

THE IRREGULAR WARFARE CENTER

Spotlight

Vol 1 • 9

Amplify | Illuminate | Address

December 2023

Jointly hosted Irregular Warfare Forum provides critical discussion on IW policy, doctrine, training, education

More than 400 senior leaders, academia, subject matter experts, and guests gathered to attend the Irregular Warfare Forum in Arlington, Virginia, Dec. 5-7.

Jointly hosted by the Irregular Warfare Center, National Defense University's College of International Security Affairs, and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, the forum laid the foundation for in-depth discussions about irregular warfare.

"We are proud to host and play a pivotal role in the IW Forum alongside the National Defense University, College of International Security Affairs and John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Command and School," said Irregular Warfare Center Director, Dr. Dennis Walters. "The theme for the event, preparing for strategic competition through policy, doctrine, training and education, provided attendees an opportunity to engage with a plethora of subject matter experts and organizations while discussing the importance of IW education throughout the community. We are delighted to work collectively with these extraordinary organizations in helping to move this critical mission forward."

SWCS Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Guillaume "Will" Beurpere, and NDU CISA's Acting Chancellor, Denise Marsh, provided opening remarks and welcomed Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Christopher P. Maier. Maier delivered the keynote address focusing on the critical role of IW in achieving national security objectives.

"We planned this specifically to expand the communities of interest and seek wider interagency and DoD perspectives on irregular warfare," said Beurpere. "Though prepare we must, what I would tell you is that it has to be with a sense of urgency. This forum is strategically driven, threat informed, and operationally focused."

Marsh added, "This call to action requires formulating concrete ways to collaborate with people and organizations outside our comfort zone ... The 2022 NDS calls for the 'incorporation of allied and partner perspectives at all stages of defense planning,' and CISA lays the groundwork to do so, building partner capacity in the classroom and beyond. We will continue to test IW concepts in the classroom and in forums like this to better develop tomorrow's Irregular Warfare leaders."

The three-day event emphasized a variety of topics focusing on setting the scene for future competition, preparing for the future of irregular warfare, and the voices of experience and the demands of the future.

For the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Deputy Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Patrick Roberson, information technology is a vital component to irregular warfare.

"Everybody should have a basic understanding of data," said Roberson. "Using data and being data literate at the lowest levels gives us a huge advantage." For an attendee, the forum presented a platform to see how irregular warfare is studied and applied across the interagency.

"We have a lot of discussions about strategy at the policy level of irregular



Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Christopher P. Maier provided the keynote address on Day 1 of the IW Forum in Arlington, Va., on Dec. 5. The Center, National Defense University, College of International Security Affairs, and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School partnered to host the 3-day event.



Gen. Charles Flynn, Commanding General of U.S. Army Pacific, provided the keynote address and answered attendee questions during Day 2 of the IW Forum in Arlington, Va., on Dec. 6. The Center, National Defense University, College of International Security Affairs, and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School partnered to host the 3-day event.

warfare, and I'm very interested in hearing about how that is making its way into the operational level and how it's being activated," said Jessica Rice, Irregular Warfare Forum attendee.

Irregular Warfare forums are held every six months. The next forum will be held in May 2024 at Fort Liberty, North Carolina.

"We at the Center encourage all attendees to learn more about the IWC and utilize all of our educational resources as we continue to evolve and grow in serving as the central mechanism for developing the Department of Defense's irregular warfare knowledge and advancing the Department's understanding of irregular warfare concepts and doctrine in collaboration with key allies and partners," said Walters.

Note: Elvia Kelly, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School Public Affairs officer; David Wycaver, Irregular Warfare Center Public Affairs and Strategic Communications manager; and Catherine Nguyen, College of International Security Affairs Strategic Communications specialist, contributed to this article.

Director's Corner



Dr. Dennis Walters
IWC Director



Greetings from the IWC team,

First off, I would like to wish everyone a happy and safe Holiday Season as the Center prepares to roll into 2024. We have come a long way in the past 14 months, and I'm excited about our progress as an organization and team!

In the upcoming year, we look forward to building upon established partnerships, developing new ones and growing our capabilities, which already includes, world-class research, education & training, wargaming, modeling, strategy and campaign design, applied research, subject matter expertise, peer review support, facilitation and published research.

During the month of December, the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) sponsored the Irregular Warfare (IW) Forum, co-hosted by our partners at the National Defense University (NDU), College of International Security Affairs (CISA), and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS). More than 400 senior leaders, academia, subject matter experts, and guests gathered to attend the Irregular Warfare Forum in Arlington, Virginia from Dec. 5-7.

Irregular warfare requires a new way of thinking. The IWC plays a key role in this mission providing education throughout the IW domain. The collaboration between SWCS and CISA represents the intent of the IWC authorities and our vital work in this environment. The IWC is pleased to play a vital role in the IW Forum and help to bring the IW community of interest together for collaboration and advancement.

