

NORAD at 65: The Arctic and Homeland Defense Symposium

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The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) celebrated its 65th anniversary on 12 May 2023, with NORAD and US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) personnel hosting a two-day symposium in Colorado focused on the Arctic and continental defence. Topics discussed included: Russian and Chinese messaging and diplomatic strategy in the Arctic; the past, present, and future of NORAD; an update on the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR); and a bi-command brief of USNORTHCOM's foundation, mandate, and its role in the Arctic. This NAADSN Activity Report provides a summary of presentations and activities over the three days.

Background

The Arctic and Homeland Defense Symposium was held at NORAD and USNORTHCOM Headquarters at Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado, from 10-12 May 2023, hosted by the Homeland Defense Institute and the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies. The event brought together senior NORAD leadership, academics, and government practitioners to share research and expertise on NORAD's future of continental defence. The first day was an "Academic Day" that involved unclassified morning briefings on NORAD, USNORTHCOM, the Arctic, and continental defence. Canadian academic participants were not allowed to attend the classified afternoon briefings, which are not included in this Activity Report. The second day was the "Symposium," which included keynote addresses and three distinct panels featuring academic experts, service members, and government practitioners from Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Approximately 180 attendees attended the Symposium, including representatives from NORAD/USNORTHCOM, the Canadian consulate in Denver, the CAF, American defence contractors, the Kingdom of Denmark, and university students. All information shared in this Activity Report is unclassified and follows the Chatham House rule of non-attribution.



Day 1 attendees outside the Eberhart-Findley Building at NORAD and USNORTHCOM Headquarters.
Photo [credit](#) to USNORTHCOM.

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Day 1, Unclassified Briefings:

The Arctic and Homeland Defense Symposium began with a series of unclassified briefings at the Eberhart-Findley Building at NORAD and USNORTHCOM Headquarters. The briefs were provided by NORAD/USNORTHCOM personnel and academic experts.

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The NORAD Commander also serves as the dual-hatted USNORTHCOM Commander. NORAD and USNORTHCOM are separate commands with separate missions. NORAD is the binational command responsible for the aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning of Canada and the continental United States. NORAD was born of the Cold War to address outward-facing threats of Soviet long-range strategic bombers and later intercontinental missiles to North America. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 until about 2010, internal asymmetric terrorist threats and Operation Noble Eagle (ONE – the combat air patrol mission created on the evening of September 11th, 2001 to protect key city centres and major national events)¹ dominated NORAD’s focus. From about 2010 to present, the resurgence of Russia and Great Power Competition as a result of advanced weapons technology (hypersonics) has reoriented the binational command to its origins.

USNORTHCOM was created out of the 9/11 tragedy. The USNORTHCOM [mission statement](#) is “to defend our homeland – deter, detect, deny, and defeat threats to the United States, conduct security cooperation activities with allies and partners, and support civil authorities.” It is the US combatant command (CoCOM) with the geographic area of responsibility (AOR) for North America. The USNORTHCOM Commander reports directly to the US Secretary of Defense. Civil support is facilitated by the Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) response support to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for natural disasters, such as hurricanes, responses for critical [infrastructure failure](#), and public health crises such as pandemics. The creation of USNORTHCOM means that, for the first time since George Washington, a single commander oversees the defence of the United States. Additionally, USNORTHCOM can pull forces and assets out of US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), US European Command (EUCOM), and US Naval Forces North Command (NAVNORTH) to achieve its missions. USNORTHCOM and NORAD have no mandate to conduct cyber operations, but are responsible for the protection of their own cyber networks. The NORAD and USNORTHCOM Commander is also the Commander of US Element NORAD (USELMNORAD) and the Deputy NORAD Commander serves as the Commander of Canadian Element NORAD, which simply means that the NORAD Commander and Deputy Commander oversee their own national personnel embedded within NORAD and USNORTHCOM. For the US in particular, USELMNORAD allows for US assets to be quickly deployed to NORAD for support of a national objective.

