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SPEAKER PRESENTATION MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE FROM SYMPOSIUM:
IMPACT OF AN ICE-DIMINISHING ARCTIC ON NAVAL AND MARITIME OPERATIONS

Webpage: <http://www.orbit.nesdis.noaa.gov/star/IceSymposium.php> --
click "Program and Agenda" link.

The amount of ice covering the Arctic Ocean has been declining rapidly in recent decades, changing the character of the northernmost sea and potentially having ripple effects on maritime commerce, national security, international relations, and on those who have traditionally depended on the waters for their livelihoods.

Representatives from several federal agencies charged with various aspects of coping with these possibly far-reaching changes--and conducting basic scientific research related to monitoring and predicting what the effects of these changes may be--discussed the immediate and potential future effects of this documented warming trend during a three-day symposium in Washington, DC on July 10-12, 2007.

The symposium, Impact of an Ice-Diminishing Arctic on Naval and Maritime Operations, was jointly sponsored by the U.S. Arctic Research Commission (USARC) and the National Ice Center (NIC), a joint agency that consists of personnel representing the U.S. Navy (USN), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).

Other participating government agencies included NOAA, USCG, the USN Chief of Naval Operations, the U.S. Office of Naval Research, the National Science Foundation (NSF) Office of Polar Programs, Minerals Management Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Cryospheric Sciences Program, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP).

"The symposium focused on three areas: the latest research on observed and forecasted changes of the Arctic sea ice environment, present and future impact of these changes on Arctic operations, and relevant national and international Arctic policy issues and the potential need for policy changes," said Pablo Clemente-Colón, chief scientist of the NIC.

In addition to remarks by officials from the USARC, NOAA, USN, USCG, OSTP, and the Canadian Coast Guard, the symposium also included briefings on scientific research being conducted as part of the International Polar Year in the Arctic, including the planned Arctic Observing Network (AON).

NSF and NOAA are developing atmospheric, land and ocean-based environmental monitoring capabilities that will be key components of

the planned circum-Arctic AON. The network will significantly enhance the observing capability in the Arctic region and data from AON will assist the efforts of the U.S. multi-agency program SEARCH (Study of Environmental ARctic CHange), developed by the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee.

A century-long record from mariners and settlements beginning in the early years of the 20th century shows a marked decline in the extent of Arctic ice cover. Satellite measurements available since the late 1970s corroborate this overall downward trend, which appears to have been accelerating in the past decade. In addition, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, published by the Arctic Council in 2004, and numerous other reports and articles published since have documented significant recent sea ice extent reductions, during both summer and winter.

The symposium was a follow up to the 2001 conference, Naval Operations in an Ice-Free Arctic, whose goal was to provide initial guidance in determining potential naval missions and identifying future naval requirements for operating in an ice-diminished Arctic.

On the Web:

<http://www.orbit.nesdis.noaa.gov/star/IceSymposiumProgram.php>

<http://www.us-ipy.gov>