We're thrilled to announce a few of our upcoming hosted-events for 2024 including the IW Medical Resiliency Sustainment Working Group in Bethesda, Md from Jan. 30 - Feb. 2 and the IWC Community of Interest Symposium (IWCCOIS) from March 11-14 in Tyson's Corner, Va.

The Working Group will facilitate key leaders' strategic austere medical decisions to validate capabilities as well as identify critical gaps and resources for operational medics with focus on survivability, restricted communications, clandestine evacuation, and prolonged field care.

The 3-day symposium will focus each day on one line of the Center's lines of effort: Amplify, Address, Illuminate with the goal of bringing together the IW COI under the IWC to help increase conventional DoD forces understanding and embracement of their role in IW, collaborate, discuss and identify pathways to improve integrated deterrence strategy as well as establish focal point for collaborative exchanges across DoD, interagency and partner nations on global, irregular problems.

I couldn't be more proud of all of the critical work the Center is doing and all of the people who make it happen on a daily basis as together we continue to find irregular solutions to irregular problems!

Stay tuned for more great things!

Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director



Upcoming IWC Events



IW Medical Resiliency Sustainment Working Group

WHO: Hosted by the Irregular Warfare Center
WHAT: The Working Group will facilitate key leaders' strategic austere medical decisions to validate capabilities, identify critical gaps and develop TTPs for operational medics with focus on survivability, restricted communications, clandestine evacuation, and prolonged field care.

WHERE: Bethesda, MD
WHEN: 30 January - 02 February 2024

IWC Community of Interest Symposium (IWCCOIS)

WHO: Hosted by the Irregular Warfare Center
WHAT: This 3 day conference will focus each day on one line of effort: Amplify - Address - Illuminate
1. Bring together the IW COI under the IWC to help Amplify, Address, and Illuminate IW.
2. Increase conventional DoD forces understanding and embracement of their role in IW.
3. Collaborate, discuss and identify pathways to improve integrated deterrence strategy.
4. Establish focal point for collaborative exchanges across DoD, interagency and partner nations on global, irregular problems.

WHERE: Tyson's Corner, Va.
WHEN: 11 - 13 March 2024

Meet The Center's Team



Denise Cooper
IWC Head of Admissions

Describe your role and responsibilities at IWC?
"As the Head of Admissions, my overall responsibility involves coordination with DoD, State Department, foreign governments, U.S. embassies, defense industry, nongovernmental organizations, and others concerning regarding IWC education and events. I analyze data to ensure we are offering valuable programs for the IW community and represent the Center across the domain."

Describe your professional background/expertise and how it aids the Center and its mission?

"I served for 28 years as a Navy Hospital Corpsman Master Chief, with the majority serving with NSW providing medical and training support to US and foreign military personnel. In 2016, I was given the opportunity to serve as an International Military Student Officer/Registrar for the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS). In 2021, I relocated to NETSFA as a Country Program Manager. I was fortunate to work and learn from some amazing people/trusted experts who are always willing to lend their support. One thing I learned as a Navy Chief, "You don't have to have all the answers, you just need to know someone who does."

Media Highlights

IW Forum Defense One Feature Article
China is using US-allied exercises to find 'soft targets': US Army's Pacific chief
<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2023/12/china-using-us-allied-exercises-find-soft-targets-us-armys-pacific-chief/392538/>

IW Forum DoD Press Release
<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3607246/assistant-secretary-of-defense-christopher-p-maier-address-crucial-role-of-ir/>

IWC Perspectives
"The Devil Went Down to Georgia: Executing Cyberspace Resistance to Counter Russia," by authors Mark Grzegorzewski, PhD, and William Holden.
<https://irregularwarfarecenter.org/publications/perspectives/the-devil-went-down-to-georgia-executing-cyberspace-resistance-to-counter-russia/>





Special Operations Forces (SOF) Institution Building: From Strategic Approach to Security Force Assistance

Article by Dr. Kevin Stringer, IWC Chair of Education, Valens Global contractor

In July 2023, Dr. Kevin D. Stringer, the Irregular Warfare Center's Chair of Education, published his seventh article in Joint Force Quarterly (JFQ), the Chairman's flagship security studies journal, entitled, "[Special Operations Forces \(SOF\) Institution Building: From Strategic Approach to Security Force Assistance](#)." This piece is his most recent product in a series of SOF-related research and writing dating back to 2007, beginning with Stringer's first JFQ article "A Supreme Commander for the War on Terror." A Supreme Commander for the War on Terror (dtic.mil)

"Special Operations Forces Institution Building" upends the typical exploration of SOF activities, which focuses on the tactical and operational levels, and instead examines the development of strategic level institutions for sustaining SOF forces and organizing SOF assets within a national framework for successful joint and coalition operations in a near-peer threat environment. This national-level structure takes the form of establishing an appropriately sized and organized special operations forces command or directorate for the state in question.

