



# Arctic Special Operations

**BG Shawn R. Satterfield**

**Commander, SOCNORTH**

21 July 2021

This briefing is classified: **UNCLASSIFIED**



# Agenda

- USNORTHCOM AOR Strategic Environment
- SOCNORTH Mission & Vision
- SOCNORTH Strategic Approach
- Why the Arctic
- SOCNORTH Northern Approach
- History: First Special Services Force
- Northern Approach Vectors
  - Advance Arctic Capabilities
  - Enhance Readiness
  - Preparation of the Environment & Information Operations
- Discussion/Questions





# USNORTHCOM AOR Strategic Environment

USNORTHCOM defends the United States' center of gravity



**Foreign areas:** Canada, Mexico, The Bahamas, British Overseas Territories (Bermuda, Turks & Caicos)

**Geographic orientation:** Northern Approaches (Arctic), Southern Approaches, Maritime Approaches

**Diplomatic:**

- Two alliances / two partnerships
- Longest border in the world (U.S. – Canada)
- Most crossed border in the world (U.S. – Mexico)
- Russia, China, Iran, DPRK diplomatic presence in AOR

**Informational:**

- Freedom of press throughout AOR
- Russian, Chinese, Iranian media outlets & cultural centers

**Military:**

- Strong alliances, tenuous partnerships
- Non-traditional defensive roles

**Economic:** fully integrated and interdependent

- Two largest trading partners
- 56% of oil imports
- 6.5% of world's population / 27% of world's GDP

*Highly complex relationships, overlapping jurisdictions & responsibilities, dynamic environment*



# U.S. Special Operations Command North



**Vision:** (U) SOCNORTH, working with mission partners, provides SOF options to deter, deny, and disrupt irregular threats and mitigate gaps and seams to defend the homeland.

**Campaign Mission:** (U) SOCNORTH plans, coordinates, and conducts special operations in collaboration with mission partners, to assure allies and partners, compete below the level of armed conflict, deter conventional and irregular threats, and set conditions to execute contingency operations in order to defend the United States and its interests.



**Homeland Defense Mission:** (U) On order, JFSOCC conducts special operations in the USNORTHCOM AOR to defend the Homeland against irregular threats.

*Providing SOF options to defend the homeland*



# SOCNORTH Strategic Approach

**STRATEGIC APPROACH** → *Counter Great Power Influence & Defend the Homeland*

## Current Environment

Malign state actors seek to expand access and influence in U.S. near abroad below threshold of armed conflict

Homeland is not a sanctuary and limited U.S. resources focused on irregular threats

NORTHCOM's primary mission of Homeland Defense requires C2 of SOF activities during a crises

## *Campaign through Cooperation*

**LOE #1 Strengthen Partnerships & Build Readiness**

## *Campaign through Competition Below Armed Conflict*

**LOE #2 Deter, Deny, & Disrupt Irregular Threats to the Homeland**

## *Campaign through Armed Conflict*

**LOE #3 Respond to Contingencies**

## Desired Endstate

Adversaries' influence degraded through SOF OAs and partnerships

Capable, interoperable, and willing regional and interagency partnerships are established

Irregular Threats to the Homeland identified and disrupted

Increased Domain Awareness and Decision Superiority maintained through a robust SOCNORTH Network

