



COAST GUARD CO- OPERATION IN A CHANGING ARCTIC

**A SEMINAR REPORT
APRIL 2015**

Sponsored by the Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program and supported by the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies / Norwegian Defence University College
Authors: Andreas Østhagen & Vanessa Gastaldo



This report is based on discussions held during a day-long seminar entitled “Coast Guard Cooperation in a Changing Arctic” on October 29th, in Toronto. The seminar was convened to discuss recent developments in the Arctic with regard to maritime cooperation, with a particular focus on the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

THE MUNK-GORDON ARCTIC SECURITY PROGRAM

Our vision is for peacefully resolved disputes in the Arctic, global environmental security that supports a healthy Arctic environment, and an Arctic foreign policy that centres on the needs of those who live there. A partnership between the Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto, and The Gordon Foundation, the Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program is dedicated to studying and promoting four overarching areas of concern:

- Emergency preparedness in the Arctic
- Arctic peoples and security
- The Arctic Council
- Public opinion in and about the North

The Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program undertakes original research and hosts interactive gatherings to achieve its vision.

THE NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES

Based in Oslo, The Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (IFS) was founded in 1980 and is part of the Norwegian Defence University College. The Institute is Norway's foremost centre of security and defence studies.

The seminar and report has been done under the research program Security and Defence in Northern Europe (SNE).

Executive Summary

Arctic states are responding to increased maritime activity in the region. To do so, coast guards have to balance the priorities and resources available to them. Co-operation, particularly through a dedicated forum, has been in development for some time. Known as the “Arctic Coast Guard Forum,” this venue provides opportunities to further the scope of Arctic governance by bridging the divide between military and civilian forums and directing the implementation of the two agreements negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council.

The coast guards of the eight Arctic states differ in their nature and mandate, some being purely civilian, some military, and others being a combination of the two. Due to this mixed nature, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum should address the “soft” security challenges facing member nations, including safety, search and rescue, and environmental issues. The common ground of soft security issues will act as a uniting force for the Forum members. States that might be problematic to include in a “hard” security dialogue, such as Russia, could be brought into the fold, as will non-state actors, such as communities, indigenous organizations, and the private sector. These actors contribute to coast guard operations by providing additional knowledge and resources that can be used during humanitarian and environmental emergencies.

Seminar participants resolved that the Arctic Coast Guard Forum should be professional and

apolitical, and focus on operational functions, such as data sharing and identifying best practises for training. The Forum should serve as a platform for holding cross-border exercises while ceding to the national interests of each member state. The Arctic Coast Guard Forum can commence its work by mapping state-operated capacities for aeronautical and maritime search and rescue. This work should begin before the 2016 search and rescue exercise currently scheduled in the United States’ Chairmanship agenda.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SEMINAR:

- 1.** Arctic states should continue to engage Russia in the planning and operation of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, despite the current challenges of military-to-military contact in the region.
- 2.** The Forum should initially avoid becoming an arena of “hard security dialogue” and focus on safety and environmental initiatives.
- 3.** The Arctic Coast Guard Forum should focus on building a community that will facilitate sharing of best practices, real-time data and information, and expertise at an operational level.
- 4.** The Arctic Coast Guard Forum should serve as a platform for search and rescue and oil spill exercises at both circumpolar and regional/ bilateral levels.
- 5.** The Arctic Coast Guard Forum must share information with other Arctic-relevant bodies while still maintaining its independence and setting its own agenda.
- 6.** The Arctic Coast Guard Forum’s Terms of Reference should include mechanisms to work with communities, indigenous organizations and the private sector.

Coast Guard Co-operation in a Changing Arctic

INTRODUCTION

Arctic states are preparing to respond to increased maritime activity in the Arctic. Arctic coast guards are (in most cases) tasked with the responsibility for ensuring that sovereign rights are enforced, travellers are safe, and the environment is protected. Consequently, the coast guards have to balance priorities and the resources available to them. State investments in their coast guards, however, are modest and are difficult to justify in the Arctic, where traffic frequency is lower than in more southern areas.

In the Arctic, low temperatures and the remoteness of the operating area add complexity to preparations for maritime emergencies. To address this challenge, two legally binding agreements on search and rescue and oil spill preparedness have been negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council.² These agreements show the value of maritime co-operation in the Arctic in order to jointly manage natural resources while protecting lives and the environment. Yet a mechanism to implement these agreements does not exist.

In October 2014, the Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program and the Norwegian Institute of Defence Studies convened a meeting of researchers, stakeholders, indigenous representatives, and coast

Table 1.