In the Arctic, NORAD and USNORTHCOM rely on the aged North Warning System (NWS), a series of short and long-range radars owned by Canada and the United States. The NWS has reached the end of its life expectancy and does not have in-flight tracking capabilities, therefore providing suboptimal situational awareness. Two new replacement radar systems, the [Arctic and Polar Over-the-Horizon Radars](#), are scheduled for full operational capability by the early 2030s. Additionally, both NORAD and USNORTHCOM rely on Pituffik Space Force Base (formerly Thule Air Force Base) in Greenland for critical refueling, resupply, and staging for Arctic exercises – although Pituffik is located in EUCOM’s AOR. The NORAD and USNORTHCOM Commander is also the Arctic advocate within the US Department of Defense (DoD), highlighting multiple interests such as international cooperation, the need for government invest in the region, and the important positions of local communities. It was acknowledged that resiliency and infrastructure development is crucial for both military communications and local jobs.

The briefs then pivoted to Chinese and Russian messaging relative to the Arctic. All Chinese messaging connects to the “Win-Win” theme promising mutual respect and mutual benefits. Chinese narratives seek to shape the

idea of the Arctic as a cooperative, globalized environment, assisted by investment and open trade opportunities. Democratic Arctic states are beginning to recognize Chinese ambitions, as the opinions of Western political elites about the Arctic do not exist within a silo. Heightened geopolitical tensions over Ukraine and Taiwan have prompted this shift in thinking amongst decision-influencers.

Scientific cooperation between Russia and the like-minded Arctic states has been pared back since Russia's full invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) has also been dropping in the like-minded Arctic states, as actors such as the Kingdom of Denmark have begun to see the United States in a more favourable light instead. The United States and NATO are the main target of Chinese Arctic messaging, with Russian-style messages of accusing NATO of destabilization over Ukraine disseminating from Beijing state media and official documents. However, the messages are actually directed at curbing American influence in the Indo-Pacific region (where China desires increased influence) and the new AUKUS (Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States) nuclear-powered submarine sharing agreement. Chinese messaging characterizes its security desires as "indivisible" and "reasonable."

China has attempted to use both "Wolf-Warrior" diplomacy and scientific diplomacy to increase its international reputation and prestige vis-à-vis the Arctic. The Arctic is subordinate to Chinese global ambitions as evidenced by lessened presence in Greenland, reducing the possible engagement space for influence with Greenlanders. Now, in light of Ukraine, there is a pause for strategic reconsolidation and reconceptualization of future diplomatic efforts. Who might China appeal to locally in Arctic states? Chinese thinking and actions may not be malicious, but vigilance within the like-minded Arctic states is required. Where does Beijing use coercive tools to tamp down dissent? There is a tendency in the West to think of China as more coherent and centralized than it actually is. Additionally, the century of humiliation of the 19th century is deeply rooted within Chinese culture and helps to explain its aggressive messaging and interactions with Western states. An example of this is when [China demanded an apology from Norwegian officials](#) when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Liu Xiaobo, an imprisoned Chinese detractor and greatly reduced purchases of Norwegian fish stocks.

Expanding on tendencies, Russia and China coordinate in the information arena, but their abilities should not be overinflated. China's special representative for Arctic affairs, Gao Feng, [told the audience at Arctic Circle 2022](#) that China would justify a possible military role in the region as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. It was suggested that Chinese messaging is far more reliant on rhetoric than on action. The Northern Sea Route [is not seen as an economically viable or attractive option](#) to any other states besides China and Russia. Chinese FDI has been limited due to the Western sanctions regime on Russia and trying to find subsidiaries to work around – an example of this is LNG2 gas. As Chinese demographics are changing, its normative generation-ahead strategic planning functions means that an opportunity window for regional and Arctic influence is beginning to close.

China and Russia are not the same players in the Arctic and must be thought of separately because they possess different tools, interests, and rights. Both states use defensive justifications to reinforce their sovereignty narratives, promoting the idea that the United States and NATO are on the offensive. At present, Russia is the only Arctic state that actively longs for Chinese investment and cooperation. The Arctic is not siloed and can be used to project broader strategic and economic messaging. China is chiefly concerned with issues within its

regional sphere of influence: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, and the East and South China Seas. In Russia, when official statements, state controlled news media, proxy websites, and social media tout NATO expansion as an existential threat to Russian existence, the Putin narrative is restated for domestic political purposes. Russian anti-Western disinformation resonates deeply within its citizenry, with Russia's strength compared to the "weak" West. These disinformation narratives are for Russian public consumption and justification of public monies allocated for the war in Ukraine to fight NATO and the West. These messages are not intended to be seen by the United States as a show of Russian strength, but shore up domestic political support within Russia.

