

# PACOM commander talks issues with USAWC students

*Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

## PACOM commander talks issues with USAWC students



*Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, speaks to Army War College students, staff and faculty in Bliss Hall on Jan. 16. Photo by Megan Clugh.*

Jan. 16, 2009 – The commander of forces in the Pacific Ocean region shared his insights into the challenges of the regions and the importance of partnerships during a talk to Army War College students in Bliss Hall on Jan. 16.

Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, made his second visit to the War College and spoke to the students for about 30 minutes before taking their questions. He shared insights of his more than 30-year naval career and the challenges that face the Navy and other U.S. forces in the region.

Keating though, started off by commenting on the single-digit weather that had recently barreled into the area.

"For those of us who live in Hawaii these temperatures are a bit bracing," he said with a laugh. PACOM headquarters is at Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii.

Keating then gave an overview of the PACOM area of responsibility, which comprises 51 percent of the earth. It encompasses about half the earth's surface, stretching from the west coast of the United States to the western border of India, and from Antarctica to the North Pole.

"I got to visit about half of them during my recent assignment," said Lt. Col. Elizabeth Coble, student. Coble recently served in the region. "PACOM is a wonderfully diverse command."

*Keating answers a question. Photo by Megan Clugh.*

One of those areas of responsibility is the Strait of Malacca, through which 85 percent of the world's oil flows through each year.

"The security in areas like these is hugely important not only to us, but to the entire world," he said.

Partnership is a huge characteristic of the region according to Keating. Partners in recent exercises have included India, Japan, Australia, and Singapore.

He discussed the role of China in the region, to include environmental concerns and the desire to bring them into the regional partnership.

"Partner with us, there is plenty of room, work with us," he said.

The activities in the regions just aren't military he said, pointing to recent disaster relief missions in Burma and the Philippines. PACOM has participated in more than 20 disaster relief operations in 12 countries and one U.S. territory (Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Palau, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Burma, India, Madagascar, Sri Lanka and Guam) since 1996.

"These types of missions help reinforce the importance of partnerships," he said.

Keating spoke as part of the Theater Strategy and Campaigning course, which challenges students to apply their skills to develop and evaluate near and long-term plans and programs.

His experience as a leader made him a perfect fit to speak during this course according to Navy Capt. Tom Wedding, student, who noted Keating's numerous leadership positions throughout his career in many important regions."

Questions for Keating included the use of soft power versus hard power, military and political interactions with China and steps being taken to strengthen security in the region.

## **PACOM background**

PACOM military personnel number approximately 250,000, or about one-fifth of total U.S. military



strength. U.S. Navy and Marine forces are numerically the largest elements in the AOR.

The Pacific Fleet includes five aircraft carrier strike groups and Marine Corps Pacific possesses about two-thirds of U.S. Marine Corps combat strength. The entire Navy-Marine team comprises more than 135,000 personnel, 180 ships, and 1,400 aircraft. U.S. Air Forces Pacific comprises approximately 39,000 airmen and 350 aircraft; and Army, Pacific has about 50,000 personnel, including four Stryker brigades. PACOM also has more than 1,200 Special Operations personnel. Finally, there are more than 13,000 Coast Guard personnel available to support U.S. military forces in the region.

PACOM participates in many exercises and other engagement activities with foreign military forces.

**Major exercises include:**

- TALISMAN SABER: A biennial Australia/United bilateral in a short warning, power projection, forcible entry scenario. The exercise is a key opportunity to train Australian and US combined forces in mid to high-intensity combat operations using training areas in Australia
- COBRA GOLD: A joint/combined exercise with Thailand designed to improve U.S./Thai combat readiness and joint/combined interoperability.
- BALIKATAN: A joint exercise with the Republic of the Philippines and the U.S. to improve combat readiness and interoperability.
- KEEN SWORD/KEEN EDGE: Joint/bilateral training exercises (field training/simulation, respectively) to increase combat readiness and joint/bilateral interoperability of U.S. Forces and Japan Self-Defense Forces for the defense of Japan.
- RIM OF THE PACIFIC: A biennial large-scale multinational power projection/sea control exercise. In 2000, participants included the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Chile and the United Kingdom.