Maritime tasks of growing importance in the Arctic, under the responsibility of the various coast guard structures.

| TYPE | MARITIME TASKS |
|----------------------|---|
| Legal/Defence | Constabulary tasks (anti-terrorism, piracy, etc.) |
| Legal | Border controls |
| Legal/Environmental | Fisheries inspection |
| Defence | Sovereignty protection |
| Safety | Search and rescue |
| Safety | Assisting passage and navigation (including ice-breaking) |
| Safety/Environmental | Oil spill preparedness and response |

¹ Or their equivalents; see Table 1.

² The two agreements signed under the auspices of the Arctic Council are the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic signed in 2011 and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, signed in 2013. 2011 doc—available on the Arctic Council website (<http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/document-archive/category/20-main-documents-from-nuuk>). 2013 do—available on the Arctic Council website (<http://www.arctic-council.org/eppr/agreement-on-cooperation-on-marine-oil-pollution-preparedness-and-response-in-the-arctic/>)

guard personnel, entitled Coast Guard Co-operation in a Changing Arctic, to brainstorm opportunities for the creation of an Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

This report is a thematic summation from the discussion, including recommendations.³

PURPOSE

The potential role of a dedicated forum for coast guard co-operation in the Arctic has been in development for some time. Originally it arose as an idea from Heather Conley at CSIS.⁴ A forum for Arctic coast guards was seen as the best way to implement the increasing number of Arctic agreements related to maritime operations.

In addition, given the mixed nature of the coast guards of each Arctic state – with some being purely civilian, others serving a military function, and some having a combined mandate – a dedicated forum is the most appropriate solution for addressing the new security challenges in the Arctic. The Arctic Coast Guard Forum is seen as an opportunity for coast guards to discuss ways to respond co-operatively to the challenges of operating in the region. The value of the Forum is that coast guard personnel can learn from their neighbors' best practices and work together effectively in the event of disaster. The first step for an Arctic Coast Guard Forum is to outline its contribution to regional governance and member-state capabilities. It is thought that the chairmanship of the Forum would follow that of the Arctic Council.

HOW CAN THE ARCTIC COAST GUARD FORUM CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION?

- Bridge the civilian-military divide. The Arctic Coast Guard Forum can facilitate co-operation on soft-security challenges faced by all member states. Currently, other Arctic forums are unable to adequately address these challenges.
- Build complementary approaches to common problems. Co-operation among coast guards will decrease research redundancy, increase credibility for domestic activities and flag potential operational challenges in new policies.
- Increase interaction with maritime stakeholders. Coast guards need to work with communities, indigenous organizations and the private sector to build solutions that balance feasibility, safety and sustainability. Consultation must be a part of the decision-making process, while respecting the importance of creating a community of coast guard practitioners.
- Move beyond dialogue to prepare for future operational responsibilities. Maritime threats (in particular, oil spills) have the potential to impact more than one state. Preparation must reflect this reality. It is risky to wait until an accident occurs and international mobilization of resources is needed. Roundtable participants were unanimous in their expectation that the Arctic Coast Guard Forum will positively contribute to Arctic governance. To take advantage of this opportunity, participants outlined what must be done to achieve these goals.

³ These discussions were governed by the Chatham House Rule. Therefore, no attribution is given to the speakers or their organizations. This is done in order to encourage frank discussion. For more information on Arctic coast guard co-operation, please see the following article: Andreas Østhagen, Coast Guards in the Arctic – Troubles Ahead?, last modified October 9, 2014, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.thearcticinstitute.org/2014/10/100914-Coast-Guard-Arctic.html>.

⁴ Heather Conley, Terry; JamieToland; Kraut, and Andreas Østhagen. "A New Security Architecture for the Arctic: An American Perspective," in CSIS Report (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2012.), 37-40.

RUSSIAN PARTICIPATION

In 2013, U.S. and Russian officials took the first initiative towards establishing a dedicated Arctic Coast Guard Forum that would be similar to the North Pacific and North Atlantic Coast Guard Forums. However, by 2014, relations between Russia and several Arctic states were strained due to Russia's annexation of the Crimea and role in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. As a result of these cooled relations, Russian delegates had difficulties obtaining visas to Canada and, thus, did not attend the two meetings of Arctic coast guards held in Canada in March and September 2014 in conjunction with the NACGF meetings. This, in effect, halted developments of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum idea.

