

# Comic reaction after US Space Force calls its troops 'guardians'

By David Millward  
US CORRESPONDENT

MEMBERS of the US Space Force, America's first new military service in more than 70 years, will be known as "guardians", Mike Pence has said. "Soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and guardians will be defending our nation for generations to come," Mr Pence said.

announcement at a ceremony to mark the first birthday of the newest branch of America's armed forces.

Until the announcement, members of the Force had been colloquially known as "space warfighters" and "space professionals".

The decision to adopt the term guardians followed consultations with members of the Force. Gen Jay Raymond, chief of space operations, rejected suggestions such as airman because he

wanted the title to be gender-neutral. The long-term future of the Force remains unclear, however, with the incoming Biden administration yet to commit to its retention. Scrapping it would require an act of Congress.

There was some scepticism over the name on social media, with some pointing out its similarity to fictional heroes such as Marvel Comics' *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

James Gunn, who created the fic-

tional superhero team, was particularly annoyed by what he regarded as plagiarism. "Can we sue this dork," he said.

It is not the first time that the Force has been accused of pilfering ideas from space fiction. When the initial insignia was unveiled, many noted that it bore a strong resemblance to the Star Trek Starfleet Command logo.

However, the Space Force denied plagiarism. "Guardians is a name with a long history in space operations, trac-

ing back to the original command motto of Air Force Space Command in 1983, 'Guardians of the High Frontier,'" it wrote on Twitter.

Space Force was one of Donald Trump's flagship policies. It was announced last December with the president describing space as the world's newest warfighting domain.

It was unveiled 35 years after the Reagan administration expanded the Cold War into space with his Strategic

Defence Initiative – popularly known at the time as "Star Wars".

The Force was allocated \$40 million (£30 million), which was taken out of the US military's annual \$738 billion budget.

Mr Pence's announcement came on the day that the Space Force got its first astronaut. Mike Hopkins, from NASA, was sworn in from on-board the International Space Station, where he is currently posted.

# Trump and Pompeo clash over who was behind hack

President suggests China carried out cyber attack but closest ally speaks out against the Kremlin

By David Millward  
US CORRESPONDENT

DONALD TRUMP was last night at odds with one of his closest allies, secretary of state Mike Pompeo, over who was responsible for the massive cyber-attack on the US government.

While Mr Pompeo fell into line with the consensus that Russia orchestrated the hack, Mr Trump suggested without evidence that China may have been the culprit, and that it may have also helped rig the election in favour of Joe Biden.

Playing down the severity of the attack, the US president wrote: "The Cyber Hack is far greater in the Fake News Media than in actuality."

"I have been fully briefed and everything is well under control. Russia, Russia, Russia is the priority chant when anything happens because Lamestream is, for mostly financial reasons, petrified of discussing the possibility that it may be China (it may!)."

"There could also have been a hit on our ridiculous voting machines during the election, which is now obvious that I won big, making it an even more corrupted embarrassment for the USA."

Mr Pompeo was the first member of the Trump administration to blame the Kremlin, endorsing the findings of the US intelligence community.

"I think it's the case that now we can say pretty clearly that it was the Russians that engaged in this activity," Mr Pompeo said in an interview on Friday.

"This was a very significant effort," he said, adding that "we're still unpacking precisely what it is."

Considered one of Mr Trump's staunchest supporters, Mr Pompeo was vocal in endorsing the president's claim that last month's election had been

stolen. His willingness to speak out on the hack before Mr Trump was seen as evidence of the secretary of state demonstrating his independence amid speculation he could be a contender for the Republican nomination in 2024.

Mr Pompeo's stance on Russia is in line with views expressed by a number of senior Republicans.

Marco Rubio, a Florida senator, said the attack bore the hallmarks of a Russian cyber-operation. He called for the US to respond if it was confirmed that the Kremlin was responsible.

"But it's crucial we have complete certainty about who is behind this," Mr Rubio said. "We can't afford to be wrong

*'I think now we can say pretty clearly that it was the Russians that engaged in this activity'*

on attribution, because America must retaliate, and not just with sanctions."

Mr Biden, the president-elect, said his administration would impose "substantial costs" on those responsible.

"A good defence isn't enough; we need to disrupt and deter our adversaries from undertaking significant cyber-attacks in the first place," he said, adding: "I will not stand idly by in the face of cyber-assaults on our nation."

Moscow has denied involvement. Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador, claimed there were "unfounded attempts by US media to blame Russia".

A few days before the cyber-attack became public knowledge, the US said it was closing the last two remaining consulates in Russia. It was unclear whether the events were linked.

The extent of the damage caused by the attack, which ensnared major government agencies, think tanks and at least 40 companies, is still emerging.

There are fears it will take several months to clear the hackers out of the networks they penetrated.