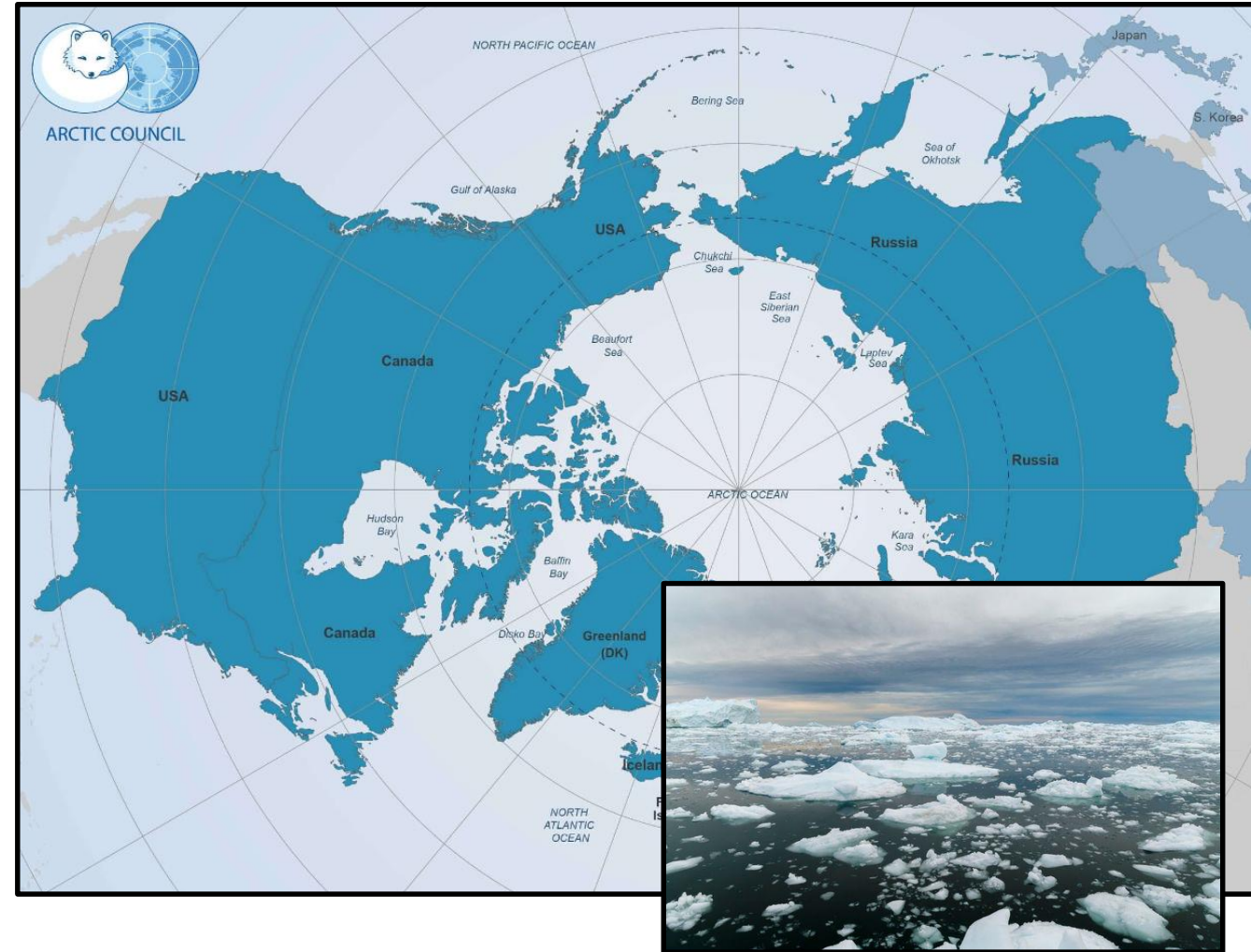
SOCNORTH postured to C2 SOF as a JFSOCC during a contingency or OPLAN activation.

*SOCNORTH, working with partners, provides SOF options to deter, deny, and disrupt irregular threats and mitigate gaps and seams to defend the homeland.*



# Why the Arctic?

- Climate change is opening the Arctic environment and presenting opportunities for our Strategic Competitors.
- The United States is one of the eight Arctic States.
- The Arctic Security Environment contributes directly to Homeland Defense (USNORTHCOM).
- 2019 DoD Arctic Strategy, “is a secure and stable region in which U.S. national interests are safeguarded, the U.S. homeland is defended, and nations work cooperatively to address shared challenges.”



*The Arctic is key terrain in the defense of the Homeland*



# SOCNORTH Northern Approach

**STRATEGIC APPROACH** → *Counter Great Power Influence & Defend the Homeland*

Multi-Domain Operations

- Domain Awareness
- Strategic Communications
- Incorporate Electronic Warfare, Cyber, and Space Domains

**Vector #1 Advance Capabilities**

- Ensure SOF can not only survive but thrive in the region.
- SOF must operate/train in the Arctic to identify required capabilities and gaps for SOF in the Arctic.
- ICW USNORTHCOM, advocate Arctic capabilities and share with the joint force.

**Vector #2 Prepare the Environment**

- Conduct activities in likely or potential Arctic operational areas to set conditions for competition, crisis, and conflict.
- Prepare by increasing knowledge of the environment through the building of human, physical, or virtual networks/infrastructure (JP 3-05 Special Operations).

**Vector #3 Demonstrate Readiness**

- Demonstrate readiness to conduct SOF Core Activities
- Identify gaps exposed during exercises and validate solutions through realistic deployment opportunities.
- Support/develop SOF OAs in Large Force Exercises (Arctic Edge, Guerrier Nordique, etc.).

