



Irregular Warfare Center

Spotlight

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Irregular Warfare Center Achieves Milestone Growth in FY25, Pivots to Homeland Resilience and the Indo-Pacific in FY26

Story by: Pedro A. Rodriguez, Contractor, IWC PAO

ARLINGTON, VA—The Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) has concluded an exceptionally productive year dedicated to advancing the understanding and application of Irregular Warfare (IW) across the defense community and its global network of partners. The IWC has cemented its role as the central hub for innovation and synchronized effort in irregular warfare, focusing its efforts on refining educational standards, providing expert subject matter input to the Joint Staff, and fostering meaningful collaboration across sectors and borders.

The Center’s digital education footprint expanded dramatically throughout the year, making foundational and advanced IW knowledge more accessible than ever before. The flagship course, IW 101, saw phenomenal success with over 2,300 enrollments and is now a mandatory prerequisite for all special operations force’s students attending the Army Command and General Staff College. Building on this success, the IWC successfully deployed the self-paced IW 110: Approaches for Homeland Security and Defense Course for DoW personnel and international partners, pivoting essential IW knowledge to professionals focused on the homeland.

IW 201 began making waves by offering sophisticated comparative analysis and timely case studies, including China’s gray zone strategy and Russia’s use of IW in Crimea. Specialized training programs, including the Transformational Irregular Warfare Leaders Thought Courses (TILT-C) and the IW Analysts Course for the Army’s 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), were conducted globally, actively synchronizing cutting-edge IW content across diverse units.

“The success of this past year is a testament to our commitment to institutionalizing Irregular Warfare knowledge. By dramatically expanding our digital catalog from over 2,300 enrollments in the now-mandatory IW 101, to deploying the more advanced IW 201 with timely case studies on gray zone strategy, we are not just educating, we are actively synchronizing and professionalizing the IW community,” said IWC Director Dr. Dennis Walters. This ensures that every practitioner, from our newest students to our senior analysts, is equipped with the shared, cutting-edge expertise required to face tomorrow’s complex challenges across the joint force and with our global partners.”

Beyond the classroom, the IWC served as a catalyst for critical IW research and strategic discourse. It successfully hosted its third annual University Research Colloquium, which brought together junior scholars and senior practitioners to strengthen the vital bridge between academia and the operational community.

The Center relaunched PRISM: The Journal of Complex Operations, which continues to serve as the leading scholarly journal for irregular warfare. Strategically, the IWC engaged in complex analyses ranging from examining China’s maritime gray zone operations to supporting the development of actionable foresight products, such as the Taiwan Occupation Foresight Workshop. Collaboration also grew significantly, with the annual symposium on Total Defense bringing together over 300 experts from across five continents.

On the global stage, the IWC provided leadership to international bodies, including the European Hybrid Center of Excellence, and enhanced NATO Integrated Deterrence by embedding critical IW insights into scenario development alongside more than 20 allied nations. The Center also successfully co-hosted the Intelligence Support to Irregular Warfare Symposiums and saw its digital reach expand, growing its social media presence. Its “Spotlight”

newsletter continued to succeed with a subscriber base of over 10,700 and increasing.

Looking ahead to Fiscal Year 2026, the IWC has announced a dynamic slate of upcoming events designed to tackle the most pressing IW challenges and strengthen collective resilience. The second quarter will feature the pivotal Maritime & Rail Transportation Working Group, a cross-sector forum dedicated to identifying vulnerabilities, mapping critical gaps, and developing integrated, actionable solutions to counter gray-zone activities, insider threats, and sophisticated cyber-attacks across U.S. ports and global shipping.

The Annual IWC Symposium, the Center’s premier annual event, is scheduled to take center stage in June 2026 and will shift its focus to the foundational topic of Homeland Defense, featuring a powerful keynote and targeted panels for practitioners, allies, interagency, industry, and academia.

The third quarter of 2026 will also include a dedicated Critical Infrastructure Working Group, a crucial forum dedicated to identifying and mitigating IW threats targeting the systems and networks that keep the nation running. Building on a prior year’s success, the IWC will co-host the next IW Intelligence Symposium with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S)) in the third quarter, which will provide a detailed, global examination of adversary capabilities and the complex convergence of threats, including how transnational criminal organizations and state-sponsored criminality are leveraged in the gray zone.

Capitalizing off the success of past colloquiums, in the fourth quarter. The colloquium brought together junior and senior scholars, as well as practitioners, to discuss a range of topics related to modern irregular warfare.

In the Indo Pacific, the IWC is focusing on strengthening regional alliances to counter malign influence. In the spring of 2026, the IWC will host several events with partners and allies, focusing on Foreign Interference and Malign Influence and a strategic communications course. Leveraging the IWC’s functional area networks (FANs) to empower allied forces in countering disinformation. The Center will expand its footprint to East Asia in the third quarter of FY26, collaborating with the Joint Interagency Task Force West and the Drug Enforcement Administration. This joint training will provide inter-national border officials with the tools to identify irregular threats and transnational criminal networks, a critical security step as the U.S. and partner nations explore the opening of new direct air routes.

