

Testimony of

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**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Marine Transportation**

**The Coast of Doing Nothing: Maritime Infrastructure Vulnerabilities in an
Emerging Arctic**

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Rayburn House Office Building**

Mr. Chairman Maloney, Ranking Member Gibbs, and members of the committee, I am pleased to have been invited to testify on this important topic and I thank you for the opportunity.

I am also pleased to be here with my distinguished colleagues. Admiral Charlie Ray is a superb leader. I have enjoyed long standing, valuable relationships with both NOAA and the Army Corps of Engineers. Their support to me and the Nation was critical in the responses to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Heather Conley is an old friend from CSIS and an expert in her field. Abbie Tingstad represents RAND where I served as a Senior Fellow and I welcome her. And finally, Mead Treadwell, who has made Arctic issues, governance, and infrastructure his life's passion.

For the record I am testifying in my personal capacity today and am not representing any other entity.

In 2016, I was honored to co-lead an independent Task Force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) that issued a report entitled "*Arctic Imperatives: Reinforcing U.S. Strategy on America's Fourth Coast*." That report developed recommendations for policy makers to consider in the Presidential transition process.

As stated in the report, "The Arctic is a crossroads of international politics and a forewarning for the world. The United States, through Alaska, is a significant Arctic nation with strategic, economic, and scientific interests. As sea ice continues to melt, countries inside and outside the Arctic region have updated their strategic and commercial calculations to take advantage of the changing conditions stemming from the opening of the region. The United States needs to increase its strategic commitment to the region or risk leaving its interests unprotected."

The Task Force organized its work in four interrelated areas: U.S. Policy; U.S. National Security; Economic, Energy and Environmental Issues; and, finally, Alaska and Alaska natives. We consulted broadly and support a comprehensive, integrated approach in assessing future options in the Arctic. That approach includes sustaining international partnership through the Arctic Council, International Maritime Organization, and the Coast Guard Arctic Forum.

The Task Force identified six main goals that U.S. policymakers should pursue to protect the United States' growing economic and strategic interests in the Arctic:

- *"Ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.* The Senate should help secure the United States' legal rights to more than 386,000 square miles of subsea resources along its extended continental shelf by ratifying this treaty.
- *Fund and maintain polar ice-breaking ships.* Congress should approve funding for up to six icebreakers to improve operational capacity in the Arctic, so as to have at least three operational ships in the polar regions at any one time.

- *Improve Arctic infrastructure.* Invest in telecommunications, energy, and other infrastructure in Alaska and find locations for safe harbor ports and a deepwater port.
- *Strengthen cooperation with other Arctic nations.* Continue diplomatic efforts within the Arctic Council and work with other Arctic states, including Russia, on confidence-building and cooperative security measures.
- *Support sustainable development and Alaska Native communities.* "Maintain the [Arctic] Council's focus on sustainable development, environmental protection, and continued involvement of the Arctic's indigenous peoples."
- *Fund scientific research.* Sustain budget support for scientific research beyond 2017 to understand the regional and global impact of accelerated climate change."

In regard to today's hearing the report emphasizes that, "The United States needs to bolster its infrastructure and assets in the Arctic to safeguard its strategic interests, defend its national borders, protect the environment, and maintain its scientific and technological leadership."

More specifically, almost no marine infrastructure is in place within the U.S. maritime Arctic. In some areas infrastructure is provided by the oil and gas industry to support their facilities. However, this infrastructure supports industrial operations. Other needs are creating severe challenges for public authorities at the local, state, and national level. New commercial activity would be hampered by inadequate infrastructure. Deepwater ports exist in Norway, Iceland, and Russia, the largest of which is in Murmansk, Russia, but the North American Arctic has no major port to service transoceanic maritime transportation. The port at Nome, Alaska, is only twenty-two feet deep, but the city of Nome hopes to build out its docks to reach a draft of thirty-five feet deep without dredging. The Army Corps of Engineers defines a deepwater port as forty-five feet deep. The Task Force urged policymakers to reinforce U.S. strategic presence in the Arctic by making a sustained commitment to boosting technology and building the infrastructure for safe operations in the region.

In closing I would like to make a general comment on the U.S. position in the Arctic and appreciate Admiral Ray's comments on peer competitors.

There is an old saying that I wish I could attribute to an author - but can't. "You don't have sovereignty unless you can exert it." Our peer competitors understand that about the Arctic and are demonstrating strategic intent with their current actions. In the United States we spend more time arguing about who understands the climate better. Before I retired from the Coast Guard I was asked by a member of Congress about my opinion on global warming. I responded that there was water where there didn't used to be and I was responsible for it. It is time to understand that we are all responsible for the Arctic and this planet.

I recommend the CFR report be appended to the record of this hearing and I am happy to answer your questions.