



Irregular Warfare Center

Spotlight

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Irregular Warfare Center Expands Global Network to Coordinate Response to Modern Hybrid Threats

Story by: **Pedro A. Rodriguez, IWC PAO, Ctr.**

ARLINGTON, VA — As the landscape of global security shifts increasingly toward “gray zone” conflicts and strategic competition, the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) is rapidly expanding its Irregular Warfare Global Network (IWGN). This groundbreaking initiative is designed to serve as a central force multiplier for the Department of War (DoW), aiming to modernize how the United States and its international partners address unconventional challenges.



The IWGN represents a strategic departure from traditional military networks by fostering a

“whole-of-society” approach. Through its system of Functional Area Networks (FANs), the IWC is uniting military professionals, interagency experts, academics, and private sector leaders to stay ahead of emerging threats that fall short of conventional war.

At the heart of the IWGN are the Functional Area Networks (FANs). These specialized groups focus on critical vulnerabilities and operational domains where adversaries often seek to gain an advantage. According to the IWC, these networks are designed to be adaptive, with new FANs arising as the global community identifies fresh challenges.

“The FANs are a relatively new concept developed by the IWC to address global challenges in irregular warfare (IW). They are essentially smaller, mission-focused networks that are broken down by functions of IW or priorities of the administration,” said Nathalie Lorentzen, IWC Functional Area Network Program Manager. “These networks bring together experts from the DoW, other government agencies, the private sector, academia, and international partners to enhance collaboration and capabilities in the field of IW.”

Key networks currently active within the IWGN include:

-Medical Support to IW: This network focuses on medical operations in austere and contested environments. It has made headlines by deploying cross-functional teams to Eastern Europe to train civilian and military doctors in providing care under extreme conditions.

-Contested Logistics & Sustainment: Recognizing that modern adversaries target supply lines both abroad and within the U.S. homeland, this network seeks to solve logistical challenges in “denied” environments, ensuring that forces remain lethal and supported even when traditional infrastructure is compromised.

-Operations in the Information Environment (OIE): Tasked with answering how the U.S. wins the “cognitive fight,” the OIE network synchronizes psychological operations, cyberspace activities, and military deception to counter foreign disinformation and malign influence.

-Defense of the Homeland: Comprising professionals from both defense and law enforcement sectors, this group focuses on “deterrence by denial.” Recent initiatives have addressed vulnerabilities in

critical infrastructure, such as the national energy grid and transportation networks.

-Emerging Technology: This network explores how advancements in artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, and other cutting-edge tools can be leveraged in asymmetric conflict, ensuring the DoW is not technologically outpaced by non-state actors or peer competitors.

-Threat Finance and Economic Levers (TFEL): By bringing together intelligence and financial experts, this network aims to identify and exploit the economic levers and financial networks used by adversaries to fund irregular activities.

The expansion of the IWGN comes on the heels of a highly productive 2025 for the IWC. In its most recent annual summary, the Center reported conducting over 61 major event, training over 1,100 U.S. personnel and participation from 55 allied and partner nations.

“The true impact of these networks lies in the opportunities they create,” said Lorentzen. They are designed to break down silos and foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving. IW exceeds the capabilities of any single organization; these networks amplify effectiveness by uniting a diverse group of experts.”

Ultimately, she added that this environment allows for the rapid sharing of ideas, the identification of gaps in doctrine and funding, and the ability to quickly mobilize resources to support partner nations and other agencies.

To support these networks, the IWC has integrated the IWGN’s insights into a growing catalog of educational resources. These include the flagship IW 101 course now a mandatory prerequisite for many special operations students and the newly launched IW 110: IW Approaches for Homeland Security and Defense.

These courses aim to professionalize the irregular warfare community by providing a common language and doctrinal framework for military and civilian personnel alike. Furthermore, the ongoing virtual FAN speaker series provides a platform for experts to convene and discuss relevant Irregular Warfare challenges.

The IWC continues to invite subject matter experts and organizations to contribute to these networks. Professionals interested in joining a Functional Area Network or seeking more information can contact the Center via their official portal at dsc.iwc-fan@mail.mil. In the upcoming months the IWC will feature each individual network, highlighting their work within the IW community in the global stage.