Russia has breached the trust of the like-minded Arctic states with its full-scale invasion of Ukraine since late February 2022. The responsibility of restoring trust between Russia and the like-minded Arctic states rests with Moscow, especially as there is currently no significant support amongst the seven like-minded Arctic states for cooperation. Protecting the mechanisms of the "paused" Arctic Council remains imperative, so that when the like-minded democratic states decide that Russia has created appropriate conditions to allow renewed international engagement, the Council can serve as a venue for regional cooperation. Participants also noted that an increasingly self-isolated Russia is likely to be more dangerous than one with which limited and carefully calibrated cooperation can be found and fostered.

The next brief provided an update on the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR). NORAD and USNORTHCOM educate other DoD practitioners and service officials on why the Arctic matters relative to a homeland defense perspective² and General Glen VanHerck's [doctrine](#). Training exercises such as Arctic Edge will remain a priority to train joint and combined forces,³ contributing to Canada's and the United States' ability to defend the region against aggression. Other exercises such as Northern Edge, IceX, and Cold Response support these initiatives. Advanced weaponry means that adversaries can now target critical infrastructure as part of [global power projection](#), such as vital ports, rail, electrical grids, and personnel. Furthermore, building critical infrastructure in the Arctic is four times as expensive and takes four times as long as projects elsewhere. This represents an enormous logistical challenge for operations and missions in the region.

The purpose of the ASFR is to: promote regional understanding, dialogue, and cooperation between the seven like-minded Arctic states, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands; enhance multilateral Arctic security safety operations; and, adapt to changing emerging environmental missions. The Roundtable was created in 2010 by the United States and Norway, and is co-chaired by the USEUCOM J5/J8⁴ and Norwegian Chief of the Defence Staff, with meetings rotating between the like-minded states. There is no guiding ASFR charter. Russia has not participated in the ASFR since 2014, as a result of its invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Meetings are attended by 2-star theatre commanders, who then share the working group discussion upwards to the Arctic Chiefs of Defence Staff (ACHODS) forum. ACHODS consists of 4-star commanders who create policy and discuss strategic constraints. The ASFR has recently met in [Fairbanks, Alaska](#) (the first time on US soil), [Turku, Finland](#), and is scheduled to meet in Sweden in 2024. Issue areas of consideration include Russia's economy in the Arctic (as one-third of their GDP is connected to the region), the hydrocarbon industry, and how China is using Russia to influence regional dynamics.

The final unclassified briefing concerned the increasing linkage of Nordic and North American defences via the North Atlantic region, Greenland, and Iceland – threats passing *through* Greenland and Iceland destined for

North America. Greenlandic defence and security remains under the control of the Kingdom of Denmark. In this increasingly complex strategic threat environment, some participants suggested that Nordic defences need to reorient between both NATO and USEUCOM and NORAD and USNORTHCOM in order to adequately deter and defend their regional interests. The new [Air Chiefs Joint Statement of Intent](#) between Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland looking to create a quad-national air force-driven command, with a common air defence region and integrated defence and command and control planning, has been precipitated by Sweden and Finland joining NATO.

The Kingdom of Denmark, Canada, and the United States increasingly view Greenland as geographically part of North America. Proposed lines of effort between the three nations include: 1) coordinated campaign planning; 2) increased exercises, cooperation, and training; 3) technical exchange of operations and information; and, 4) dialogue on development of facilities and materiel. Additionally, Europe has historically viewed the Arctic as a maritime domain issue, whereas North America has viewed the Arctic primarily through an aerospace lens.

