

119TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. 4708

To improve the security of the Arctic, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 8, 2026

Mr. LEE introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to
the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To improve the security of the Arctic, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Arctic Security and
5 Diplomacy Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The Arctic is a critical domain for the secu-
9 rity and sovereignty of the United States and faces
10 elevated risks related to the threats of territorial ex-
11 pansion and violation, influence operations, sabotage
12 of critical undersea infrastructure, and espionage by

1 foreign adversaries, particularly the People’s Repub-
2 lic of China and the Russian Federation.

3 (2) The Russian Federation holds a significant
4 portion of the Arctic, accounting for approximately
5 53 percent of the Arctic Ocean coastline, and has
6 significantly expanded its military basing infrastruc-
7 ture and capabilities in the region.

8 (3) In 2018, the People’s Republic of China de-
9 clared that it is a “Near-Arctic State” with signifi-
10 cant interests in the Arctic and is attempting to be-
11 come a “polar great power” through economic ex-
12 pansion, scientific investments, and dual-use civilian
13 and military infrastructure.

14 (4) The Russian Federation is cooperating with
15 the People’s Republic of China to establish a “Polar
16 Silk Road” in the Arctic, and the two countries are
17 working together to strengthen cooperation in polar
18 shipbuilding and ship technology.

19 (5) The People’s Republic of China has made
20 multiple attempts to gain strategic footholds in the
21 Arctic, has research stations in Norway’s Svalbard
22 archipelago and in Iceland, and consistently at-
23 tempts to co-opt and manipulate civilian science and
24 research activities, university partnerships, and mul-

1 tilateral science and research initiatives throughout
2 the Arctic.

3 (6) The People’s Republic of China has ob-
4 server status on the Arctic Council, has significantly
5 increased diplomatic engagement with Nordic coun-
6 tries, and uses investments in cooperative marine
7 scientific research as a form of soft power in the
8 Arctic.

9 (7) The People’s Republic of China engages in
10 extensive marine surveying, much of which has dual-
11 use risk for military applications, including seabed
12 mapping, NATO asset monitoring, and other espio-
13 nage-related activity.

14 (8) In 2022, the Danish Security and Intel-
15 ligence Service reported several attempts at espio-
16 nage by the People’s Republic of China against Den-
17 mark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands.

18 (9) In 2024, the Canadian Security Intelligence
19 Service warned of espionage activity by the People’s
20 Republic of China and the Russian Federation, and
21 the Canadian military discovered and removed buoys
22 in the Arctic owned by the People’s Republic of
23 China.

24 (10) In 2025, the head of the National Police
25 Commission in Iceland warned that the China-Ice-

1 land Arctic Science Observatory poses dual-use risks
2 and may be used for espionage.

3 (11) The 2026 Annual Threat Assessment by
4 the intelligence community describes the Russian
5 Federation as “our primary challenge in the Arctic
6 . . . Moscow is seeking to expand and deepen its
7 presence in the Arctic through increased maritime
8 trade, natural resource extraction, and military ac-
9 tivity,” while warning that the People’s Republic of
10 China “seeks to expand its Arctic presence using sci-
11 entific research, investments, and commercial ven-
12 tures along the Northern Sea Route.”

13 (12) The 2025 NATO Maritime Strategy high-
14 lighted the Russian Federation’s military build-up in
15 the Arctic and use of hybrid threats like sabotage
16 against critical undersea infrastructure, while warn-
17 ing that the People’s Republic of China “is pursuing
18 a military build-up, including rapidly expanding its
19 naval capabilities, increasing its use of dual-use mili-
20 tary-scientific vessels and surging its presence in the
21 High North and the Arctic, while remaining opaque
22 about its intentions.”

23 (13) According to the Department of Homeland
24 Security, an unprecedented number of military and
25 research vessels of the People’s Republic of China

1 are operating in or near United States Arctic
2 waters.

3 (14) It is in the interests of Arctic countries to
4 cooperatively limit the ability of the People’s Repub-
5 lic of China to conduct further espionage in the Arc-
6 tic.

7 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

8 In this Act:

9 (1) AGENCY.—The term “agency” has the
10 meaning given the term “Executive agency” in sec-
11 tion 105 of title 5, United States Code.