Participants in this Coast Guard Co-operation in a Changing Arctic meeting agreed that Russian participation in the Arctic Coast Guard Forum is necessary, in part because of its extensive coastline and responsibilities along the Northern Sea Route. Russia is an integral partner for Norway given the adjacent 1750 km maritime border in the Barents Sea. Finland also shares a long maritime border with Russia in the Gulf of Finland, albeit not in the Arctic. On the other side of the Arctic, Russia and the US share an extended maritime border in the Bering Sea/Strait area, derived from the 1990 border agreement between the US and the USSR.⁵

The expansion of coast guard operations will be dependent on diplomacy with Russia. In all these border regions, co-operation is required to efficiently manage fisheries resources, prepare for search and rescue, and provide sufficient assistance for

navigational aids. Excluding Russia, the largest Arctic state, from an Arctic Coast Guard Forum is not in the interest of the other Arctic states.

Formalizing the Arctic Coast Guard Forum has been put on hold until Russia returns to the table. However, preparing to respond to safety and environmental incidents must continue, and multilateral discussions need to move forward even if military dialogue and co-operation with Russia is disrupted due to conflicts elsewhere.

Recommendation: Arctic states should continue to engage Russia in the planning and operation of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

SECURITY DIALOGUE

Participants discussed the potential of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum to be a venue for security debates in the Arctic. In response, participants identified several concerns related to the potential *securitization*⁶ of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum's activities.

A well-established arena to discuss hard security matters in the Arctic does not exist. Issues of international security are excluded from the mandate of the Arctic Council. Security among state actors is discussed at venues including the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable and the Northern Chiefs of Defense Forum.⁷ Five out of eight Arctic states are NATO members, while Sweden and Finland are "close partners" to the defense alliance. Consequently there is a risk that including security issues in the Forum's agenda will alienate Russia and necessitate excluding non-state actors.⁸

5 U.S. State Department, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs: "Status of Wrangel and Other Arctic Islands," fact sheet, accessed at U. S. Department of State, last modified September 8, 2009, accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/128740.htm>

6 "Securitization" is a term used in political science to refer to a threat (to a state, to a person, to the environment) that requires extraordinary action.

7 The Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR) is a semi-annual gathering of senior military officers from the Arctic Eight and selected allies. The Northern Chiefs of Defence meeting, occurs once a year.

8 Kristian Åtland, "Interstate Relations in the Arctic: an Emerging Security Dilemma." *Comparative Strategy*, no. 33 (2), 145-166.

Arctic Coast Guards: Across the Military/Civilian Divide

| COUNTRY | INSTITUTION | ORGANIZATION | NATURE CIVILIAN/MILITARY |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| United States | United States Coast Guard (USCG) | Department of Homeland Security | Semi-military |
| Canada | Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) | Department of Fisheries and Oceans | Civilian |
| Denmark/ Greenland | Søværnet (1. eskadre) | Royal Danish Navy | Military |
| Norway | Kystvakten | Royal Norwegian Navy | Military |
| Sweden | Kustbevakningen | Ministry of Defence | Civilian |
| Iceland | Landhelgisgæsla | Ministry of Justice | Semi-military |
| Finland | Rajavartiolaitos | Ministry of the Interior | Semi-military |
| Russia | Coast Guard of the Border Service | Federal Security Service | Semi-military |

Table 2: Organizations in charge of coast guard tasks and their corresponding institutional structures.

Furthermore, discussions of hard security could hamper the growth and sustainability of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum. The heavy burden of the security dialogue in the Arctic has the potential to limit discussions and prevent the Forum from tackling the growing number of pressing soft security issues such as safety and environmental tasks. Soft security issues have the potential to unite the group around challenges common to all states, whereas sovereignty/legal security issues could alienate some members and key collaborators such as communities.

The varying coast guard structures pose an additional challenge to any dialogue of a military nature, which could potentially prevent participation of one or more Arctic states. Coast guard structures in the eight Arctic countries vary greatly (see table 2 for a brief overview). Even the three categories of operational style (civilian, semi-military and military) do not reflect the nuances between those in the same category. There is not one unified Arctic coast guard model, as each is tailored to its national interests. Focusing on common safety and environmental tasks will strengthen the capacity

of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum to contribute to regional governance, because search and rescue and marine pollution emergency situations can happen at any time. The Arctic Coast Guard Forum must choose its priorities based on these criteria.

