



Irregular Warfare Center

Spotlight

Amplify | Illuminate | Address

Vol. 5 Ed. 2 | February 2026

Deter | Defend | Defeat

Aviation Leaders and Defense Experts Convene to Tackle Emerging Drone Threats in Commercial Aviation Security

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

ARLINGTON, Va. — In a move to harden the nation's skies against evolving global threats, the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) recently collaborated with a group of commercial airlines to discuss unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and its effect on domestic aviation, January 15, 2026. The summit shifted the focus from traditional security protocols to the complex realities of irregular warfare (IW), specifically addressing the proliferation of UAS and their potential to disrupt domestic aviation and transportation infrastructure.

The engagement, requested by industry leaders, provided a platform for expert-level discussions on how lessons learned from active conflict zones are translating to domestic aviation risks. Security experts from the IWC detailed the global UAS and counter-UAS (C-UAS) landscape, highlighting how state and non-state actors are increasingly modifying commercially available drones to conduct asymmetric campaigns. By framing these issues through the lens of irregular warfare, the session underscored the "gray zone" threats that operate below the threshold of conventional conflict but pose significant risks to airline resilience and risk mitigation.

"The discussion was interactive and tailored to airline operational realities, emphasizing practical relevance rather than theoretical threat descriptions," said Dr. Robert Redding, Ph.D., IWC Contractor, Deputy Regional Advisor Homeland Defense.

The dialogue moved beyond theoretical descriptions to address the "operational realities" of the airline industry. Participants examined the growing intersection between insider threats, supply chain vulnerabilities, and UAS-enabled disruptions.

Significant discussion focused on the legal challenges of operating in a permissive domestic environment where regulatory constraints often hamper the deployment of effective countermeasures near airports.

Airline security leaders expressed heightened concern regarding third-party vendors and cargo security, particularly how emerging technologies could be used to exploit gaps in traditional screening.

"In aviation, security is not static, it's a living system. As leaders in multimodal operations, we have a responsibility to constantly learn, adapt, and improve to stay ahead of an evolving threat environment," said Mohamad Mirghahari, Chief Security Officer Landline, IWC Contractor. "Integrating



irregular warfare into aviation security discussions adds critical value because threats don't distinguish between aircraft, airports, or ground transportation, and neither can our defenses. The challenge is that adversaries adapt at a pace that often outstrips regulation, funding, and training cycles, as we've seen in real time in places like Ukraine."

The session identified a critical need for ongoing education and a structured dialogue to bridge Department of War threat analysis with civilian aviation practices.

"It is critical for the aviation industry to continuously engage in these discussions because the threat environment is constantly evolving. We must remain proactive - learning, adapting, and improving our security posture to ensure operations remain secure, resilient, and safe," said Mirghahari.

Participants showed their appreciation for the discussion by saying "the instruction illuminated key gaps in understanding of the unmanned warfare threat, and how global trends in unmanned warfare present challenges to commercial aviation."

Mirghahari added that these conversations enable them to anticipate emerging risks, share best practices, and maintain the highest standards of aviation security in an increasingly complex global landscape.

Following the success of the meeting, commercial airline security leaders provided "explicitly positive" feedback, calling the IW-informed threat framing "extremely valuable."

"Including irregular warfare in aviation security planning is essential because modern threats extend beyond conventional aviation risks," said Mirghahari. "Whether involving aircraft, airports, or ground transportation, our operations must adapt not only to changes in technology and travel patterns, but also to non-traditional and asymmetric threats. Irregular warfare introduces tactics that exploit gaps across domains, making it vital that aviation security frameworks account for these evolving methods to remain effective and relevant."

The discussion reinforced the relevance of IWC expertise in addressing emerging homeland threats that fall below the threshold of traditional military conflict, while offering tangible benefits to private-sector partners responsible for national transportation systems.

For more news and information about the IWC follow us on: LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/irregularwarfarecenter/?viewAsMember=true>, X <https://x.com/IrregularWarCtr>. Check out our website <https://irregularwarfarecenter.org/news/>

Director's Corner

Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director



Director's Corner: Beyond the Conventional: IW in Homeland Defense

The security of our homeland is not a future challenge; it is a present-day imperative. Right now, our nation is under persistent attack from adversaries employing irregular warfare to exploit our seams, sow discord, and undermine our institutions. These threats operate below the threshold of traditional armed conflict, targeting our economy, infrastructure, and the very trust that binds our society. To ignore this reality is to cede the advantage to those who wish us harm.

In our complex and interconnected world, an effective homeland defense requires addressing the full spectrum of threats. We can no longer afford to focus solely on conventional dangers like intercontinental ballistic missiles while ignoring the clear and present danger of irregular threats, such as the People's Republic of China's domination of critical mineral supply chains and their systematic infiltration of our critical infrastructure. Security is no longer a binary choice between preparing for the conventional or the irregular; we must confront both simultaneously.

