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## A Colder War – Student Thesis on Arctic Conflict Earns Top Award

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# A Colder War – Student Thesis on Arctic Conflict Earns Top Award

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By PO2 Michael Ehrlich

U.S. Air Force Maj. Brandon Daigle was recently awarded the U.S. Air Force Outstanding Student Award for his exemplary work in the classroom, and for his research on the future of foreign policy in the Arctic. His thesis, "Assessing the Strategic Utility of the High North: A Colder War," explores a spectrum of responses and outcomes to the varied stakeholders in the region.

"Over 30 percent of the resources that are available in the world are still buried under the ice somewhere," said Daigle. "What is that going to look like in the future and what are the implications of a colder war should this turn into some kind of fighting engagement in many years to come?"

Daigle, and his thesis partner U.S. Army Maj. Brian James, came to work on this subject after participating in a pilot wargaming course related to Special Operations Forces in the high north.

"What Brian and I found was, through a round of those internally-developed wargames, was that there were a lot of questions that we needed to take a step back and answer before we can really determine what an Arctic task force would look like," explained Daigle.

What they discovered while trying to answer those questions are that there are currently several policies already in place from a host of countries including the United States, Russia, China, Canada, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

"We were able to really dig in, and analyze what they had from a military capability standpoint, a policy standpoint, and how those countries were able to create an impact for their own countries," said Daigle.

"With our research in the Arctic, this information can be used to define future policies in the region ranging across a scale from full militarization to diplomacy, or even across economic levels to determine how the United States can best use the resources that come out of the region and use that as leveraging points with other countries in terms of trade agreements and future policies.

"Our work has tried to shape policy to come to the overall standpoint that negotiations and diplomacy are really the way to go in this region ... pulling back in some of the military investments going forward, so we can all benefit as stakeholders in the region," added Daigle.

Daigle also noted on how his award and NPS education will have a lasting impact personally and professionally.

"It's an honor to receive the U.S. Air Force Outstanding Student Award," said Daigle. "Being recognized by my peers, the faculty and the department chair, really means a lot for me from my time here. It is an accomplishment I will take with me and remember my time here, and relive the great experience at NPS.

"Not only from an academic standpoint but from the overall experience with friends, and meeting other operators in the field that are doing the same kinds of work to enable a joint fight. My education here will definitely help me out in my next assignments in terms of being able to shape policy and strategic objectives and factors," he added.