Recommendation: The Forum should initially avoid becoming an arena of “hard security dialogue” and focus on initiatives that promote co-operation on safety and environmental threats.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An Arctic Coast Guard Forum builds on established relationships among Arctic states to develop a community with a focus on operational day-to-day activities. Roundtable participants recognized data sharing, identifying best practices and training as three potential focus areas of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum that could improve Arctic operations.⁹

Participants identified multiple areas of domestic, bilateral and multilateral co-operation that are happening organically and should be formalized in the work of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, including:

- Bilateral co-operation in mapping the continental shelf;
- Analyzing traffic patterns, particularly around border co-operation areas;
- Co-ordinating research on the science of ice flow management;
- Domestic risk assessments; and

- Models for co-operation between domestic departments (for example, Canada and the U.S.’s integrated border enforcement team).

The Forum should also be a platform to initiate cross-border exercises, either live or in tabletop format. Joint emergency response exercises have increased in frequency, but a lead organization is needed to address long-term strategic planning, including what types of exercises are needed and how to apply lessons learned after the exercise is over. Under the direction of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, both bilateral and circumpolar exercises can be done.

Recommendation: The Arctic Coast Guard Forum should focus on building a community that will facilitate sharing of best practices, real-time data and information, and expertise at an operational level.

Recommendation: The Arctic Coast Guard Forum should serve as a platform for search and rescue and oil spill exercises at both circumpolar and regional/bilateral levels.

GOVERNANCE AND AFFILIATION

Roundtable participants listed a set of “values” that will help the Arctic Coast Guard Forum find its place in regional governance. It should be professional, apolitical and focus on operational challenges. Over the long term, the Forum should grow organically as a result of wider use by participants and emphasize consensus-based decision making.

The Arctic Coast Guard Forum can contribute to recent regional agreements on search and rescue

⁹ Outsourcing or sharing sovereignty or legislated tasks such as fisheries inspections or border patrols is difficult, if not impossible, without the coastal state forgoing some of its sovereignty. For example, it is difficult to imagine Danish Navy vessels conducting fisheries inspections on Canadian vessels in Canadian waters, or vice versa. Geography is also an important challenge to consider. Arctic geography entails large maritime areas where few incidents occur, with small numbers of – if any – coast guard vessels present. Sharing responsibilities or outsourcing tasks is often not even an option, with no other country in the vicinity of the areas where the situation is most dire.

and oil spills through its operational expertise in these two arenas. Some participants argued that the Arctic Coast Guard Forum should co-ordinate relevant Arctic Council Working Groups and Task Forces. These efforts can be applied when the Arctic Coast Guard Forum changes or adds new priorities, such as fisheries and marine biodiversity. Following the models of the North Pacific and North Atlantic Coast Guard Forums, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum must set its own agenda, with a rotating chairmanship and an informal setting.

The Arctic Coast Guard Forum should also identify its scope, especially its limitations as a regional force dealing with domestic issues. Some tasks will require coast guards and Arctic states to take a local approach. Participants indicated, for example, that “one size does not fit all” when it comes to partnerships with the diverse indigenous communities and organizations in the region. At the state level, states that operate year-round (such as Norway) may have different needs than states that only operate seasonally (Canada and the United States). As one participant simply said: “different regions, different worries.”

Recommendation: The Arctic Coast Guard Forum must share information with other Arctic bodies while still maintaining its independence and setting its own agenda.

INCLUSION AND CONSULTATION WITH NON-STATE PARTNERS

Two schools of thought emerged on how the Arctic Coast Guard Forum should govern its relationship with other actors. The first recommended that the

group be kept as small as possible in order to share “close, operational contacts and relationships.” The second was that coastal communities and indigenous peoples should be included along with other private actors in the region. The private sector and local communities are a resource in case of an emergency, including search and rescue, vessel evacuation to land or oil spill.¹⁰ State investments are limited. Equipment cannot be readily available at all locations at all times. Non-state partners contribute additional knowledge and resources that can be used during humanitarian and environmental emergencies.

In a coastal emergency, local communities are often the closest available responders and consequently the most adversely affected during response and recovery. Offshore, oil and gas companies are legally responsible for potential emergency situations by law and operating standards. Although these laws differ among Arctic states, private sector assets are the only response readily available in remote maritime areas.

Through the discussions, participants made several recommendations on how to work with non-state actors in the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

- Develop best practices for negotiating memorandums of understanding with industries operating in the area to create a plan to utilize resources during an emergency.
- Map local monitoring systems already present in Arctic communities.