Day 2, Symposium:

The second day consisted of panel presentations and discussions featuring several NAADSN members exploring NORAD's past, present, and future. The panelists began by discussing NORAD's [September 1957 operationalization](#) and [May 1958 diplomatic exchange of notes](#) (the official birthday recognizes the May date). Before NORAD's operationalization (originally to be named CADCANUS and the Commander to be stylized as CINCADCANUS),⁵ North American defence came under the command of both American and a Canadian Air Defence Commander (ADC). Both ADC's were responsible for the airspace defence of their own territory – the Americans had just created Continental Air Defence Command (CONAD) to oversee operational command of all US air defence assets. This bifurcation of North American airspace, combined with US military interservice rivalries and division of labour (air force was responsible for fighter aircraft and longer-range missiles, army was responsible for shorter-range missiles, and the navy was responsible for offshore warning),⁶ amplified the need for a functional binational military arrangement that, in theory, would be the sole command for strategic defence of North America.

During the mid 1950s, Canadian diplomats sought a policy of “no annihilation without representation” with regard to nuclear consultations with the United States. Many officials in Ottawa saw the new NORAD Command as a venue to accomplish this, and secret nuclear consultation agreements were held before NORAD's creation. The Chair of Canadian Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Foulkes, and the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) both viewed operational air integration as desirable – for Canada, this would be an opportunity to be routinely consulted on US air defence decisions. An original expectation of the Canadian government was that NORAD would become the sole command for strategic defence of North America. However, for domestic US national matters since 1957, the link between the US JCS and NORAD has always been linked and twinned with the US command responsible for North American defence and their successors: CONAD, Aerospace Defense Command (ADCOM), Space Command (SPACECOM), and USNORTHCOM. Ballistic missile defence was never added to NORAD's mission suite because of late technological adoption and Canada's repeated refusal to participate in these programs.⁷ However, NORAD has both missile warning and tracking capabilities. This leads to the question: is

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the current Tri-Command Framework (NORAD, USNORTHCOM and Canadian Joint Operations Command or CJOC) the best way to structure North American air defence?

NORAD is both a supported and supporting command for Canada and the United States, meaning it is not a force generator. Despite the addition of the maritime warning mission in 2006, the binational command remains Air Force centric. The current NORAD and USNORTHCOM Commander, Gen. Glen D. VanHerck, has outlined the following [deterrence framework](#) for NORAD and USNORTHCOM to “Deter in Competition, Deescalate in Crisis, and Defeat in Conflict:” All-Domain Awareness (sometimes referred to as Joint-All Domain Command and Control [JADC2] or Pan-Domain Awareness in Canadian lexicon), Information Dominance, and Decision Superiority, of which all are buttressed by artificial intelligence.⁸ However, information to support Information Dominance often resides in other government departments and local Indigenous communities, which may not be included in a decision-makers operating picture. Without a common lexicon between the armed services, governments, and public communities, breaking down stovepipes remains a persistent challenge.

As history has routinely shown, NORAD Modernization is a product of technological advancement and crises that render existing defensive capabilities outdated or mismatched to the threat environment. North Americans generally consider the pursuit of the “[away game](#)” and ability to project power globally as the best form of defence. The large numbers of capabilities and personnel stationed in North America represents a [vulnerability](#) for our adversaries to exploit. Additionally, the Tri-Command Framework struggles to incorporate other government departments’ information and perspectives into continental defence planning. NORAD is essentially a United States Combatant Command, but cannot be called one due to political sensitivities – hence the twinning with USNORTHCOM. The binational command’s greatest strength is its global Area of Operations for aerospace warning. NORAD can further reduce exploitations of gaps and seams from adversaries with its 360 degree monitoring of a threat environment, such as the often-overlooked southern approaches to North America – NORAD only has one and a half domains, but has to be aware of and integrate every other domain. Technocratic challenges and solutions brought upon by NORAD Modernization can be dealt with by the Military Cooperation Committee (MCC) and the [Permanent Joint Board on Defence \(PJBD\)](#) can assist in reducing political concerns over particular defence issues. This current cycle of NORAD Modernization, precipitated by Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine, has not yet engaged the political process, as new defence capabilities, such as radar systems and sensor grids are technologically complex. It is only when political attention turns to Modernization does momentum increase, with the post-9/11 Bi-National Planning Group serving as an example.