The Center will also continue its virtual “Lunch & Learn” Lecture series with timely topics such as Chinese Cognitive Warfare, Building Societal Resilience Against Hybrid Threats, Mapping the BRICS+ Cryptocurrency Ecosystem, and Measuring Impact of Messaging. The IWC remains committed to ensuring U.S. irregular warfare priorities are integrated into multinational planning as it works to secure the future.

“Looking ahead to FY26, our focus is crystal clear: to strengthen our nation’s resilience against the most complex irregular threats. From safeguarding our essential supply chains at the Maritime & Rail Transportation Working Group to dedicating our premier annual Symposium to Homeland Defense, the IWC is driving the hard work that matters,” said Walters. “We will continue to serve as the vital coordinating body, bringing together the best minds from defense, inter-agency, industry, and our allies, to collectively stay ahead of the curve and secure our future.”

Director’s Corner

Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director



Director’s Corner: Partnership, Progress, and Promise

As 2025 draws to a close, I’m reflecting on a year of remarkable achievements in our mission to lead Irregular Warfare efforts across the Department of War. A key highlight has been our work strengthening alliances to counter aggression in the Indo-Pacific.

Strengthening Alliances in the Pacific

Last month, our leadership advanced a critical partnership with the Philippines, a pivotal ally in the region. We met with JUSMAG-Philippines, respected Filipino academics, and leaders from the U.S. Special Operations Task Force to lay the groundwork for a long-term continuing education program.

This initiative is tailored to empower the Philippine government to defend their homeland against irregular threats and counter the pervasive malign influence from China. This engagement is a prime example of our strategic focus: building partner capacity to deter aggression and defend shared interests. By fostering a collaborative environment, we are helping our allies develop the resilience and skills needed to meet the complex challenges of the modern security landscape. This effort directly supports our broader goal of defending the homeland by reinforcing the capabilities of our partners on the front lines.

Looking Ahead with Gratitude

As we close out this year of partnerships across combatant commands, expanding educational programs, and building global communities of practice, I’m grateful for the dedication of everyone in the irregular warfare enterprise. Your commitment to excellence makes this challenging work possible.

To all our partners, colleagues, and friends, may your holidays be filled with peace and time with loved ones. Here’s to an even more impactful 2026.

PRISM: Call For Manuscripts

The IWC is seeking Manuscripts for an upcoming special edition of PRISM!

Submit today!



Media Highlights

GOLDEN DOME: A SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES OVERVIEW
by: U.S.A.F. Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Stackhouse

Little Spartans: How Small State Militaries Use Special Forces to Punch Above Their Weight
by: Simon Anglin, Department of War Studies, King’s College London



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SPOTLIGHT

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Irregular Warfare Center Joins National Resilience Discourse, Focuses on Energy Grid Vulnerability

Story by: Pedro A. Rodriguez, Contractor, IWC PAO

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. — The Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) played a key role in the recent Defense Tech-Connect / Resilience Week conference, where Dr. Robert Redding, an IWC Contractor and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) Deputy Regional Advisor, served as a panelist to discuss “Fostering Whole-of-Society Resilience through Energy Assurance,” November 19, 2025.

The panel convened national security practitioners, energy sector professionals, researchers, and emergency management leaders to examine the intersection of infrastructure resilience, hybrid threats, and irregular warfare.

Dr. Redding, representing the IWC, provided vital irregular warfare expertise, emphasizing the conceptual alignment between adversary hybrid tactics and energy infrastructure targeting. He focused on the Department of War and IWC perspectives on deterrence by denial, societal resilience, critical infrastructure interdependencies, and NORTHCOM/homeland implications for effective civil-military coordination, as well as the essential need for integrated national security, energy sector, and community-based planning frameworks.

“We must operate from the understanding that our adversaries are not just targeting military assets. They are targeting the interdependencies that hold our society together, with our energy infrastructure being the primary seam,” said Dr. Redding. “True deterrence, therefore, isn’t just about a military response. It’s about deterrence by denial, building a resilient

and integrated framework where the energy sector, civil authorities, and national security are already coordinated. Effective homeland defense demands we close these gaps through civil-military cooperation before a crisis, not in the middle of one.”

The newly named National Laboratory of the Rockies (NLR), formerly known as the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, which hosted and facilitated the panel, established the context by highlighting the energy grid as a growing target and focus of national vulnerability. Panel host Dr. Bobby Jeffers utilized NLR’s energy resilience analysis to show the major national-level consequences of energy system disruption, including degrading mission assurance and inducing societal unrest, a concept also called “One Target, Dual Outcomes”.

