

The Canadian Arctic: Sovereignty and Security

(U) In 2006, the Canadian Government launched a high-profile effort to assert Canadian sovereignty “from coast to coast to coast,” with particular emphasis on the Arctic. Easier maritime access to the far north and a potential scramble for the bounty of natural resources there have raised public awareness among Canadians of the importance of the region to their security and prosperity.

(U) To assert and defend its interests in the north, Canada in 2007 announced Arctic defense and security initiatives:

- procuring five or more Offshore Arctic Patrol Vessels (OAPVs) with first-year-ice-breaking capability;
- developing a deep water Arctic berthing and refueling facility to service and support Navy Arctic deployments, as well as future OAPVs;
- establishing an Arctic Training Center (ACT) near Cambridge Bay, Nunavut; and,
- increasing the Canadian Ranger Program by up to 800 personnel,

(U) Canada’s growing attention to Arctic sovereignty revived discussion about two long-standing bilateral issues: conflicting Canada – U.S. border demarcation claims and the status of the Northwest Passage. Despite such differences, the two governments continue to enjoy extensive, mutually beneficial, long-term cooperation in the Arctic in the areas of defense, coastal navigation, fisheries, environment, and law enforcement. President Bush reiterated at Montebello in August 2007 that “the United States does not question Canadian sovereignty over its Arctic islands, and the U.S. government supports Canadian investment to support its sovereignty.”