Following the [spy balloon incidents of February 2023](#), media coverage in Canada was quick to pivot away from China to question why US Air Force assets were stationed and operating in Canada, typically portraying Canada as the weak link in the North American defence partnership. Misunderstanding, if not outright lack of knowledge, about NORAD underpinned a divisive conversation about American imperialism and Canadian sovereignty that directly plays into the hands of adversaries who wish to exploit, divide, and sow discord in the North American political dialogue. Even as many Canadians and Americans do not fully understand NORAD, it is reflexively pointed to as a crown jewel of Canada-US relations writ large when there are tensions in other issue areas. Do both Ottawa and Washington have the same understanding of the binational command as Colorado Springs?

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Government agencies, the executive branches, and the military services are not structured to move quickly unless a significant crisis arises. One participant insisted that implementation of [NORAD Modernization capabilities](#) is five-plus years too late. The first mention of this cycle of Modernization dates back to [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Donald Trump's 2017 joint statement](#), but it actually extends back to the [Final Report of the Bi-National Planning Group in 2006](#) and intelligence warnings about the buildup of Russian strategic forces and the threat posed by the People's Republic of China. Although NORAD Modernization is now a hot political topic in Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)* Canada's 2017 defence white paper, discusses North American defence modernization with scant reference to NORAD. This leads to the question: is the structural relationship of Canada-US continental defence, relative to the geostrategic environment, both reliable and efficient? There is more to North American defence modernization than just simply NORAD Modernization, which is largely a technical capability problem – albeit one with significant political challenges. NORAD's Global All-Domain Operating Picture is for both North American deterrence and warfighting, which means closer integration for the CANUS relationship. This portends Canada having to make difficult decisions in the future about participation in missile defence. A future integrated North American defence command will include sensors in sea, air, and space (with land and cyber on the margins), and must break down stovepipes to achieve a more complete understanding of the threat space.

The geostrategic threat environment of 2023 is comparable to the early 1950s, with advancements in weapons technology, proxy conflict between great powers, and rising challenges to democracy driving the agenda. Some panelists remarked on the phrase “never let a good crisis go to waste” as justification for recontextualization of NORAD expansion to include Greenland and Iceland in its AOR – especially as threats emanating from the North Atlantic and Barents Sea are seen as passing through on their way to North America. The technical and functional environment of the 1950s (including Canadian and US domestic political consensus on the Soviet threat) led to the political considerations supportive of NORAD's formalization in 1958. This is directly comparable to the expanded mission suite of 2006 and current considerations with heightened geopolitical attention towards the Arctic, Ukraine, and Taiwan.

Panelists also considered areas of future research and provided some closing thoughts separate from the presentations. Short-term considerations include reconsidering the Tri-Command Framework, expansion of NORAD's global Area of Operations, and how to encourage emerging scholars to study NORAD's command and control (C²) architecture and other topics related to the binational command. Further opening of the channels between academia and the two militaries can help to demystify Canada-US defence cooperation, with NORAD as the centre piece.

Panelists also emphasized that Canada will eventually have to choose its NORAD Modernization investment priorities relative to capacity to pay for and maintain these systems, with due consideration of US signals about what capabilities are and are not important. This prompted the question of NORAD's current funding model. Does the 60%/40% split, with the US paying more, from the North Warning System in the 1980s remain acceptable? What are actual annual costs associated with NORAD?

The spectre of a fully integrated “North American Defense Command,” encompassing all domains for North America, is driven by threats technological advancements, and political will, but it remains a “bridge too far” for

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Canada due to domestic political concerns over “sovereignty.” Such a comprehensive scoping of the command is also unlikely to be in the interest of the US, as most land-domain missions in North America fall under a disaster response lens and an integrated all-domain defence command would result in an enormous resource and organizational restructuring for both countries’ Armed Forces. (For example, Air Marshall Roy Slemon, the Chief of the Royal Canadian Air Force Air Staff from 1953-57 and then the first Deputy-Commander of NORAD, brought a third of his forces to Colorado Springs when NORAD was created.) However, the development of Joint All-Domain Command and Control and the concept of [Deterrence by Denial](#) implies that further integration of the defence relationship is necessary. Given the blurring of defence and security and the merger of domains in an increasingly interconnected threat environment (such as the new threat vector over Greenland), the panelists ended by suggesting that a reconceptualization of personnel in NORAD positions may be necessary to include greater representation from the Coast Guards and Navies (especially given the creation of the 2nd Fleet/Norfolk and NATO Supreme Allied Command Atlantic or SACLANT). Final thoughts included the further promotion of NORAD knowledge throughout government, academia, and public circles, to increase resilience and deterrence between cross-border agencies and communities.

