

Session 4: Japan's Nuclear Disaster and the U.S.-Japan Alliance

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Summary

Dr. Patrick Cronin, Senior Advisor and Senior Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at CNAS, pointed out that there will be wide range of affect the nuclear disaster in Japan (3/11) will have on US Japan Alliance. Some of those affects are on Energy security cooperation, US Forces (USF) and Self Defense Force (SDF) cooperation, and Nuclear power safety regulation cooperation. Dr. Cronin, the moderator for the discussion, asked the panelists their view on how 3/11 have or will change Japan and or US.

Dr. Noboru Yamaguchi, professor of National Defense Academy of Japan, emphasized the effectiveness of US-Japan alliance shown by the USF and JSF joint operation after 3/11. The rapid deployment of USF, USF's cultural awareness of Japan, and the coordination between USF and JSF showed the capacity of great coordination between US and Japan. He hopes that this posture will continue in the future and this coordination capacity to be used on other issues as well.

Dr. Tetsuo Kotani from the Okazaki institute touched on the positive and negative implications of 3/11 and "Operation Tomodachi". He pointed out that massive deployment of USF like USS Ronald Reagan showed US's great commitment to the incident, and the great coordination seen from the operation gives us hope of what else we can use this alliance for. The Negative implications of the 3/11 would be Fukushima Nuclear Crisis's negative impact on the reputation of nuclear powered vessels. The crisis left bad public image on not only nuclear weapon but on nuclear power itself. Since nuclear powered ship like Ronald Reagan

is key element on protecting regional security, Japan must try its best to scrub off this negative image.

Dr. Zachary Hosford from CNAS pointed out that no fundamental change occurred between US and Japan after 3/11 because the regional politics did not change after 3/11, but it showed both US and Japan how they can increase the range cooperation. For example, US and Japan can cooperate more on creating stronger and safer nuclear power plant and creating better safety regulation.

Dr. Chaim Braun, professor of Stanford University, pointed out several technical lessons that Japan has learned from 3/11. Some of the lessons were avoiding multiple reactors in single power plant site, ensure strong emergency power system, and avoid massive storage of spent fuel near the power plant. For spent fuel storage issue, he presented his idea on using Rokkasho reprocessing plant, and also using Rokkasho for other countries to lower the risk of Nuclear Crisis in the East Asian region. He emphasized the point “Good safety regulation is good economic” as the major lesson for Fukushima Nuclear Crisis.

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