The central focus of the discussion was on achieving “whole-of-society resilience as a form of deterrence by denial” against hybrid threats targeting critical infrastructure, cyber networks, and vulnerable societal nodes. Dr. Redding educated the energy-sector-heavy audience on the characteristics and relevance of irregular warfare (IW) and how adversaries are interested in civil infrastructure degradation to shape strategic outcomes.

Other panelists, including Tim Tetreault of NLR and Jonathon Monken of Converge Strategies, addressed complementary aspects, covering technical/operation-

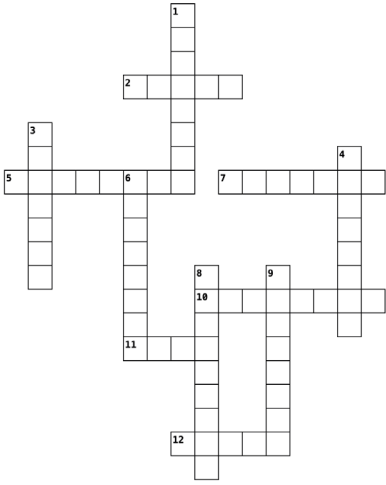
al considerations for energy resilience and state-level emergency management insights, respectively. The event successfully placed the IWC as a key contributor to national energy resilience discourse and reinforced the importance of energy infrastructure as a primary IW-relevant target set.

Following the strong audience reception, the IWC is positioned for collaborations focusing on joint analytic work, integrating state emergency management perspectives into its activities, and providing additional resources for critical infrastructure security.

The IWC will build on this foundation with the NLR to integrate energy infrastructure vulnerability considerations into IWC curricula, scenario planning, and assessments. The Center also plans to explore opportunities for NLR participation in the IWC’s Defense of the Homeland Working Group.

“The IWC team is excited to work jointly with the NLR,” said Dr. Redding. “This collaboration could only make our energy infrastructure security stronger; we can’t afford to have blind spots when it comes to the country’s power infrastructure. Bringing NLR to the table regularly is the best way to make sure our training and assessments are actually ready for a real-world attack.”

Irregular Warfare Crossword



- Across
2. Works with NATO and partners in Europe, Russia, and parts of Eurasia.
5. Conducts globally integrated mobility operations, leads the broader Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise, and provides enabling capabilities.
7. Covers the Middle East, parts of Central Asia, and South Asia.
10. The U.S. Department of Defense unified command responsible for homeland defense and civil support in North America
11. Key component of Irregular Warfare (IW), focusing on influencing foreign audiences
12. Unified combatant command charged with overseeing the various special operations component commands of the US Armed Forces
- Down
1. Oversees U.S. military operations in space.
3. Focuses on security and defense in Africa
4. Responsible for providing contingency planning, operations, and security cooperation for Central and South America, the Caribbean (except in Territories of the United States)
6. Defends and advances U.S. cyber interests.
8. Encompasses about half the earth’s surface, stretching from the waters off the west coast of the U.S. to the western border of India, and from Antarctica to the North Pole.
9. Manages global strike, nuclear deterrence, and missile defense.

Current Initiatives, Upcoming Events & IW Educational Offerings

Don’t forget to check out The Department of War’s Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) *PRISM: The Journal of Complex Operations* follow the link for the latest issue!



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This Month in the History of Irregular Warfare

- The Iran Hostage Crisis (Nov 4, 1979) - The seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran is a classic example of state-sponsored subversion and psychological warfare, using non-state actors (students) to achieve strategic political goals without declaring a formal war.
- Second Battle of Fallujah (Iraq, Nov 7 – Dec 23, 2004) - One of the largest urban COIN operations in modern history. U.S. and coalition forces fought house-to-house to clear a stronghold of insurgents and foreign fighters, highlighting the complexities of irregular warfare in dense urban environments.
- Washington’s Crossing of the Delaware (U.S., Dec 25–26, 1776): Though part of the Revolutionary War, this was a masterful unconventional operation. Using stealth, surprise, and a holiday timing to strike a superior force (the Hessians), it is a textbook case of leveraging “irregular” timing and environmental conditions to gain a strategic advantage.
- The Winter War & Ski Troops (Finland/USSR, Dec 1939): After the Soviet invasion, Finnish “Sissi” units used ski-borne guerrilla tactics to harass and destroy much larger, road-bound Soviet columns. This remains one of the most successful examples of small, mobile forces defeating a conventional giant.

Crossword Answers: 1. SPACECOM, 2. EUCOM, 3. AFRICOM, 4. SOUTHCOM, 5. TRANSCOM, 6. CYBERCOM, 7. CENTCOM, 8. INDOPACOM, 9. STRATCOM, 10. NORTHCOM, 11. MISO, 12. SOCOM

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