

LIVE: David Perdue testifies before Senate on nomination for ambassador to China

TRENDING:

LIVE UPDATES: TRUMP TARIFFS FALLOUT

STOCK MARKET PLUNGE

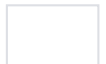
PROXY VOI

OPINION > NATIONAL SECURITY

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NOT THE VIEW OF THE HILL

US security starts in the Arctic

BY MIKE SFRAGA AND LAWSON BRIGHAM, OPINION CONTRIBUTORS - 06/11/20 1:30 PM ET



istock

President Donald Trump's June 9, 2020 Memorandum on Safeguarding U.S. National Interests in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions is welcome news to those who have long

“polar security icebreaking fleet acquisition program that supports our national interests in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.”

Although the United States Coast Guard has detailed their needs to better serve and assert U.S. interests in the polar regions, the president’s affirmation that current U.S. maritime capabilities and related infrastructure is woefully lacking should spur further development and implementation of a new comprehensive Arctic strategy for the United States.

On May 29, retired Rear Admiral Kenneth Braithwaite, former U.S. ambassador to Norway, was confirmed as the 77th secretary of the Navy. During the secretary’s confirmation hearing, U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan (R- Alaska), highlighted the lack of a U.S. Arctic deep-water port and asked Braithwaite if he could commit to advocating for one should he be confirmed. Braithwaite’s answer was succinct, “Yes, sir.” Regarding the transformation of the Arctic Ocean, he stated, “As it begins to become more navigable on the surface, we also need to make sure that our presence is noted...it will be a priority of mine...”

On the same day Braithwaite was sworn into office, the city of Nome, located on Alaska’s Seward Peninsula along the Bering Strait, announced the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decision to advance to Congress for action the Port of Nome, Alaska Modifications Report. The report calls for the U.S. to “provide shore-side support for research vessels, cruise ships, oil tankers, and most importantly, U.S. Coast Guard icebreakers and national security cutters, as well as U.S. Navy vessels.”

The U.S. was a lead country, with Canada and Finland, in the Arctic Council’s Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA) approved by the Arctic Ministers in April 2009. AMSA determined that Arctic states cannot achieve enhanced security without robust marine infrastructure. This includes the development of ports, communication systems, aids to navigation, hydrography and charts, search and rescue (SAR) capacity, environmental response capacity, intermodal access to ports, environmental observation networks, marine domain awareness capacity, icebreakers, icebreaking commercial cargo carriers and scientific research stations.

President Trump’s memorandum, steps to advance an Arctic port in Nome and Braithwaite’s commitment to an Arctic port, are three significant and timely

This basic Arctic infrastructure deficit presents serious economic, social, political, national and environmental security implications in Alaska and the United States. The lack of a deep-water port from Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands, to the U.S.-Canada boundary in the Beaufort Sea, is a critical gap that limits America's sea power and constrains the economic development of our Arctic region. We urgently call for funding to establish the country's first Arctic deep-water port in Nome. However, it will not be enough to have an Arctic port without the essential complementary connections to the rest of Alaska. Nome should be connected to Fairbanks by a new, strategic rail thoroughfare where a seamless connection can be made to the existing Alaska Railroad system south to Anchorage.

Federal funding for basic infrastructure in Alaska is vital to respond to a profoundly changing Arctic with greater marine access, potential natural resource development and concerns for increased Russian and Chinese bilateral Arctic investments, engagement and military activities.

We identify nine key recommendations for agency funding, including: Fund the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge and build a suitable Arctic port in Nome capable of mooring a large vessel, such as a Coast Guard icebreaker, naval combatant or commercial ship.

Fund NOAA's National Ocean Service for a 20-year program to conduct hydrography and chart the U.S. Arctic Exclusive Economic Zone; this action is consistent with the Presidential Memorandum of November 2019 focused on ocean mapping of the U.S. EEZ and the shoreline and nearshore of Alaska.

Fund NOAA's National Weather Service and National Ocean Service to enhance the operational marine and terrestrial observation operational network in Alaska.

Fund the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard to build and commission a third Polar Security Cutter and additional ships as deemed required for enhanced U.S. Arctic and Antarctic operations.

Fund the Departments of Transportation, Interior and Defense to construct a railway corridor linking a new, deep-water Arctic port in Nome to Fairbanks, Alaska.

a changing Arctic security domain.

Fund the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to develop and construct an enhanced communications system for military and civilian use in Alaska; the system must include submarine fiber-optic cables connecting coastal communities, industrial facilities and vital defense locations.

Fund enhanced maritime domain awareness systems that improve marine information to Arctic coastal communities and aligns with the Marine Exchange of Alaska.

Fund the Department of Defense to establish the Ted Stevens Arctic Center for Security Studies to inform and advance the nation's interests throughout the region.

The nearly complete lack of U.S. Arctic marine infrastructure remains a critical vulnerability for Alaska and the nation. Congressional funding is imperative if the U.S. wishes to respond seriously to the many security challenges of a changing Arctic Ocean and capitalize on the potential economic opportunities that await greater access to this region. Continued lack of investment in our Arctic infrastructure will be a strategic shortcoming with negative, long-term consequences.