**Hail and farewell**  
President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania pose for their official 2020, and final, Christmas portrait on the Grand Staircase of the White House.

ANDREA HANKS / THE WHITE HOUSE

# Drivers risk lives as Siberia's ice roads fall prey to climate change

Locals in one of the world's coldest places rue the unexpected turn that is threatening communities

By Nataliya Vasilyeva  
in Sottintsy, Russia

Kostya Germogin is sitting in his van in a snowbound car park, waiting for it to be loaded up before a journey over a frozen, fog-shrouded river.

This, though, is no normal river crossing. Every year, when the ice on the river Lena stops the ferry working, it eventually gets thick enough to serve as a makeshift roadbridge to the nearby city of Yakutsk.

Or, at least, it used to. With global temperature rises now affecting even Siberian cities like Yakutsk – one of the world's coldest places – the time when the Lena's ice is declared safe enough to drive on arrives later every year.

Mr Germogin, however, has a living to earn, and does not have time to wait for the official all-clear, which would normally have come weeks ago. So off he sets across the ice sheet – undeterred by the risk of plunging through the ice, a fate that kills numerous drivers every year.

Two weeks earlier, on the same stretch of the Lena, a van fell through, with the driver and three passengers lucky to escape. "Of course I'm scared," says Mr Germogin, 33. "But you have to get used to it. We need to get the goods to the other side."

Ice roads have long been part of the transport infrastructure around Yakutsk, where temperatures can plunge as low as minus 64C. With winter lasting for the better half of the year, residents rely on them as the only land link between Yakutsk and communities on the Lena's far side. Mr Germogin makes the journey despite



The official winter road, above, was opened late as wary drivers moved goods to smaller vehicles, below



knowing that his own vehicle is also at least two tonnes overweight, making it even more likely to break the ice.

Arian Tastygin, a maintenance worker whose job is to check vans on the Yakutsk side, is fatalistic. "People are trying to get through. Everything here relies on winter roads," he said. The shortening of the ice-road season shows how climate change in this part of Russia's far north is disrupting people's livelihoods.

The ice roads are typically in use from November to April. But this year, one of Yakutsk's main ice roads, linking it to a railway station that brings goods from China and Russia's Far East, did not open until early December, about three weeks later

than usual. "Winter roads come into operation later in the year as the ice takes longer to form and it begins to melt earlier, cutting the season short," says Dr Lyudmila Lebedeva, a scientist with Yakutsk's Melnikov Permafrost Institute. "There used to be winters when the ice on the Lena was two metres – we don't see that any more."

The ice roads season on the Lena could drop by much as 50 days by the end of the century due to climate change. Already, the ice here is now only two-thirds as thick as it was 60 years ago. Dr Alexander Fedorov, the director of the Melnikov institute, has a map of the surrounding state of Yakutia – a region nearly as large as India – over his desk. It shows different climate zones layered one over the other, going north to the Arctic coast.

Just in his own lifetime, a temperature increase of between one and two degrees has caused the warmer climate zones to migrate several hundred kilometres north.

Admittedly, to the average wintertime visitor, global warming can seem far off. When *The Telegraph* was there in early December, the temperature was no higher than minus 41C. But winters here have nonetheless been getting milder and later.

Nadezhda Novopriyzzhaya, the acting director of a museum and nature reserve on the banks of the River Lena, recalls how uneasy locals were about this year's unseasonably warm November: "Everyone would ask: 'What happened?'" she said. "When is it going to get cold?"

Locals have reported a patchy supply of goods in local shops, while farmers have seen disruptions to their routine. They typically cull animals with the arrival of winter and store the meat outside. Farmer Maria Dobretsova, 56, had to push back the culling period for her cows by 20 days this year before the mercury finally plummeted below -20C. "It's extra expenses for us to feed them," she said.

Moving goods across the Lena would be much easier if Moscow, six time zones away, were to give the green light to the ill-fated project of a bridge to serve Yakutsk. The proposed £1 billion crossing has been mired in nearly two decades of delays, and still has not been officially approved.

While Russian government officials still routinely deny the human cause of

*'Of course I am scared. But you've got to get used to it. We need to get the goods to the other side'*

climate change, Yakutia residents are glad that the Kremlin has at last finally acknowledged that it is taking place. Russia adopted the Paris Agreement to fight climate change last year.

Vladimir Prokopyev, a regional lawmaker, says a bridge over the Lena would be the only viable solution. But the region, he says, lacks the funds to build it without Kremlin financing.

"If we don't make this decision now, the economy of this region and the whole country is going to lose billions of roubles," he says.

## Personal

### Text for the day

AT THAT moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.  
Luke 2:38 (NRSV)

### Messages

GRATEFUL THANKS to St Jude for prayers answered. CH  
Online ref: 590077

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