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**STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT  
JUNE 5, 2019**

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The Russian Government's maritime related efforts with respect to climate change are primarily in the Arctic and focused on two goals. The first is securing Russia's economic interests in its Arctic zone; the second goal is military modernization, primarily of the forces within the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command (OSK-Northern Fleet). Nearly all Russian armed forces in the Arctic are subordinated to this command.

To further its maritime **economic interests**, the Russian Government is modernizing infrastructure along its northern coast and on some of its Arctic islands. The goal is to be able to monitor, protect and defend its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Arctic and to enforce a regulatory regime across the Northern Sea Route (NSR). *(The NSR is located within Russia's EEZ between the big island of Novaya Zemlya and the Bering Strait.)* As climate change has made portions of the Arctic navigable for a longer period of the year, the Russian Government has promoted the NSR and its Arctic region as possibilities for increased shipping and investment. Moscow believes that there is substantial economic potential in the Arctic. Naval Intelligence assesses that this economic potential exists but that the Russian Government appears overly optimistic regarding its development in the near- and medium-term. This applies both to the NSR becoming a major shipping lane and to expanded resource extraction. Climate change will not make these resources easier to extract – either ashore or offshore, nor is it likely to change the basic geography or economics of shipping that make the NSR unlikely to become a major and highly trafficked maritime thoroughfare. While Arctic shipping is likely to increase, it will remain a miniscule portion of global shipping.

From a **military perspective**, Russia's primary military power in the Arctic is resident in the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet, based in ice-free harbors near Murmansk on the Barents Sea. The Northern Fleet's primary mission is to operate a submarine force providing a sea-

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based strategic deterrent as part of Moscow's nuclear triad. Much of the Northern Fleet is focused on supporting this submarine sea-based deterrent force.

Climate change is unlikely to have much, if any, impact on the Northern Fleet and its primary missions. Greater variability in sea ice coverage is the most relevant climate change impact, however, since the Northern Fleet largely operates in the Barents Sea which is ice-free year round, there is virtually no impact on naval operations in this region. Because Russian strategic submarines are built to operate in ice zones, climate change is unlikely to have large systemic impact. Other than strategic deterrence, the Northern Fleet's mission include the overall defense of the Arctic approaches to Russia. To this end, work is underway to refurbish and re-establish military infrastructure required to monitor, protect, and defend Russia's northern regions. Russia is modernizing maritime frontier outposts, area surveillance sensors, and airfields. It is also developing a chain of search and rescue stations to enable emergency response should maritime traffic along the NSR require assistance.

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