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(U//FOUO) Did You Know that NSA Has an Arctic Presence?

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(U//FOUO) The Arctic region has been very much in the news lately. From ice melt in the Arctic Ocean to increasing competition for hydrocarbons and minerals, the Arctic is truly becoming an international hotspot. The United States is now giving a higher priority to Arctic issues. For the first time in the history of the Arctic Council, the US Secretary of State attended a bi-annual Summit session which was held in Nuuk, Greenland, in May of this year. Another sign of the growing importance of the Arctic is the new Unified Command Plan signed by the President on 6 April 2011. The new UCP assigned the responsibility for the Arctic to US Northern Command; before this the Arctic had been divided among three commands.

(U//FOUO) One of the main concerns in the Arctic from a military standpoint is Russian plans and intentions. The Russians have announced plans for two Arctic brigades, and they are planning to increase the number of icebreakers in their fleet. These plans, along with an increasing Chinese presence and expressed interest in the Arctic, pose a significant intelligence challenge to the United States, Canada, and the other Arctic countries.

map of northern Alaska



(U) Point Barrow is at the northernmost tip of Alaska

(U//FOUO) NSA is keeping pace with these developments, as witnessed by the SINIO presentation planned for 29 Nov entitled "[The Arctic: The New Frontier.](#)" Unbeknownst to many people, *NSA has an Arctic presence* through the Alaska Mission Operations Center. In addition to the main AMOC facility on Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson (JBER) in Anchorage (which is sub-Arctic at 61N), the AMOC maintains *a remote intercept facility at Point Barrow, Alaska.* At 71N Barrow is the northernmost point of the United States⁽¹⁾.

(S//SI/REL) The AMOC facility in Barrow is hosted by the US Air Force (USAF) Long Range Radar Site. The facility consists of an antenna array, a FRD-13 PUSHER⁽²⁾, and a small [SCIF](#) which houses the

collection equipment for a CELTIC II short-duration command-and-control communications collection suite⁽³⁾. The output of this suite is forwarded to a position on the AMOC watch floor. Two USAF maintenance personnel from the AMOC are always TDY at Barrow for a month at a time.



(U//FOUO) Note: click on each photo for a larger view.

Above left: The FRD-13 PUSHER array at Point Barrow. Center: AMOC personnel at Barrow (l-r) ██████████ (AMOC Deputy Commander), SrA ██████████, and SSgt ██████████ Right: The author and Jeff Bolenbaugh on the shore of the Arctic Ocean

(S//SI/REL) Using the collection site at Point Barrow, as well as other collection systems ranging from terrestrial HF (local and remoted) to remoted overhead VHF to remoted [FORNSAT](#), **the AMOC maintains a 24/7 watch over Russian military air activity in the Arctic.** Reports range from real-time tip-offs to both the Alaska [NORAD](#) Region on JBER and the Canadian NORAD Region at Winnipeg, Manitoba, for the positioning of AWACS, tankers and fighters to intercept and identify Russian bombers; to product reports of Russian re-supply flights to Ice Station Barneo, a Russian ice station near the North Pole.

(S//SI/REL) The AMOC maintains a close relationship with the USAF 611th Intelligence, Reconnaissance and Surveillance Division on JBER, as well as with NORAD and US NORTHCOM in Colorado Springs on Arctic Russian air activity. The AMOC has also begun to establish a closer relation with US Coast Guard District 17 -- the USCG component responsible for the Arctic -- headquartered in Juneau, Alaska. One benefit of this relationship is that AMOC personnel have been invited to participate in USCG Arctic Domain Awareness flights on USCG HC-130 aircraft operating from JBER or from USCG Air Station Kodiak. These flights have allowed AMOC personnel to gain an understanding of Arctic operating conditions which are unique to NSA analytic elements.



(U//FOUO) Above left: The author and Mr. ██████████ at Point Barrow prior to an Arctic Domain Awareness flight. Center: The author on the flight deck of a USCG HC-130 aircraft during an Arctic Domain Awareness flight. Right: Barrow as seen from the air.

(S//SI/REL) The facility at Barrow is moving into the future of NSA operations. A wideband [GLAIVE](#) system is being installed to replace the aging CELTIC II under Project DRYTIDE⁽⁴⁾. The AMOC is also

planning to conduct a signal survey from Barrow in the near future. This survey will characterize the current VLF/HF signal environment in the Arctic.

(U//FOUO) The AMOC has become a key player in Intelligence Community arctic meetings and discussions. Due to its unique location, the AMOC will be hosting the 4th Intelligence Community Arctic Working Group in March 2012, offering IC analysts a look at Arctic operating conditions and engagement with US military operators in the region.

(U//FOUO) Between the planned upgrades at Barrow and a robust engagement with Arctic partners, the AMOC is uniquely positioned to continue to be a vital part of NSA's efforts against the emerging Arctic Intelligence problem.

(U//FOUO) For more information on the AMOC visit our home page -- "[go AMOC](#)" on NSANet.

(U) Notes:

(1) The northernmost inhabited point in North America (and the world) is a Canadian SIGINT facility, the Canadian Forces Station Alert at 84N on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island. See a [related SIDtoday](#) article.

(2) [Wullenweber](#) (requires logging onto Intelink)

(3) [CELTIC](#)

(4) [Project DRYTIDE](#)

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