



NORWEGIAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MID-ATLANTIC WASHINGTON DC CHAPTER

Supporting Norwegian American Business Interests MidAtlantic Washington, DC

ATLANTIC COUNCIL: TRANSATLANTIC APPROACHES TO SECURITY IN AN EVOLVING ARCTIC *NACCMA Reports on Captain Thorleif Thorleifsson Circumnavigation of the North Pole*

Washington DC November 17 2011 – The Atlantic Council hosted a conference on Transatlantic Approaches to Security in an Evolving Arctic. On the agenda were opening remarks by Ambassador Wegger Chr. Strømme from the Norwegian Embassy, a presentation by polar explorer Thorleif Thorleifsson, and panel discussion by Trond Grytting, Norwegian Embassy; Robert Nurick, Atlantic Council; Paul Zukunft, US Coast Guard and Sherri W. Goodman.

Sherri Goodman, Board Director at the Atlantic Council, introduced the topics of the day including Ambassador Strømme's remarks, Thorleif Thorleifsson's presentation and the concluding panel discussion. Ambassador Strømme spoke about Norway as a marine nation with a long history of naval explorations and activity in the arctic. "There are no heroes like the mariners in Norway," the ambassador said. He reminded the audience that the arctic is a physically challenging area and explained how the climate change has started the ice-melting which allows for expeditions like the one undertaken by Captain Thorleifsson. He stated the importance of collaboration between the arctic countries and used the Russian-Norwegian cooperation regarding the delimiting line as an example of functioning cooperation. The Ambassador introduced Captain Thorleif Thorleifsson who presented his experience from his expedition around the North Pole, passing through both the Northern Sea Route and the North-West Passage in one summer season.



Ambassador Wegger Chr. Strømme, image from Royal Norwegian Emb.

Captain Thorleifsson's presentation showed how the physical environment in the arctic has changed, and used the expeditions of Roald Amundsen, Fridtjof Nansen and Mr. Franklin as historic examples. He compared the ice-situation then and now, and explained how changes in the ice situation have enabled increased transportation in the high north. Roald Amundsen spent six years to get around the pole trapped in ice most of the time, while Thorleifsson's expedition did it in 80 days. Captain Thorleifsson talked about issues they faced, and that everyone traveling the high north would face such as diplomacy issues with the arctic states, Russia's particular demand for control and communication, and the harsh ice and weather conditions. The polar explorer highlighted the difficulties with getting permission from the Russians as one of the major challenges with the expedition. They solved this by starting the planning early, getting signatures from 41 different Russian officials guaranteeing their allowance to pass. They completed the amazing journey in a



Polar explorer Thorleif Thorleifsson

31 foot, 2000 kilo trimaran described as “driving around in the arctic in a convertible car,” by Captain Thorleifsson.

The conference was concluded with a panel discussion by Rear Admiral Trond Grytting (Defense Attaché at the Norwegian Embassy), Robert Nurick (Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council), Assistant Commandant, Rear Admiral Paul Zukunft (US Coast Guard) and Sherri W. Goodman (Board Director at the Atlantic Council). The three participants started with statements on their most important issues.

Rear Adm. Grytting highlighted the strategic importance of High North for Norway; the role of military in the arctic providing sovereignty, control and search and rescue capability with its presence; and how Norway and Russia have increased communication, activity and joint exercises as a result of the common land and sea borders.

Mr. Robert Nurick, a Russia expert, presented Russian arctic security policy. He described the Russian tone as more moderate than a few years ago, with an increased Russian presence in the area and less emphasize on rapid movement capabilities, but more focus on not being pushed out of the area (in terms of control) and their governance of their slice of the arctic area.

Rear Adm. Zukunft started by addressing US challenges regarding the arctic such as the lack of a national arctic strategy and their inability to ratify the Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS). He continued by presenting important ongoing activity in the US-arctic area like the offshore drilling and infrastructure buildup. He also gave his views of the top three issues in the arctic as: lack of national US arctic strategy, ratification of the UNCLOS, and need for increased US presence in the arctic. The final point he supported with the fact that the US only has two icebreakers and no imminent plans for building any new capacity due to the lack of a national arctic strategy plan.

The session continued with a round of questions from the audience covering topics such as: China's role in the arctic, Russia as a maritime power, EU as a possible member of the Arctic Council, and NATO's role in the high north.

For a detailed report on Captain Thorleifsson's remarks, please visit http://www.norway.org/News_and_events/top-stories/Thorleif-Thorleifsson-Norwegian-Explorer-and-Environmental-Witness. Einar-Andre Jakobsen reporting on behalf of the Norwegian American Chamber of Commerce Washington bringing national event coverage and representation to members throughout the nation.



Crew-members celebrating the success of the mission, Thorleif Thorleifson (middle), from his presentation



Rear Admirals Paul Zukunft and Trond Grytting (US Coast Guard and Norwegian Embassy) and Sherri Goodman, Atlantic Council



Robert Nurick at the Atlantic Council