¹⁰ Evacuation of a maritime vessel to a nearby community was the focus of Operation Nanook 2014, Canada’s largest Arctic whole-of-government exercise to date. In the case of this type of evacuation, resources needed for the emergency response will need to be found in the community. For more examples of how this type of emergency response requires community support, please see Meredith Kravitz and Vanessa Gastaldo, *Emergency Management in the Arctic: the Context Explained* (Toronto : Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program, 2013).

- Formalize indigenous-led oil spill response as part of national oil spill response strategies.
- Develop best practices for working with non-state actors with a regional/local approach.
- Invite indigenous organizations and private sector representatives for formal opportunities (for example, biannual side meetings) to meet with the Arctic Coast Guard Forum as a whole.

Participants noted that some of these practices already occur domestically and are a source of best practices that should be shared throughout the Forum.

Recommendation: The Arctic Coast Guard Forum's Terms of Reference should include mechanisms to work with communities, indigenous organizations and the private sector.

FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION: MAPPING SEARCH AND RESCUE ASSETS

Roundtable participants recommended that the Forum focus on safety issues, including search and rescue, to encourage participation from all Arctic states. As a start, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum can address multiple dimensions of safety issues by mapping the search and rescue assets of the Arctic states.

Beginning in 2015, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum can focus on state-operated capacities for aeronautical and maritime search and rescue. The outcomes of this project will assist in the planning of the 2016 search and rescue exercise planned by the United States during their chairmanship of

the Arctic Council. A second phase of the project would be mapping non-governmental assets, including those owned by companies or in local communities.

Once this project is complete, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum can identify gaps and recommend future activities. Following this, the Arctic Council could examine how to strengthen communication systems for search and rescue responses that include both public and private assets.¹¹ This project would be a substantive contribution to the implementation of the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (2011) and provide a framework for the Arctic Coast Guard Forum to expand the discussions to include new topics such as oil pollution response, fishery protection or ice floe management.

CONCLUSION

Participants in the seminar agree that the Arctic Coast Guard Forum will make a positive contribution to maritime operations and governance. Beginning with search and rescue and oil spill response, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum will contribute to work already underway across the various Arctic regions. Long term, the Forum will be able to further contribute by providing strategic direction on emerging issues in the field. The Arctic Coast Guard Forum could bridge the military-civilian divide, providing new opportunities to share domestic and international best practices to protect the region's people and environment. Moving forward, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum can take an active approach to addressing the challenges of operating in the Arctic in the 21st century.

¹¹ Communications infrastructure will be examined under the plan for the U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2015-2017). Narrowing the focus of this project to the impact of communications technology on search and rescue may be a project of interest for subsequent chairmanships.

Appendix:

List of Discussion Participants

Tanya Alvaro

Director, Horizontal CCG Priorities, Canadian Coast Guard

Roger Connelly

Former COO, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Erin Abou-Abssi

Science and Policy Researcher, Oceans North

Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon

Visiting Fellow, Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History

John Higginbotham

Fellow, Carleton University (Ottawa) and Centre for International Governance Innovation

Ron Kroeker

Senior Policy Analyst, National Search and Rescue Secretariat Canada

Paal Hilde

Associate Professor, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies

Andreas Østhagen

Research Fellow, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies

Inuuteq Holm Olsen

Representative from Greenland to U.S. and Canada

Conn Nugent

Advisor, The Gordon Foundation

Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørv

Professor, UiT: The Arctic University of Norway

Tom Axworthy

President, The Gordon Foundation

Tony Penikett

Advisor, The Gordon Foundation

Vanessa Gastaldo

Program Officer, The Gordon Foundation

Martin Fortier

Executive Director, Arctic Net

Jessica Shadian

Fellow, Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies

Ernie Regehr

Senior Fellow in Arctic Security, The Simons Foundation

Heather Conley

Senior Vice President, Europe, Eurasia and the Arctic, Centre for Strategic and International Studies

Will Greaves

PhD Candidate, University of Toronto

Bjørn Egenberg

Naval attaché, Norwegian Embassy, Washington D.C.

Nils Morten Udgaard

Professor, University of Bergen and journalist, Aftenposten (ret.)

Captain Scott Smith

Deputy Director, Marine Transportation System Directorate, United States Coast Guard

Drue Pearce

Senior Advisor, Crowell and Moring

Doug Johnson

Legislative Assistant to MP Dennis Bevington (N.W.T.)

Peter Stapleton

Policy Analyst, Horizontal Priorities, Canadian Coast Guard

Benjamin Walker

International Business Development, Lockheed Martin

Daniel Lockhart

Student, University of Toronto