12 (2) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CON-
13 GRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Con-
14 gress” means—

15 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations,
16 the Committee on Homeland Security and Gov-
17 ernmental Affairs, and the Select Committee on
18 Intelligence of the Senate; and

19 (B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the
20 Committee on Homeland Security, and the Per-
21 manent Select Committee on Intelligence of the
22 House of Representatives.

23 (3) ARCTIC.—The term “Arctic” has the mean-
24 ing given that term in section 112 of the Arctic Re-
25 search and Policy Act of 1984 (15 U.S.C. 4111).

1 (4) COVERED ACTIVITIES.—The term “covered
2 activities” means marine surveys that may pose
3 dual-use risks for civilian and military applications,
4 including—

5 (A) exploration of natural resources;

6 (B) seabed mapping, hydrographic surveys,
7 and oceanographic surveys;

8 (C) data collection related to subsea assets
9 and infrastructure;

10 (D) operation of unmanned maritime sys-
11 tems; and

12 (E) any other activity designated by the
13 Secretary of State as posing a risk to national
14 security.

15 (5) COVERED VESSEL.—The term “covered ves-
16 sel” means a foreign vessel that—

17 (A) is a vessel of a foreign adversary; or

18 (B) the Secretary of State reasonably be-
19 lieves to be associated with a foreign adversary
20 in a manner that threatens the security of the
21 United States.

22 (6) EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE.—The term
23 “exclusive economic zone” means, with respect to
24 the United States, including the Commonwealth of
25 Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern

1 Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the
2 United States Virgin Islands, and any other terri-
3 tory or possession over which the United States ex-
4 ercises sovereignty, the zone seaward of and adja-
5 cent to the territorial sea, including the contiguous
6 zone, and extending 200 nautical miles from the ter-
7 ritorial sea baseline (except where otherwise limited
8 by treaty or other agreement recognized by the
9 United States) in which the United States has sov-
10 ereign rights and jurisdiction.

11 (7) FOREIGN ADVERSARY.—The term “foreign
12 adversary” means any foreign government or foreign
13 nongovernment person engaged in a long-term pat-
14 tern or serious instances of conduct significantly ad-
15 verse to the national security of the United States
16 or the security and safety of United States persons,
17 including—

18 (A) the Democratic People’s Republic of
19 Korea;

20 (B) the Islamic Republic of Iran;

21 (C) the People’s Republic of China; and

22 (D) the Russian Federation.

23 (8) FOREIGN VESSEL.—The term “foreign ves-
24 sel” means any vessel that is—

1 (A) owned, operated, or chartered by a for-
2 eign government;

3 (B) owned or controlled by an entity orga-
4 nized under the laws of, headquartered in, or
5 otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of a foreign
6 country; or

7 (C) registered under the flag of a foreign
8 country.

9 (9) INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.—The term
10 “intelligence community” has the meaning given
11 that term in section 3 of the National Security Act
12 of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3003).

13 (10) MARINE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.—The
14 term “marine scientific research” means any activity
15 that is—

16 (A) undertaken in the ocean to expand
17 knowledge of the marine environment and its
18 processes, including data collection activities;
19 and

20 (B) regulated by the United States under
21 the Presidential Proclamation on Revision to
22 United States Marine Scientific Research Policy
23 of September 2020.

1 (11) TERRITORIAL SEA.—The term “territorial
2 sea” means the waters extending to 12 nautical
3 miles from the baselines of the United States.

4 (12) UNITED STATES WATERS.—The term
5 “United States waters” means—

6 (A) the territorial sea of the United States;

7 (B) the exclusive economic zone of the
8 United States; and

9 (C) the continental shelf of the United
10 States, as it pertains to marine scientific re-
11 search and other activities on the seabed or
12 subsoil.

13 **SEC. 4. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

14 It is the policy of the United States—

15 (1) to limit espionage and influence operations
16 by foreign adversaries in the Arctic and in United
17 States waters;

18 (2) to inform allied countries with a presence in
19 the Arctic about the espionage and influence oper-
20 ations of foreign adversaries in the Arctic, including
21 espionage through covered activities;

22 (3) to condition support from the Federal Gov-
23 ernment for marine surveys on cooperation with
24 counterespionage in the Arctic and in United States
25 waters, including limitations on information sharing

1 of data obtained through covered activities in the
2 Arctic and in United States waters; and

3 (4) to leverage all appropriate diplomatic means
4 available to ensure the security of the Arctic and the
5 sovereignty of United States waters through the en-
6 forcement of section 6, including through—

7 (A) demarches;

8 (B) public condemnations;

9 (C) diplomatic sanctions;

10 (D) coordination of multilateral diplomatic
11 pressure;

12 (E) motions to remove an offending coun-
13 try from Arctic-related multilateral bodies and
14 cooperatives; and

15 (F) any other diplomatic means authorized
16 by law.