This new environment demands that we get comfortable with being uncomfortable. We must have the courage to challenge long-held assumptions and the institutional inertia that stifles innovation. The path to effective solutions is paved with experimentation, and must be willing to try new approaches, accept prudent risks, and "fail fast" to learn and adapt more quickly than our opponents. Success in this gray zone requires agility, creativity, and a relentless pursuit of new capabilities.



AI generated content.

Some of these discussions are already happening and should be encouraged. At the Joint Futures Forum in January, leaders from across the security space including the IWC, discussed a range of irregular threats that complicate our responses to conventional threats but these conversations are too few and are rarely empowered to do more than "admire the problem."

To champion this transformation, the Irregular Warfare Center serves as a dedicated partner in developing the tools for this fight. Our Congressional mandate and authorities explicitly call on us to bridge the Department with interagency, industry, academia, and civil society. Together, we are fostering a culture that rewards bold thinking and empowers our workforce to face the uncomfortable truths of modern warfare. In today's world, the security of our nation depends on this collective evolution.

IW Courses

The recent launch of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security's (CDHS) Learning and Resources page marks a significant advancement in the accessibility of specialized security education, specifically highlighting the growing demand for Irregular Warfare (IW) expertise. The collaboration between CDHS and the Irregular Warfare Center has successfully elevated the visibility of the IW self-study curriculum, with IW101 emerging as a frontrunner in engagement, boasting the highest number of active participants and ranking fourth in completions as of January 2026.

By integrating new features like global registration tracking, this partnership continues to refine the delivery of IW doctrine to a broader international audience, ensuring that critical insights into non-traditional threats remain at the forefront of professional development this year. To learn more follow the link: <https://www.chds.us/c/learning-research/>

Media Highlights

[U.S Southern Command Humanitarian Assistance Program, and Guatemala Partner to Provide Medical Care in Puerto San Jose](#)

By SSG Michael Talbert Joint Task Force-Bravo Public Affairs

[JIATF-401 Announces Kinetic Counter-Drone System; Enhancing Warfighter Lethality](#)

Defense Media Activity-Army Productions



Irregular Warfare Center

SPOTLIGHT

Amplify | Illuminate | Address

Vol. 5 Ed.2 | February 2026

Deter | Defend | Defeat

Addressing Readiness: How the MSIW Network is Enhancing Medical Preparedness and Resources

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



Photo by: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Zoe Morris

ARLINGTON, VA - In the complex landscape of modern conflict, where the lines between the frontline and safe zones have all but vanished, the traditional approach to military medicine is undergoing a radical

transformation. Leading this charge is the Medical Support to Irregular Warfare (MSIW) network, a specialized pillar of the Irregular Warfare Center's (IWC) broader set of Functional Area Networks (FANs). The MSIW FAN was developed in collaboration with the office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict (ASW SO/LIC). The MSIW FAN is more than just a directory of doctors, medics, and academics; it is a strategic force multiplier designed to ensure that when the environment is most hostile, the medical care is at its most sophisticated.

"The MSIW FAN is a specialized network that unites medical professionals dedicated to improve medical care in austere, contested, and denied environments," said Nathalie Lorentzen, IWC's Functional Area Network Program Manager.

Conventional medical logistics typically rely on established supply chains and "Golden Hour" evacuations, but irregular warfare often unfolds in austere, contested, and denied environments where those luxuries simply do not exist. The

MSIW network addresses these high-stakes gaps by uniting a global community of medical professionals who specialize in operating where the map ends. By fostering deep collaboration across the Department of War (DoW), interagency partners, and international allies, the networks foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving.

The network works in partnership with key medical stakeholders, practitioners, and thought leaders to serve as a primary brain trust for irregular challenges in medicine. It prioritizes expert collaboration to solve unique medical and logistical hurdles that exist at both the battlefield and industry wide level. This collaboration bridges the gap between military medicine, private sector innovation, and international health initiatives, creating a common network of professionals to innovate amid a rapidly changing threat landscape.

Lorentzen added that this collaboration significantly enhances medical support for IW by acting as a facilitator for the broader community. While many entities are driving these efforts within their own organizations, the IWC and its FANs provide a crucial, central platform. "Our role, which is consistent across all networks, is to use the FANs to amplify important work already being done; by bringing experts together, we help the community identify gaps, advance requirements, and share resources more effectively. This allows us to help with

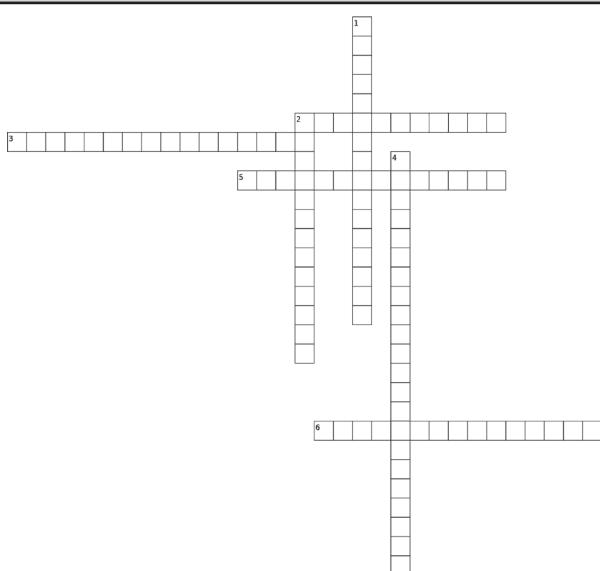
collective challenges."

