_Intelligence_and_National_Security_Implications.
- "Incorporating Community-Based Observing Networks and Systems: Toward a Regional Early Warning System for Enhanced Responses to Arctic Critical Events," *Washington Journal of Environmental Law and Policy*.
- "Complex Human-Environmental Processes: A Framework for Social-Ecological Observatories," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*.
- "Community-Based Observing for Social-Ecological Science: Lessons from the Arctic," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*.
- "Bering Sea Sub-Network II: Sharing Knowledge, Improving Understanding, Enabling Response - International Community-Based Environmental Observation Alliance for Resilience in a Changing Arctic," *Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna*.
- "The Role of Indigenous Science and Local Knowledge in Integrated Observing Systems: Moving Toward Adaptive Capacity Indices and Early Warning Systems," *Sustainability Science*.
- "Climate Change and Security in the Arctic," The Center for Climate and Security, Institute of the Council on Strategic Risks, and The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

Endnotes

1. The Compound Security Threats in Strategic Competition framework of Joint Special Operations University's "JSOU NEXT" addresses all aspects of full-spectrum doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLP-F).
2. The Joint Staff J7 runs the Multinational Capabilities Development Campaign with JSOU personnel leading the Climate Security Working Group's Arctic Technical Requirements concept of operations in partnership with NATO allies.
3. "SOF Truths," United States Special Operations Command, accessed 14 October 2021, https://www.socom.mil/about/sof-truths.
4. Open-source analysis shows that 91 percent of arctic-related publications, events, and products are focused on geopolitical narratives published as open-source reports or media products, 5 percent are focused on training exercises, and 4 percent are focused on products responding to DOTMLP-F operational needs.
5. There are multiple definitions and constructs of irregular and unconventional warfare across the Department of Defense. No single definition adequately captures the nature of civil support team/security cooperation.

DR. LILIAN "DOC" ALESSA, PHD, PREGBIOL.
CHIEF SCIENTIST (J5), UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

JSOU PRESS
JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIVERSITY

United States Special Operations Command
ATTN: JSOU Press
7701 Tampa Point Boulevard
MacDill AFB, FL 33621-5323
https://jsou.edu/press

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