17 **SEC. 5. STRATEGY.**

18 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the
19 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State,
20 in coordination with the heads of the elements of the intel-
21 ligence community and the Secretary of Homeland Secu-
22 rity, shall produce a strategy to identify and combat espio-
23 nage and influence operations by foreign adversaries in the
24 Arctic.

- 1 (b) ELEMENTS.—The strategy required by paragraph
2 (1) shall include—
- 3 (1) identifying and countering espionage activi-
4 ties in the Arctic;
 - 5 (2) diplomatic methods to enforce section 6;
6 and
 - 7 (3) as appropriate, enlistment of and coordina-
8 tion with allied countries that have a presence in the
9 Arctic to combat espionage by foreign adversaries.

10 **SEC. 6. MARINE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN UNITED STATES**
11 **WATERS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—No foreign scientist may conduct
13 a maritime scientific research project in United States
14 waters without prior consent from the United States Gov-
15 ernment provided in accordance with this section and with
16 appropriate international customs as determined by the
17 Secretary of State.

18 (b) REQUIREMENTS; APPLICATIONS.—The Secretary
19 of State, in coordination with the heads of the elements
20 of the intelligence community and the Secretary of Home-
21 land Security, shall—

- 22 (1) require foreign vessels to obtain prior con-
23 sent to conduct maritime scientific research in
24 United States waters; and

1 (2) implement a process for reviewing applica-
2 tions for such consent.

3 (c) INFORMATION SHARING.—To facilitate the proc-
4 ess for reviewing applications to conduct maritime sci-
5 entific research under this section, the head of each agency
6 shall share information related to such maritime scientific
7 research with the Department of State unless otherwise
8 prohibited by law.

9 (d) PROHIBITION ON COVERED VESSELS.—Except as
10 provided in subsection (e), the Secretary of State shall not
11 approve any application submitted under this section for
12 any covered vessel.

13 (e) NATIONAL INTEREST WAIVER.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State may
15 waive the prohibition in subsection (d) on an indi-
16 vidual basis if the Secretary determines that doing
17 so is the national interest of the United States.

18 (2) NOTICE REQUIRED.—Not later than 5 days
19 after any issuance of a waiver under paragraph (1),
20 the Secretary of State shall submit to the appro-
21 priate committees of Congress written notice de-
22 scribing the waiver.

23 (f) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION.—Not later than
24 15 days after the date of any violation of subsection (a),

1 the Secretary of State shall notify the appropriate commit-
2 tees of Congress of such violation, including—

3 (1) the country affiliation of the foreign sci-
4 entist;

5 (2) the nature of the violation; and

6 (3) subsequent action by the Federal Govern-
7 ment to address the violation.

8 **SEC. 7. REPORT.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
10 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State,
11 in coordination with the heads of the elements of the intel-
12 ligence community and the Secretary of Homeland Secu-
13 rity, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Con-
14 gress a report on espionage and influence operations by
15 foreign adversaries in the Arctic and in United States
16 waters.

17 (b) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subsection
18 (a) shall include the following:

19 (1) An assessment of the extent to which cov-
20 ered activities support espionage and influence oper-
21 ations by foreign adversaries in the Arctic and in
22 United States waters.

23 (2) A description of United States Government
24 support for covered activities in the Arctic that in-
25 volve foreign adversaries, including—

- 1 (A) funding;
2 (B) public-private partnerships;
3 (C) maritime security;
4 (D) technical assistance;
5 (E) information sharing; and
6 (F) any other form of material or technical
7 support.

8 (3) A description of efforts by the Secretary of
9 State to enlist allied countries with a presence in the
10 Arctic to combat espionage in the Arctic by foreign
11 adversaries.

12 (4) Recommendations for combating such espio-
13 nage.

14 (c) FORM.—The report required by subsection (a)
15 shall be submitted in unclassified form but may contain
16 a classified annex.

17 (d) AVAILABILITY.—The report required by sub-
18 section (a) shall be made available on request to any Mem-
19 ber of Congress.

○