A subsequent panel turned to a discussion on Russian and Chinese information operations within the Arctic. Since 2014, a changing security environment has increased regional interest and activity, necessitating closer Canada-US defence cooperation in the region. *Strong, Secure, Engaged* states that the Arctic represents an “important international crossroads where issues of climate change, international trade, and global security meet.” [Oft-cited strategic drivers](#) include great power competition, technology, climate change, shipping routes, access to Arctic resources, and Arctic boundary and status of water disputes. Policy statements often bundle these drivers together, however, without carefully considering different levels of analysis or conceptualizing whether the generic category of “the Arctic” is the best way of understanding where, when, and how they apply. A speaker assessed that changing power dynamics in the Arctic are unlikely to derive from disputes over regional disputes over boundaries, resources, or regional governance in the next decade years, and instead will reflect broader international forces and dynamics. Although Canada faces no near-term conventional military threats to its Arctic, resurgent strategic competition globally may have “spill over” effects on circumpolar security.

Threats passing *through* the Canadian Arctic emanate from outside of the region and pass through or over it to strike targets also outside of the region. For example, a cruise missile of hypersonic delivery vehicle launched from Russia would likely pass over the Canadian Arctic before striking at a target in the northern continental United States. Sensor systems that detect the launch and track the missile might be based in the Arctic, but one speaker insisted that it would be misconstrued as an “Arctic threat” in a defence of North America context. Instead, he suggested that most kinetic threats that would pass through the Canadian Arctic are best considered from a global deterrence (denial and punishment) perspective and that emerging threats to North America, across all domains, must be situated in the context of continental defence and the longstanding Canada-U.S. defence partnership exemplified by NORAD. Both *SSE* and Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework underscore the importance of NORAD modernization efforts, the integration of layered sensor and defeat systems, and the need to improve reach and mobility within this alliance construct. New commitments, however, will require creative thinking about infrastructure, surveillance and detection, interception capabilities, and command and control relationships. In the face of hybrid/gray zone tactics, which blur state and societal threats,

integrated deterrence allows decision-makers to leverage all assets, across domains and theatres, in order to win the information space and prepare for crises or conflict.

Threats *to* the North American Arctic are those that emanate from outside of the region and affect the region itself. Most of these threats fall below the threshold of armed conflict and within the “grey zone” associated with hybrid warfare. The speaker highlighted how Russian and Chinese [strategic messaging and information operations](#) are funnelled through official government statements and publications, state-funded global messaging, proxy sources, and weaponizing of social media that seek to propagate and amplify misinformation to manipulate public discourse in the West for their own objectives.

Threats *in* the Arctic originate within the region and have primary implications for the region. Examples include permafrost degradation threatening critical infrastructure, the failure of a diesel-electric generator powering an isolated community, or the heightened polarization of public debate leading to economic or political disruption. Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework observes that “the qualities that make the Canadian Arctic and North such a special place, its size, climate, and small but vibrant and resilient populations, also pose unique security challenges, making it difficult to maintain situational awareness and respond to emergencies or military threats when and where they occur.” Climate change compounds these challenges, reshaping the regional environment and, in some contexts and seasons, facilitating greater access to an increasingly “broad range of actors and interests.” This requires a multi-faceted and holistic approach, and the complexity of the regional security environment places a premium on collaboration amongst all levels of government, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, as well as with trusted international partners. A speaker highlighted the [Canadian Rangers](#) as a distinctive model of military service that provides a Canadian Armed Forces presence in sparsely-populated local communities that are logistically and economically difficult to reach and sustain. Serving as “lightly equipped and self-sufficient mobile forces in support of CAF sovereignty and other domestic operations,” the Rangers are an effective component of the defence team that serves national and community interests simultaneously.

