

United States Arctic Imperatives: Outcomes of a Council on Foreign Relations Task Force

20 September 2017, Wednesday, 2.00pm–3.00pm
Seminar Room 5-2, Level 5, Block B, NUS Bukit Timah Campus
469 Bukit Timah Road, Singapore 259756

Admission is free. To register, please click [here](#).

SPEAKER

Lawson W BRIGHAM

Distinguished Fellow and Faculty,
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Dr Lawson W BRIGHAM is Distinguished Fellow and Faculty at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fellow at the US Coast Guard Academy's Center for Arctic Studies and Policy, and Senior Fellow at the Institute of the North in Anchorage. He is a US Coast Guard Academy (BS) graduate and a US Naval War College distinguished graduate and holds graduate degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (MS) and Cambridge University (MPhil and PhD). A career US Coast Guard officer, Dr Brigham commanded four Coast Guard ships, including the icebreaker *Polar Sea* on Arctic and Antarctic expeditions. During 2004–09 he was chair of the Arctic Council's Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment and Vice Chair of the Council's working group on Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment. Dr Brigham has been a research fellow at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a faculty member of the US Coast Guard Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School, and Alaska Director of the US Arctic Research Commission. He was also a 2008 signer of the American Geographical Society's Flier's and Explorer's Globe, the Society's historic globe of exploration, in recognition of *Polar Sea's* 1994 voyages becoming the first ship in history to reach the extreme ends of the global ocean. Dr Brigham was elected to the Norwegian Scientific Academy for Polar Research and was awarded the Polar Medal by the American Polar Society. Since summer 2017, he has served as a member of the US National Research Council's Polar Research Board. His research interests focus on the Russian maritime Arctic, Arctic climate change, polar marine transportation and polar geopolitics.

INTRODUCTION

Following a year-long study, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) released a task force report, 'Arctic Imperatives: Reinforcing U.S. Strategy on America's Fourth Coast', in Washington DC on 22 March and in New York on 23 March. The report emphasises that the US has significant strategic, economic and scientific interests in the Arctic region, and that the nation needs to 'increase its strategic commitment to the region or risk leaving its interests unprotected'. The timing of the report's release was important, as the US relinquished its chairmanship of the Arctic Council in May 2017, and the CFR hopes to maintain the momentum of the US chairmanship and provide visibility of Arctic issues within a new administration. The CFR Task Force identified six main goals for the US in the Arctic: (1) ratifying UNCLOS and securing subsea resources on the outer continental shelf (north of Alaska); (2) funding up to six icebreakers operated by the US Coast Guard; (3) improving telecommunications, energy and other infrastructure in Alaska to support a sustained security presence and economic diversification; (4) deepening work with all Arctic states, including Russia, on confidence building and cooperative security measures; (5) supporting sustainable development for the people of the Arctic and further consulting with Alaska Natives to improve their well-being; and (6) sustaining robust research funding to understand the ongoing, profound changes in the region and their impact on the globe. The speaker, a member of the CFR Task Force, will provide an overview of the report and indicate possible future directions of the US in the Arctic, including requirements for infrastructure and assets to protect US Arctic national interests.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW

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