

Arctic Security Guarantee for Active Research and Defense (ASGARD)

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Background

Russia and China's "limitless" partnership has enabled these adversaries to increase their presence in the Arctic, posing the EU and U.S.'s greatest threat to securing the region.¹ Russia has over 50 active Arctic military bases, and China has invested tens of billions of dollars in Arctic research and development since 2013.² In February 2026, the United States withdrew from the Hybrid CoE, one of the only existing frameworks for EU-U.S. Arctic cooperation.³ This withdrawal has left an even larger gap between Sino-Russian and EU-U.S. Arctic defense. Still, it has opened an opportunity to focus on shared defense priorities via technological development and military training.

Objectives

- Synchronize EU-U.S. research and defense operations.
- Secure the Arctic against adversarial aggression.
- Facilitate Western access to key trade routes and natural resources.

Components

ASGARD's goals will be achieved by establishing a base for research, defense technology testing, and military training. It will be located near Nuorgam, Finland, where joint European-U.S. military exercises have taken place for two years.⁴

- I. Technology and Training** – Developing critical technologies and training Western forces in the Arctic environment (e.g., cold-resistant lithium-ion batteries, long-range drones).
- II. Research** – On-site testing of satellite data collection and rare earth mineral surveying methods (e.g., hyperspectral imaging, AI scanning of drill cores).
- III. Economy & Trade** – Securing key trade passageways and critical resources.

Implementation and Immediate Benefits

ASGARD challenges mounting Russian aggression against EU Member States and Sino-Russian cooperation in the Arctic. Bolstering the EU-U.S. presence in the Arctic secures Western access to trade routes and critical natural resources, making the estimated start-up cost of \$331M and annual maintenance costs of \$280M a worthwhile investment. ASGARD safeguards EU-U.S. military, technological, and economic interests: without it, the EU and U.S. remain vulnerable to military escalation and ceding this critical region to our adversaries.

¹ Guðbjörg Ríkey Thoroddsen Hauksdóttir and Baldur Thorhallsson, “‘Limitless’ Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Arctic? Drivers and Barriers Shaping China and Russia’s Cooperation in the Region,” *Polar Geography* 48, no. 3 (2025): 176, 184, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1088937X.2025.2477004>.

² “Cutting Through Narratives on Chinese Arctic Investments,” *The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, 23 June 2025.

³ Kirsi Pere, “The United States Withdraws from Hybrid CoE,” *Hybrid CoE - The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats*, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/news/the-united-states-withdraws-from-hybrid-coe/>.

⁴ “Arctic Military Activity Tracker,” *CSIS Europe, Russia, Eurasia Program*, <https://arcticmilitarytracker.csis.org/>.

⁵ Humpert, Malte. “Russia to Earn \$160bn in Taxes from Northern Sea Route by 2035, Arctic Region Accounts for 7.5 Percent of GDP.” *High North News*, 19 May 2025, www.highnorthnews.com/en/russia-earn-160bn-taxes-northern-sea-route-2035-arctic-region-accounts-75-percent-gdp.

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