

# Commandant's Note



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As this issue of *Infantry* is going into print, Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine enters its second year with snow still covering the battlefields across the war-torn country. Subfreezing temperatures and intolerable conditions have added to the devastation of war as another bitter winter has wreaked havoc on personnel and equipment across Eastern Europe. This edition examines how the Army can generate and produce Arctic-capable forces ready to deploy, fight, and win in extreme conditions against adversaries in large-scale combat operations (LSCO).

Continued modernization and technological advancements throughout every operational domain must consider the possibility of fighting in such an austere environment. However, the Arctic is not merely another potential battlefield. The Department of Defense identified the [North American] Arctic as "the northern approaches of the United States" and "a potential vector both for attacks on the homeland and for U.S. power projection" in the 2019 Arctic Strategy.

Russia is a mere 55 miles away from the United States at the Bering Strait. It is the largest nation by landmass, population, and military presence within the Arctic circle. It has modernized military bases and airfields, deployed enhanced air defense systems, and increased military exercises and training operations north of the Arctic Circle. Intensification of regional economic competition, and the possibility of conflict around natural resources and transit routes, including the North Sea Route, make the Arctic a top priority for Moscow. And, though the fighting in Ukraine intensifies, Russia continues to carry out concurrent military exercises in the Arctic.

Russia's military buildup in the Arctic poses a strategic challenge for our NATO Allies, multinational partners, and the Army. In recent months, Russia fired anti-ship cruise missiles to test its readiness for possible regional conflict. In this issue, Dr. Lester Grau and Dr. Charles Bartles provide a great article to enhance the Infantry Soldier's knowledge of Russia's current Arctic training mission and battalion tactical group.

Likewise, despite having no territorial claims, the People's Republic of China seeks a more significant influence in the Arctic. China's operational presence in the Arctic is limited. However, it aims to increase diplomatic, economic, and military activities under the Belt and Road Initiative, an ambitious transnational infrastructure and construction program initiated globally in 2013, intending to establish a trans-Arctic shipping route. In addition, China has also partnered with Russia on multiple efforts, such as airfield construction, energy extraction, and intelligence sharing.

The Army has a critical role in securing America's Arctic interests. The Department of the Army's 2021 Arctic Strategy tasks us with "project[ing] power from, within, and into the Arctic to conduct and sustain extended operations." Doing so will require changes to how we generate, posture, train, and equip our forces. We must develop new equipment and tactics specifically suited for the Arctic environment.

Alaska is home to the recently reactivated 11th Airborne Division and the newly established Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center - Alaska (JPMRC-AK). With the long, extreme winters and the complex terrain of the incredible expanse of wilderness as their “backyard” at the JPMRC-AK, no Infantry formation has more skin in the game than the “Arctic Angels.” In this issue of *Infantry*, the senior leaders of the 11th Airborne Division provide the reader with multiple articles covering various topics related to fighting in the Arctic environment.

The ability to train units and test equipment in the extreme conditions of the Arctic will be critical to the success of our operations in the future. Along with the Army’s premier facility for institutional and functional cold-weather training, the Northern Warfare Training Center in Fort Wainwright, the JPMRC-AK, and its observer/coach/trainers, will prepare Soldiers from across the Army for the Arctic fight. MG Brian Eifler, the Commanding General of the 11th ABN DIV, and Mr. Troy Bouffard provide an article describing the background, mission, and way ahead of the JPMRC-AK.

Tactical and technical operations receiving focused attention in this edition are the execution of joint force entry and sustainment operations in Arctic conditions. Multiple senior leaders of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), the Spartan Brigade, provide a detailed breakdown of considerations by warfighting function in the article “Airborne Joint Forcible Entry Operations in an Extreme Cold Weather Environment.” In addition, two pieces by MAJ Stanley Bershinsky and CPT Sarah Schwei examine the technical and logistical challenges of providing support and medical care in “Logistics Support in the Arctic” and “Patient Hold Goes Cold.”

As the Arctic continues to grow in strategic importance, the Army must focus on these types of operations through training exercises; the development of new equipment and doctrine; enhanced infrastructure and logistical capabilities; and improving interoperability with our multinational Allies and partners, as well as within the Joint Force community. The following articles provide insight into the Arctic environment that matters to us all. Formations far from “America’s Last Frontier” may be called on to fight at the world’s northernmost latitudes. The Army’s premier fighting force, the Infantry, must do everything required to deploy, fight, and win in an Arctic environment.

I am the Infantry! Follow me!