



UNITED STATES TRANSPORTATION COMMAND

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SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, ILLINOIS 62225-5357

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

FROM: CDR USPACOM / CDR USTRANSCOM / CDR USNORTHCOM

SUBJECT: Icebreaker Support

1. The United States has enduring national, strategic, and economic interests in the Arctic and Antarctic. In the north, the United States is an Arctic nation with broad and fundamental national security interests. In addition to the essential requirements for homeland security and maritime domain awareness, the effects of climate change and increasing economic activity require a more active presence in this maritime domain. In the south, the United States maintains three scientific stations. While the mission of the stations is largely scientific, their presence secures the United States' influential role in the Antarctic Treaty decision making process and maintains the balance necessary to maintain our position on Antarctic sovereignty.

2. To assert our interests in these regions, the United States needs assured access with reliable icebreaking ships. Today, however, two of the three Coast Guard icebreakers are nearing the end of their service lives, with one relegated to caretaker status. Over the past 10 years some routine maintenance has been deferred and there is no service life extension program for these ships. As a result, the nation's icebreaking capability has diminished substantially and is at risk of being unable to support our national interests in the Arctic regions. An example of our reduced icebreaking capability is last season's McMurdo Station resupply mission where USNS GIANELLA spent 50 hours in pack-ice awaiting escort from a leased Swedish icebreaker.

3. In summary, icebreakers are essential instruments of United States policy in the polar regions. We therefore recommend Joint Chiefs of Staff support for the following:

- A program for the construction of new polar icebreakers to be operated by the Coast Guard.
- Coast Guard funding to keep existing icebreakers viable until the new ships enter service.
- Sufficient Coast Guard operations funding to provide increased, regular and reliable icebreaker presence in the polar regions.

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