Mike Sfraga is the director of the Polar Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center and former distinguished co-lead scholar of the Fulbright Arctic Initiative. Lawson Brigham is a global fellow in the Wilson Center's Polar Institute and fellow at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy's Center for Arctic Study and Policy.

**TAGS ALASKA ARCTIC ARCTIC COUNCIL DAN SULLIVAN DONALD TRUMP
INFRASTRUCTURE NOAA**

Copyright 2025 Nexstar Media Inc. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.



SPONSORED CONTENT

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Online Shopping Tools](#) | Sponsored

Amazon's Worst Nightmare: Shoppers Canceling Prime for This Clever Hack

[Online Shopping Tools](#) | Sponsored

Average Cost to Charter A Private Jet May Surprise You (See Prices)

[Business Class Discounts](#) | [Top Searcher Now](#) | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Juneau: Three Banks Introduce 5% Interest Rates on Savings

[Savings](#) | [Search Ads](#) | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Plastic Surgeon Tells: If You Have Wrinkles, Do This Immediately (It's Genius!)

[Beverly Hills MD](#) | Sponsored

[Learn more](#)

Honda's New 2025 CRV Is Breathtaking, Especially at This Price

[Auto](#) | [Search Ads](#) | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Alaska: Controversial Changes Near Juneau Leaves Drivers Fuming

[Penny Pincher](#) | Sponsored

All New Hyundai Palisade For Seniors Simply Amazes - See The Cost

[New Hyundai Palisade 2024](#) | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Sleep Experts: This Mouth Taping Trick Could Transform Your Health

[HiStrips](#) | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

New Small Electric Car for Seniors (The Price May Surprise You)

[Small EV Cars](#) | [Best Searcher](#) | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Most Budget-Friendly SUVs On The Market (See The List)

[Popular Searches](#) | [Search Ads](#) | Sponsored

[View Deals](#)

Health & Lifestyle | Sponsored

(Learn more)

Juneau: Unsold Cars with Zero Miles: Get Them Dirt Cheap

GoSearches | Search Ads | Sponsored

Cardiologists: Add This 1 Thing To Your Coffee To Turn On Fat Burning Mode

Health News | Sponsored

Learn More

Empty Antarctica Cruises Cost Almost Nothing (Take A Look)

Cruise cost | Search ads | Sponsored

2025 Senior SUV Is A True Head Turner (You'll Love The Price)

SUVs | Rank Searches Now | Sponsored

Learn More

Plaque psoriasis is silent but deadly: 10 Symptoms you should know

Plaque Psoriasis | search ads | Sponsored

Learn More

More National Security News



The Navy can't fight for freedom while banning books

NATIONAL SECURITY / 4 HOURS AGO



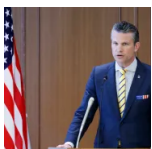
Team Trump is losing World War III

NATIONAL SECURITY / 5 HOURS AGO



Assessing Hegseth's interim defense strategic guidance

NATIONAL SECURITY / 23 HOURS AGO



From Hillary to Hegseth, our politicians are a national security problem

OPINION / 2 DAYS AGO

[See All](#)

Video/Hill.TV



Rising: April 2, 2025

RISING / 23 HOURS AGO



Rising: March 31, 2025



Rising: March 28, 2025

RISING / 6 DAYS AGO

[See all Hill.TV](#)

[See all Video](#)

Top Stories



House Republicans torpedo Johnson effort to block proxy voting for new parents

HOUSE / 2 DAYS AGO

[See All](#)

**THE
HILL**

Opinion

How to submit an op-ed.

Most Popular

2

4 GOP senators vote with Democrats to undo Trump tariffs on Canada

3

White House defends not including Russia, North Korea on tariffs

4

House cancels rest of votes for week after GOP floor rebellion

5

Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariffs: Here's how much countries are getting ...

The Hill Podcasts – Morning Report







What Do You Think?

Loading survey...



SIGN UP FOR OUR DAILY EMAIL

Your Email

Send

THE HILL

Resources

[SITEMAP](#)

[THE HILL APPS](#)

[PEOPLE](#)

[RSS](#)

[PRINT EDITION](#)

Other Areas

[GALLERIES](#)

[THE HILL JOBS](#)

[NATIONAL JOBS](#)

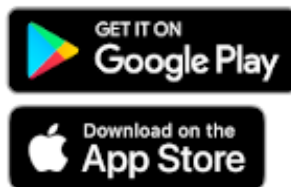
Contributors

[SUBMIT OPINION CONTENT](#)

About Us

[WORK FOR THE HILL](#)

Get the App



PRIVACY POLICY 11/18/2024

TERMS & CONDITIONS

CONTACT

ADVERTISE

SUBSCRIBE TO PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

NEWSNATION

BESTREVIEWS

NEXSTAR DIGITAL

JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY

DO NOT SELL OR SHARE MY PERSONAL INFORMATION

THE HILL 400 N CAPITOL STREET NW, SUITE 650 WASHINGTON DC 20002