“The networks are designed to be adaptive, with new FANs being created as new needs and challenges are identified,” said Lorentzen. “The overarching goal is to create a unified, “whole-of-government” approach to irregular challenges.”

In this six-part feature series we will be breaking down all five FANs to understand their mission, and impact on the IW global landscape.

For more news and Information about the IWC follow us on the links below:

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X <https://x.com/IrregularWarCtr>
Check out our website <https://irregularwarfarecenter.org/news/>

Director’s Corner

Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director



Director’s Corner: A New Year for Homeland Defense

Happy New Year and welcome to 2026. As we embark on a new year, the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) is renewing its focus on one of our key missions: supporting the defense of the homeland. Through forward-thinking research and education, we will continue to lead the Department of War’s efforts to counter threats in the irregular space and ensure our nation’s security.

This month, we are wasting no time in advancing this mission. On January 13th and 14th, we were proud to take part in the Western Hemisphere Homeland Seminar and the Western Hemisphere Command Senior Seminar at Ft. Bragg. These forums are essential for building the partnerships and strategies necessary to safeguard our interests at home and in our nation’s periphery. Later in the month, on January 22nd, our participation in the Joint Futures Forum will help shape the dialogue on future defense challenges.

A key aspect of defending the homeland is securing our critical infrastructure, with that in mind, at the end of January, the IWC will host a workshop to examine irregular threats to America’s vital agriculture sector. This event underscores our commitment to proactively identify and mitigate vulnerabilities before they can be exploited by our adversaries.

The IWC looks forward to a year of impactful research, education, and collaboration. By confronting today’s challenges and preparing for tomorrow’s, we will continue to earn our role as the leader in the irregular warfare enterprise.



PRISM: Call For Manuscripts

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

Submit today!



Media Highlights

NORTHROP GRUMMAN TO ADVANCE KRATOS XQ-58 VALKYRIE DRONE FOR MARINE CORPS ‘LOYAL WINGMAN’ PROGRAM
by: Aaron-Matthew Lariosa, USNI News
M/V Bella 1 Oil Tanker Seized by U.S. in North Atlantic
by: SOF News



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SPOTLIGHT

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IWC Leads the Way in Tampa: Shaping the Future of SOF and the Irregular Warfare Enterprise

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

TAMPA, Fla. - The landscape of global conflict is shifting toward unconventional and hybrid strategies, a reality that took center stage at the 14th Annual Special Operations Forces and Irregular Warfare (SOF & IW) Symposium in Tampa, Fla., December 10-11, 2025. Hosted by the Defense Strategies Institute (DSI), this year’s symposium focused on the strategic challenges facing the SOF enterprise through 2025 and beyond.

While the symposium gathered a broad spectrum of senior leaders from United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), international partners, and industry innovators, the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) emerged as an intellectual driver of the irregular warfare (IW) conversation.

The presence of three key IWC representatives Chris Burns, (Ctr.) Senior Advisor for Irregular Warfare, Tom Searle, Deputy Regional Advisor, (Ctr) CENTCOM and SOUTHCOM, and Josh Hastey, (Ctr) Deputy Regional Advisor, INDOPACOM served as a force multiplier for the Center’s mission. Their participation as key-note speakers and panelists solidified the IWC’s reputation as the central “shaping force” within

the Irregular Warfare community of interest.

The IWC’s contributions spanned the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of IW with Burns delivering a forward-looking address titled “Leveraging SOF Expertise for the Development of the Next-Gen Warfighter,” focusing on how elite experience must inform the training of tomorrow’s forces.

Searle challenged the prevailing “glass-half-empty” view of American competition with his afternoon address, “The US is Winning in IW: Now What?”

“Most articles about Russian, Iranian, and Chinese IW emphasize the threat and suggest that we should imitate them.” said Searle. “I wanted to point out that adversary IW efforts are going badly. For example, Iran built proxies to deter attacks on Iran but instead, the proxies started wars that dragged Iran into direct conflict with Israel and the U.S. I wanted the audience to recognize and learn from adversary mistakes instead of imitating bad adversary strategies.”

