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# Earthlog

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By Fred Pearce

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A weekly column taking an inside look at the environment, by Fred Pearce

Climate change irony

Suddenly, everyone wants a share of the Arctic. And all because climate change is removing the ice and making drilling for oil feasible. I hardly need to underline the irony of that. But I am just amazed that there are such large chunks of the planet left that have not been claimed. Where else?

Russia began the "scramble for the Arctic" recently by digging up a rule in the 1982 UN Law of the Sea that says countries can claim oil and minerals in any continental shelves that extended from their shores.

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for any reason or object whatever". Luckily, nobody has told bin Laden about this yet. But meanwhile, the Russians are already mining coal up there.

#### Old (tunnel) news

Some papers (well, in Britain The Guardian) reported last weekend that the Iranians claimed to have found a tunnel under the British embassy in Tehran that the Brits used to bring in "spies and prostitutes".

The embassy denied all knowledge, but what neither side seems to have spotted is that subterranean passageways into the embassy are a matter of historical record.

Tehran is riddled with dozens of exquisitely constructed tunnels dug centuries ago to bring water from the mountains. Some are tens of kilometres long. They are called qanats. One of them discharged into the embassy grounds and supplied the place with water until the 1930s. I suggest there is little doubt that this is what the I