From the author's own practitioner experience in the special operations community and advising on such initiatives, he distills the SOF institutional development aims into four broad objectives to be achieved through the creation of national-level SOF organizations:

- (1) SOF autonomy, defined as the SOF institutions' achievement of a greater degree of independence from the respective military services. This goal endeavors to elevate an integrated SOF organization within a national defense hierarchy to increase SOF autonomy and reduce subordination to the conventional land, sea, and air services.
- (2) Joint and interagency SOF integration, defined as the establishment of unity of command for the joint SOF elements within a state as well as the creation of enhanced connections to other relevant national agencies.
- (3) SOF operational command and control (C2) capabilities, defined as the creation of a SOF national-level headquarters element with a core SOF organization and staff. The goal is to establish a C2 capability for NATO, regional, or coalition constructs while taking control over SOF readiness, capability development, and operational employment.
- (4) SOF service-like competencies, defined as "man, train, and equip functions," in order to better manage SOF recruitment, improve retention, own budget resources, and control SOF-specific procurement.

The article proceeds to analyze SOF institutional building through the representative but very different cases of Belgium and Ukraine. Equally important to this discussion is the US advisory approach required for effective collaboration within the context of this security force assistance effort. The author advocates the need for highly qualified joint officers with the right cross-cultural and interpersonal skills plus political astuteness. The cases also reinforce the prerequisite for general officer level sponsorship on both sides of the advisory equation.

SOF institution-building (SOFIB) takes on significant importance for the future because as irregular and hybrid warfare becomes more prevalent, the relevance of SOF as an interministerial integrator and catalyst increases. Allied and partner nation SOF can be sustainable and operationally effective in a near-peer environment only if they exist within a proper institutional framework—an appropriate SOF command or directorate structure. These SOF institutional development efforts align closely with IWC objectives of addressing current and future irregular threats while amplifying actions through the strengthening of interagency and joint network connections.

What the Israel-Hamas Conflict Illustrates About Irregular Warfare

Article by Varsha Koduvayur, IWC Senior Analyst, Valens Global contractor

IWC senior analyst Varsha Koduvayur and subject matter expert Peter Chin published an analysis of the current Israel-Hamas conflict through the lens of irregular warfare (IW) in Foreign Policy on November 6, 2023. In "Hamas and the New Lessons of Irregular Warfare," Koduvayur and Chin break down Hamas' multi-front assault into discrete components of an IW campaign.

While the definition of irregular warfare may still be nebulous, its characteristics are much easier to define. IW actors use a mix of asymmetric, indirect, and multidimensional means to accomplish a certain goal. By these characteristics, Hamas' offensive against Israel is certainly an IW scenario: Hamas launched its attack across air, land, and sea, thus going around the much more powerful and well-equipped Israeli Defense Forces. With its barrage of an estimated 2,200 rockets into Israeli, Hamas' missile volume was too much for Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system. Under cover of the missile barrage, Hamas militants drove bulldozers that tore down the well-fortified border of the Gaza Strip, allowing hundreds of militants through.

Importantly, none of the irregular warfare techniques Hamas used were new. Instead, Hamas combined existing irregular tactics to create new evolutions—to great gains. And Hamas' usage of indirect means, the group sheds light on four key lessons on irregular warfare.

First, high-tech tools alone are not guarantees of a winning edge. Low-tech means used creatively can beat more advanced systems. Hamas utilized human intelligence to accumulate detailed data on its desired targets within Israel, and to identify vulnerabilities in its military equipment. The high-tech Israeli border, full of cameras, sensors, and other features, ultimately crumbled against the combined effort of Hamas' granular intelligence and its combination of drones, bulldozers, motorcycles, and missiles.

Second, the low-tech innovation that Hamas showed was not new. The group just found a way to utilize existing methods in a new and effective admixture that its adversary did not expect and was thus unprepared to counter.

Third, IW actors will learn how to overcome their adversaries' capabilities, or at least to beat those capabilities temporarily—long enough to win an advantage, as Hamas did. Indeed, this is a key element of IW.

Fourth and finally, actors must develop nonmilitary options for responding to an IW scenario. Nonmilitary optionality that can yield short-term wins is key. Israel is caught

in a predicament now because it has seemingly limited nonmilitary options to respond with, and the military response it has launched thus far has yielded significant international condemnation.

These lessons are critical for countries to learn, and the Hamas-Israel conflict provides a theatre in which nations can observe and prepare for an IW scenario without being engaged in one themselves. The article is part of the IWC's public-facing research arm, and the IWC's flagship courses, such as TILT-C, are geared to teach these kinds of lessons to target audiences.

Photo of the Month



Irregular Warfare Center team members gathered for a group photo during Day 3 of the IW forum event in Alexandria, Va., on Dec. 7. The Center, National Defense University, College of International Security Affairs, and the U.S. Army John. F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School partnered to host the 3-day event.

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For general inquiries, please contact us at info@irregularwarfarecenter.org
For media-related inquiries, please contact us at media@irregularwarfarecenter.org

IWC Spotlight Newsletter Editor-In-Chief
David Wyscaver
IWC Public Affairs &
Strategic Communications Manager