

**U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski Written Remarks
3rd Symposium on the Impacts of an Ice-Diminishing Arctic
on Naval and Maritime Operations
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In the Arctic, environmental changes are occurring at a dramatic rate. The Arctic is warming faster than any other area on the planet and some sea ice models now project the Arctic Ocean could be seasonally ice free as early as 2013. While these changes in the Arctic are happening rapidly, U.S. Arctic policy has been slow to catch up.

The impacts of this rapid warming in the Arctic are being felt dramatically by the residents who are legitimately concerned about the effects that an ice diminished Arctic will have on their way of life. Many of the indigenous people of the region still live a subsistence lifestyle. They are dependent on the sea and ice and fear not only the loss of summer sea ice and the effects on marine mammals, but that increased maritime activity relating to the transportation of goods, oil and gas, mineral extraction, tourism and research will have a negative impact on their lives as well.

Until recently, the resources of the Arctic were deemed to be too difficult and expensive to develop. But with increasing access and high energy and mineral prices, the Arctic's wealth, which is estimated to contain approximately 22 percent of the world's remaining oil and gas reserves, is now being intensely explored and developed.

The U.S. should approach the Arctic strategically, proactively and comprehensively. We must work in a spirit of multilateral cooperation, but protect our interests. There are many issues of priority in the Arctic, but the one in which I believe the United States should prioritize first is ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

There are some who do not see the point in joining the rest of the world in ratifying the Treaty. They say that the U.S. already enjoys the benefits of the Treaty even though we are not a member and that by not becoming a party to the Treaty, we can pick and choose which sections we abide by, while not subjecting our actions to international review.

I believe it is crucial for the United States to be a party to this Treaty and be a player in the process, rather than an outsider hoping our interests are not damaged. Accession to the Convention would give current and future administrations both enhanced credibility and leverage in calling upon other nations to meet Convention responsibilities. Given the support for the Treaty by Arctic nations and the drive to

develop natural resources, the Treaty will also provide the environmental framework to develop these resources while minimizing environmental impacts.

I truly believe that we now have the best opportunity for Senate accession to the Treaty. I have been meeting with my Senate colleagues from the Foreign Relations committee, Dick Lugar and John Kerry, developing a strategy to bring the Treaty to a vote by the full Senate. With the strong support of the White House, all branches of the United States military and the business and conservation communities, we could finally see the United States follow the lead of the other 157 nations that have signed on to the Treaty and ratify it.

I was extremely gratified when the last Administration finally released a new National Security-Homeland Security Presidential Directive on the Arctic. This updated Arctic Policy, the first in 15 years, recognizes several new developments including the effects of climate change and impacts of increased activity in the region, the significant energy and natural resources that have been identified, a growing understanding of the significance of the unique natural environment and an increased awareness of the geo-political importance of the Arctic.

The policy calls for enhanced security, environmental protection, sustainable resource and economic development, scientific research, and international cooperation.

The policy also has an implementation plan for the relevant federal departments and agencies to carry out the policy and recognizes that implementation will require significant resources and assets. This will likely include increased funding, personnel and Congressional support to fully carry out the policy. I am committed to helping the Administration understand the importance of the region and implement the policy.

I believe it is a policy that will be a vital working document that can address the dynamic changing environment in the Arctic and give the region the increased attention and resources sorely needed.

Another priority issue for me is United States polar icebreaker capability. If we are seeing a "global chess game," playing out in the Arctic, then the United States is playing with a severe shortage of pieces. The United States has only two working icebreakers and a third in caretaker status. Even China, which doesn't have any Arctic waters, has one. I have recently made an appropriations request for federal funds to refurbish the Polar Star, which is in caretaker status, and funding to start the design process for a new Polar Class heavy icebreaker. I believe that it is imperative we rebuild and increase our nation's

icebreaking capability to meet the increasing need for a stronger United States strategic presence in the Arctic, improved scientific platforms and impacts from the projected increase in marine activity.

I know that you will be discussing the recently released the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment. I commend the work of the Arctic Council and the report's authors. The report raises some very important questions that I hope you will help us attempt to answer: how do we avoid a mismatch of shipping standards and regulations in the Arctic Ocean? How do we get develop and ensure that shipping is coordinated throughout the Arctic? How do we promote the investment necessary to have appropriate aids to navigation, adequate vessel tracking, search and rescue capability, ports of refuge, and an adequate level of environmental protection that this vulnerable region demands?

The Arctic is unquestionably unique and the projections of an ice-diminished Arctic have profound implications for this region, its ecology, environment and people. How we address and adapt to these changes is truly the challenge and opportunity that lies ahead. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today, I am sorry that I am unable to attend in person, and I hope that you will have an extremely productive symposium.