Northern Approach Desired Endstates

**Adversaries' influence along Northern Approach degraded through SOF OAs and partnerships**

**Capable, interoperable, and willing regional and interagency partnerships are established**

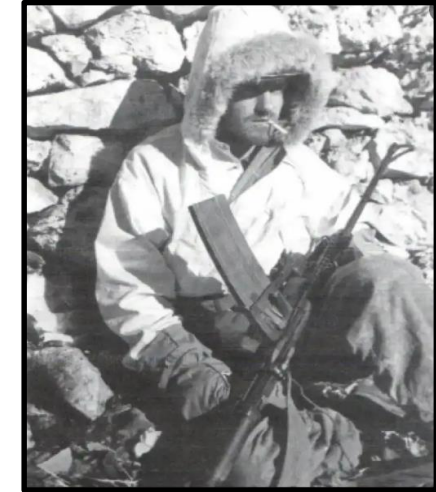
**Irregular Threats to the Homeland identified and disrupted along Northern Approach**

**Increased Domain Awareness along Northern Approach**



# History: First Special Service Force

- Currently a focus on the Arctic is driving strategy, innovation, and resources against a problem of fighting and winning in an unforgiving environment.
- Fighting and winning in a cold weather and challenging terrain is not new to Special Operations Forces (SOF).
- First Special Service Force (FSSF) – elite American-Canadian commando unit from World War II.
  - Trained for cold weather and mountainous terrain.
    - Homeland Defense - Aleutian Islands, AK - 1943
    - Offensive Operations - Monte La Difensa, Italy – 1943



*History of SOF operating in austere environments*





# Advance Arctic Capabilities

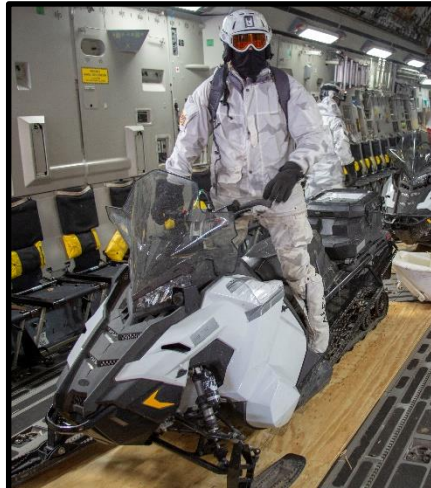
- Operating in the Arctic is extremely difficult (Cold Weather, harsh terrain, & long distances).
- SOF must operate/train in the Arctic to identify required capabilities and gaps for SOF in the Arctic.
- The Winter Warfare Course
  - Backcountry mobility, avalanche awareness and preparedness, winter survival, snowmobile operations with advance riding techniques, special operations small unit tactics on skis and snowmobiles



*Ensure SOF can not only survive but thrive/operate effectively in the Arctic*



# Enhance Readiness

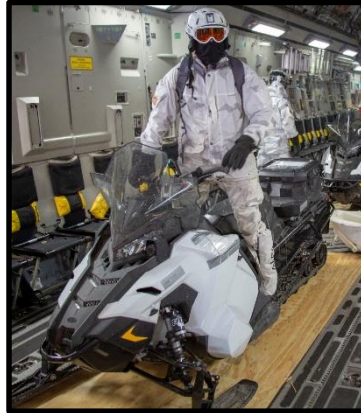


- Conduct training/operations in the Arctic.
- Identify gaps exposed during exercises and validate solutions through realistic deployment opportunities.
- Support/develop SOF OAs in Large Force Exercises (Arctic Edge, Guerrier Nordique, etc.).
  - Arctic Edge 22 – Large SOF contingent
    - 10<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> SFG (A)
    - Naval Special Warfare (NSW)
    - 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR
  - Guerrier Nordique (Arctic Warrior) 22 – Canadian Exercise

*Conduct Combined, Joint, and Service component exercises in the Northern Approach*



# Preparation of the Environment



- **Preparation of the Environment**
  - Conduct activities in likely or potential Arctic operational areas to set conditions for competition, crisis, and conflict.
  - Prepare by increasing knowledge of the environment through the building of human, physical, or virtual networks/infrastructure (JP 3-05 Special Operations).

*Prepare for competition, crisis, and conflict.*



# Discussion/Questions

