



Interactive Workshop Cases

Youth Climate Security Talks

Case 1: Impact of climate change on future military operations

Speaker

Vice-Admiral (ret) Ben Bekkering

*Former Netherlands Military Representative to NATO and EU
Participant of International Military Council on Climate and Security*



Background information

Human activity, in particular the use of fossil fuel, has caused an unprecedented rise of global temperature. This has affected the regulatory phenomena of our planet, such as oceanic currents, climate and ice caps. Already, the consequences can be widely felt around the globe. Frequent spells of extreme weather cause substantial damage to people, infrastructure and economy, with nature left with less and less time to recover. Diseases traditionally contained to certain regions are now spreading. Biodiversity, so much needed for a balanced life, is decreasing. Even when drastic measures to adapt and mitigate are taken now, the consequences of past human activities will burden the planet and cause suffering for decades to come.

With life becoming tougher, people suffering and nations struggling to guarantee prosperity, it is only prudent to assume that global, regional and national security will be under pressure. This may lead to tension in a variety of sizes and shapes. We already witness an increase in the number of disasters that call for humanitarian assistance. Also, as regions most affected by climate change are also plagued by weak governments, failing economies, growing populations and rising extremism, they need help to alleviate suffering, prevent crises and solve conflict. This help can only be effective when the climate element is fully understood and interventions made with near-zero footprints. Elsewhere, along the big rivers around the globe, upstream countries built dams to ascertain availability of much needed water, leaving downstream countries dry and desperate. The result is rising regional tension and even potential conflict. Closer to home, both geopolitically and geographically, the melting ice caps and thawing permafrost in the Arctic have different consequences for different global powers, fueling global strategic competition.

The militaries, most certainly in the West, like to consider themselves as first responder and last man standing in all sorts of crises and conflicts. In order to fulfill that ambition, they must become responsible and resilient organisations as well as credible and effective operators. This case looks at the second part. To allow the military to be credible and effective, they must possess the right capabilities built around trained people, optimised equipment and relevant doctrines. Only then can the military respond effectively and adequately to the political requirements.

The Case*

A capability development process starts with a sound understanding of size, scope and scale of future operations. The speaker challenges you to consider the impact of climate change and the associated consequences for security, use that to define the character of future military operations and determine, if necessary and needed, concurrencies and priorities for developing capabilities.

**You are challenged to come up with interesting ideas within your group during the workshop on the 2nd of November, which you can present during the final meeting on the 9th of November. Feel free to think out of the box and challenge the speakers with your ideas.*