

Arctic Nations Cope With Ramifications of Rapidly Warming Region



Rear Adm. Ewa Skoog Haslum, chief of Navy for Sweden, discusses the expansive needs of the Arctic, noting current military cooperation may not be enough to tackle its challenges. *LISA NIPP*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Arctic is getting hotter, both literally and figuratively, and allied Arctic nations are grappling with the issues posed by increased access to the region by industry and hostile nations such as Russia and China.

“No doubt, the level of activity in the Arctic is continuing to grow,” said Rear Adm. Ronald J. Piret, commander of Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, speaking as a panelist on “The Geostratic Importance of the Arctic” on April 4.

Piret and fellow panelists from Canada, Sweden and the Joint Arctic Command, agreed that international cooperation in the region is vital and more of it will be needed as the Arctic grows more accessible due to climate change.

Adm. Linda Fagan, vice commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, said great partnerships in the region already exists and the United States is seeking more of them, but she said, “We need to be thinking beyond coast guards and navies to industry and academia.”

In some cases, even the current level of military cooperation isn't enough, some speakers said. Rear Adm. Ewa Skoog Haslum, chief of Navy for Sweden, said “we [the Swedish navy] need to be a little bit bigger and to share the burden.”

Chris Henderson, deputy commissioner for the Canadian Coast Guard, said having enough access to be able to increase cooperation is a challenge, as all his assets are spoken for, so if an international exercise opens up it can be a challenge to find a ship able to participate.

There's also the issue of increasing activity from Russia and China. Just as traditional allied nations are operating, "all the autocratic nations are present in the Arctic as well," Haslum said.