



7.2 ROUNDTABLE 5: OPERATIONS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC MODERATOR'S SUMMARY

Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt

To begin, I want to re-emphasize the objective of this panel. It is entitled Naval Operations in Asia and the Pacific. We are supposed to discuss how climate and energy may affect how the United States organizes, trains, and equips naval forces in the region.

The moderator is Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt, U.S. Navy (Retired). Rear Admiral McDevitt is a CNA Vice President and Director of CNA Strategic Studies. CNA is a not-for-profit federally funded research center in Washington, DC. Strategic Studies conducts research and analyses that focus on strategy, political–military issues, and regional security studies. It has widely regarded analytical programs that focus on East Asia, India, the Middle East, irregular warfare in Afghanistan, Iran, and Europe. It also has growing programs that address sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. During his navy career, Rear Admiral McDevitt held four at-sea commands, including an aircraft carrier battle group. He received a B.A. in U.S. History from the University of Southern California and a master's degree in American Diplomatic History from Georgetown University. He was a Chief of Naval Operations Strategic Studies Group Fellow at the Naval War College. He is also a graduate of the National War College in Washington, DC. Rear Admiral McDevitt was the Director of the East Asia Policy office for the Secretary of Defense during the George H. W. Bush Administration. He also served for 2 years as the Director for Strategy, War Plans, and Policy (J-5) for the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Command (CINCPAC). He concluded his 34-year active-duty career as the Commandant of the National War College in Washington, DC. In addition to his responsibilities leading the CNA Strategic Studies, he has been an active participant in conferences and workshops pertaining to security issues related to maritime security and U.S. security policy and has had a number of papers published in edited volumes on these subjects. His personal expertise is East Asia, and his most recent research focus has been the maritime dimension of China's national strategy.

Let me just say that I think Admiral Keating covered a lot of that already. He certainly emphasized the importance of capacity, made the point that we have the capability to do lots of things, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, the kinds of operations that can be precipitated by adverse weather or by the environmental effects arising from climate change. The issue for the future is not so much that we do not have the capabilities, because the U.S. military routinely demonstrates that we have the capabilities to respond to all sorts of natural disasters; the key question in the future will be, if weather changes the periodicity of these sorts of events, will we have the capacity to respond?

Admiral Keating also mentioned the reaction of countries around the region to the effects of climate change, and he used the example of the chief of defense of Tonga, who was worried about inundation as sea level rises. As we have heard, the AORs for U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) and U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) cover a large expanse of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and those two bodies of water include many, many island nations. There are also immense archipelagic states in Indonesia and the Philippines that have thousands of islands, many of which are low lying. The prospect of sea-level rise is a serious issue for these countries. Based on my own participation in some of the events that Admiral Keating mentioned, I would like to re-emphasize that this is not simply an abstract problem for many of these countries. This is a no-kidding, serious thing that they talk about a lot.

Another climate-related concern of particular interest in the region is that of climate- or weather-induced human migration. In January 2010, for example, I had the opportunity to talk to some Indians in New Delhi who felt that they would eventually be facing a really big illegal immigration problem. They were concerned about what might happen when sea-level rise compounds the severity of the typhoons that come up the Bay of Bengal and hit Bangladesh. What if increased flooding becomes a permanent problem? Where are all those people going to go? The Indians think that they are going to head for India, and they are not very happy about the prospect.