IW is a global playing field and Hastey provided a granular look at strategic competition during

the “IW in the Indo-Pacific” panel. Alongside other IW experts, Hastey utilized a case study on foreign political interference in Palau to illustrate the complexities of hybrid influence.

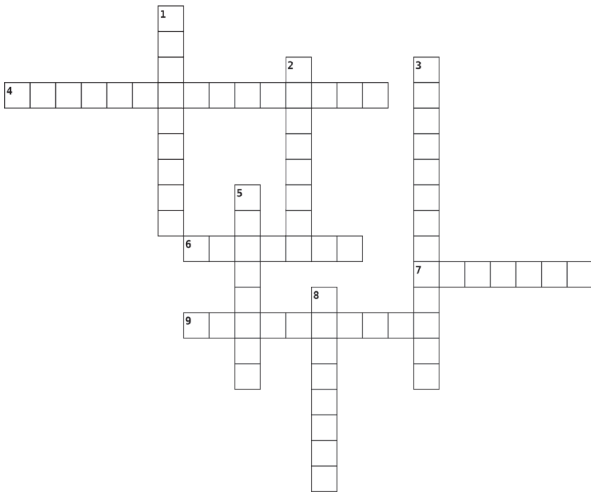
“It was a real pleasure to share the panel with other IW experts,” said Hastey. “I think we were able to spark some fruitful discussions, and look forward to working with them again in the not too distant future.”

Beyond the panels, the IWC deepened critical international ties. Representatives engaged in high-level discussions with key members of several partner nations. These interactions highlight the IWC’s role in harmonizing IW strategies with key allies in the theaters around the world.

The 14th Annual Symposium made one thing clear: Irregular Warfare is no longer a “niche” concern, it is the primary arena of modern competition. Guiding the SOF community toward a more sophisticated understanding of IW.

Irregular Warfare Crossword

Hint: Names of famous operations and U.S. Special Forces.



- Across**

4. Operation in Venezuela to depose dictator Nicolas Maduro.

6. Search for Saddam Hussein.

7. Highly trained operators for direct action, special reconnaissance, and foreign internal defense missions, continuing the legacy of the WWII era teams.

9. Elite medical and combat rescue specialist, famous for “These things we do, that other may live,” rescuing personnel in any environment.
- Down**

1. Invasion of Panama to depose dictator Manuel Noriega.

2. Joint engagement to find Osama Bin Laden.

3. The “Black Hawk Down” incident in Somalia involving Rangers and Delta Force.

5. Operation in which OSS/OEE teams parachuted into France to aid resistance fighters.

8. A 2005 U.S. military mission in Afghanistan to disrupt Taliban-aligned forces, which turned into a devastating ambush, resulting in the deaths of three Navy SEALs and 15 other service members.

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 Gunpowder Plot Trials (January 27, 1606):** While the plot to blow up Parliament was discovered in November, the judicial climax occurred in late January. Guy Fawkes and his fellow conspirators were tried and executed (Jan 30–31). This event remains a classic study in state-sponsored counter-terrorism and the neutralization of an irregular internal threat.
- The “Templer Era” in Malaya (January 1952):** General Sir Gerald Templer was appointed British High Commissioner during the Malayan Emergency. He is credited with refining the concept of “Hearts and Minds,” a cornerstone of modern counterinsurgency (COIN) theory.
- The Birth of the Navy SEALs (January 1, 1962):** Recognizing the need for unconventional capabilities in “rimland” and riverine environments, President John F. Kennedy officially established SEAL Teams 1 and 2. Their initial mission was focused specifically on unconventional warfare and counter-guerrilla operations in Vietnam.
- Tet Offensive (January 30, 1968):** This month marks the anniversary of one of the most significant irregular and conventional hybrid campaigns in history. Launched by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army, it fundamentally shifted American public perception of the Vietnam War.

Crossword Answers
1. Jedburgh 2. Red Dawn 3. Tora Bora 4. Gothic Serpent 5. Just Cause 6. Absolute Resolve
7. Red Wings 8. Pararescue 9. Raiders

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