The Arctic is inextricably tied to the rest of Canada, to North America, and to the international system as a whole. This interconnectedness brings opportunities for communities, governance, and economic development, and also poses complex, multifaceted challenges. Accordingly, strategic forecasters should strive to situate the North American Arctic in global, regional, and domestic contexts to anticipate new challenges, promote effective adaptations to changing circumstances, and identify how the military should be trained and equipped to act decisively in concert with its allies. Additional considerations included the downside of North American experts fixating on Canadian and American capability limitations (seeking to embarrass governments into increasing spending on Arctic defences) that [play into the narratives of competitors](#); and the possibility of adversaries using the [Arctic as a diversionary space](#) so that they can pursue their ambitions elsewhere (such as Russia in Ukraine or China in the South China Sea); and the danger of a crisis or escalation elsewhere in the world spilling over into the Arctic, particularly owing to misperceptions or miscalculation.

Finally, panelists considered Great Power Competition between China and Russia in the Arctic. Analysts are too simplistic in their characterization of the relationship between Beijing and Moscow with respect to the Arctic.

The two states are not allies, despite the “No-Limits Partnership” signed just before Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Instead, the two might be viewed as “frenemies,” with China holding the financier purse-strings for Russian Arctic ambitions (especially since Western sanctions have hampered Russia’s trade and economic prospects). Sovereignty concerns about China in Russia’s Arctic have largely been pushed to the side, as Beijing’s resources and investment are existential to prevent Russia’s economic collapse. Given that the Russian Arctic accounts for 20% of the country’s GDP, this partnership is vital for Moscow. Beijing presents this as a “win-win” – Russia receives financial support in exchange for increased Chinese Arctic influence. However, analysis shows that China is taking advantage of Russian Arctic economic resources, such as the Vankor oil field pipeline to China, for lower-than-market cost (in this case, per barrel). It is not a partnership of equals, and Russia is forced to sell its crown jewels for “peanuts.”

Anticipating and addressing twenty-first century challenges requires clear, coordinated action in order to leverage the broad and deep expertise of Canada, the United States, NATO, and other allies and partners. Taken together, the opportunities, challenges, increased competition, and risks associated with a changing and more unpredictable Arctic require improved situational awareness and more fidelity in anticipating and preparing to address different threats [through, to, and in](#) the North American Arctic and adjacent regions.

Day 3, Celebrations:

On 12 May 2023, guests were invited to the official NORAD 65th Anniversary celebrations. This ceremony included remarks from NORAD and USNORTHCOM Commander Gen. Glen D. VanHerck, Canadian Vice Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Frances Allen, and former NORAD Deputy-Commander and Canadian Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. (Ret.) Thomas Lawson. Following the remarks, guests were treated to a flyover from two CF-18s and one F-16s and an informal reception at the Peterson Hub mess hall.



The 12 May 2023 flyover of Peterson Space Force Base, celebrating NORAD’s 65th Anniversary. Photo [credit](#) to @NORADCommand on Twitter.

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¹ Andrea Charron and James Fergusson, *NORAD: In Perpetuity and Beyond* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 39.

² The United States refers to the defence of North America as "homeland defense," while Canada prefers the term "continental defence."

³ Joint is one or more services operating together (such as the Air Force and Navy). Combined is one or more state working together.

⁴ The J5 is responsible for Strategy, Policy, and Plans. The J8 is responsible for Requirements, Analysis, and Resources.

⁵ Joseph T. Jockel, *Canada in NORAD, 1957-2007: A History* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 25

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷ See James Fergusson, *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence, 1954-2009: Déjà Vu All Over Again* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

⁸ Glen D. VanHerck, "Deter in Competition, Deescalate in Crisis, and Defeat in Conflict," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 101 (2021): 7-9, https://www.norad.mil/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-101/jfq-101_4-10_VanHerck.pdf?ver=vVI2vBwL4HZBV9Sh91ar4w%3D%3D.