Ultimately, this effort supports the broader goal of the functional area network to enable the DoW to better support the U.S. alongside partner and Allied warfighters through enhanced medical care in the face of adversarial IW. While lethality is often associated with advanced weaponry, the MSIW network proves it is inextricably linked to the confidence of the operator. As the landscape of warfare continues to shift, the MSIW remains a critical safeguard, ensuring that no matter how irregular the fight, the medical support remains world-class and ahead of emerging biological threats and trauma trends.

"Our goal is to continue to evolve the MSIW FAN from a collaborative network into a strategic enabler that proactively shapes the future of austere medical care," said Lorentzen. "We will achieve this by deepening collaboration across military, civilian, and academic partners and serving as a unified group focused on tackling and solving emerging challenges in support of resilience in the medical field."

For more news and information about the IWC follow us on the links below: LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/irregularwarfarecenter/?viewAsMember=true> X <https://x.com/IrregularWarCtr> Check out our website <https://irregularwarfarecenter.org/initiatives/iw-global-network/>.

Irregular Warfare Crossword



Across

2. A deliberate, malicious attempt by unauthorized individuals or groups to access, disrupt, destroy, or steal data from computer systems, networks, or digital devices.

3. The coordinated national effort to ensure a safe, secure, and resilient United States against threats like terrorism, cyber-attacks, and natural disasters.

5. A premeditated, politically or ideologically motivated attack against information systems, computer programs, and data, aimed at causing violence, fear, or significant disruption to critical infrastructure.

6. Is the protection of U.S. sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and critical defense infrastructure against external threats and aggression.

Down

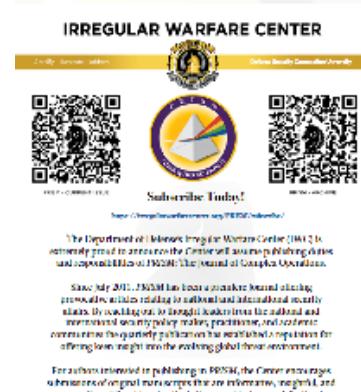
1. Preventing terrorist attacks within the U.S. and reducing vulnerability.

2. Protecting critical infrastructure from digital attacks.

4. The ability of computers and machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Current Initiatives, Upcoming Events & IW Educational Offerings

Don't forget to checkout The Department of War's Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) [PRISM: The Journal of Complex Operations](https://irregularwarfarecenter.org/initiatives/prism-the-journal-of-complex-operations/). Follow the link for the latest issue!



Spotlight Team

IWC Director Dr. Dennis Walters
IWC Deputy Director /Chief of Staff, Dr. Lori Leffler
IWC Contractor, Public Affairs Official/Editor Pedro A. Rodriguez

Contributors

IWC Contractor, Deputy Regional Advisor, INDOPACOM Dr. Joshua Haste

This Month in the History of Irregular Warfare

-February 14, 1779 - The Battle of Kettle Creek during the American Revolutionary War, patriot militia used irregular tactics to defeat a superior force of loyalists in Georgia. This victory disrupted British efforts to recruit local support, demonstrating how irregular "partisan" units could achieve strategic effects in the "Southern Campaign."

-February 1942 - Commando training begins: the legendary Commando training depot at Achinacarry in the Scottish highlands was established. The "Cradle of the Commandos" developed the rigorous, unconventional training methods that would eventually influence the selection and training of modern special operations forces (SOF) worldwide.

-February 1951 - The Birth of "irregular" terminology the U.S. Army published field manual (FM) 31-20: Operations Against Guerrilla Forces. This was a pivotal moment as it officially linked the term "irregular warfare (IW)" to guerrilla operations. In the early Cold War context, IW was largely defined as the "duplicious" methods used by communist-inspired insurgencies, setting the stage for decades of unconventional warfare doctrine.

-February 2022 - The invasion of Ukraine: the modern era of IW was redefined when Russia's conventional invasion was met with a sophisticated blend of Ukrainian partisan warfare, sabotage, and information operations. It highlighted how irregular methods can be integrated with conventional defense to stall a much larger adversary.

1. Counterterrorism, 2. Cyberattack/Cybersecurity, 3. Homeland Security, 4. Artificial Intelligence, 5. Cyber Terrorism, 6. Homeland Defense.

Connect With Us



Irregular Warfare Center (IWC)



Irregular Warfare Center (IWC)



@IrregularWarCtr



IWC Homepage

IWC Contact Info

For general inquiries, please contact us at dsca.iwc-info@mail.mil

For media-related inquiries, please contact us at dsca.iwc-media@mail.mil