

Moran: China Way Ahead of US on AI Data



Retired U.S. Navy Adm. William Moran, then vice chief of naval operations, visits Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Detachment Iwakuni at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, Sept. 12, 2018. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Stephen Campbell*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The United States still has an edge in two aspects of artificial intelligence (AI), but the People’s Republic of China is ahead on a third aspect and rapidly closing on the other two, a retired Navy admiral said.

Speaking on AI in a Nov. 16 webinar – hosted by the Navy League of the United States and sponsored by Deloitte – was retired Adm. William Moran, former vice chief of naval operations and currently a strategic advisor for several companies, a board member at the US Naval Institute and as the founder and president of WFM Advisors LLC.

Moran considered three legs of AI in his assessment: quality of data; AI expertise; and domain expertise.

“You add those things together and that’s where the magic happens,” he said.

The admiral said that much available data has to be refined, a time-consuming task that requires a large investment in personnel to convert stove-piped data in stove-piped systems to be useful across networks.

The United States – inside the U.S. Navy and outside – is flush with AI expertise, Moran said.

“We are the best in the world in developing algorithms and developing AI capability,” he said.

But even more so, the Navy is vastly endowed with domain expertise.

“From a DoD [Department of Defense] perspective, we are so far ahead of the Chinese, in my opinion,” he said. “ASW [anti-submarine warfare], ASUW [anti-surface warfare], even – to some extent – cyber, we’re way ahead on domain expertise.

Moran said that on the aspect of data, “China is way ahead of us, because they can put raw manpower and unlimited resources towards data and they’ve done that for quite some time ... and they don’t have a lot of the roadblocks to obtaining that data, not worried about the security pieces that we rightfully have in front of mind, whether it’s on the operational or tactical edge or the operational management structure.”

He said that China is going to close gaps quickly in AI and domain expertise.

“They’re in a race to get there sooner than we do,” he said.

“You’ve got to get the domain folks in with the software engineers that are writing the code, with the data that’s high quality, and it can happen pretty quickly. ... You just have to commit and get after it.”