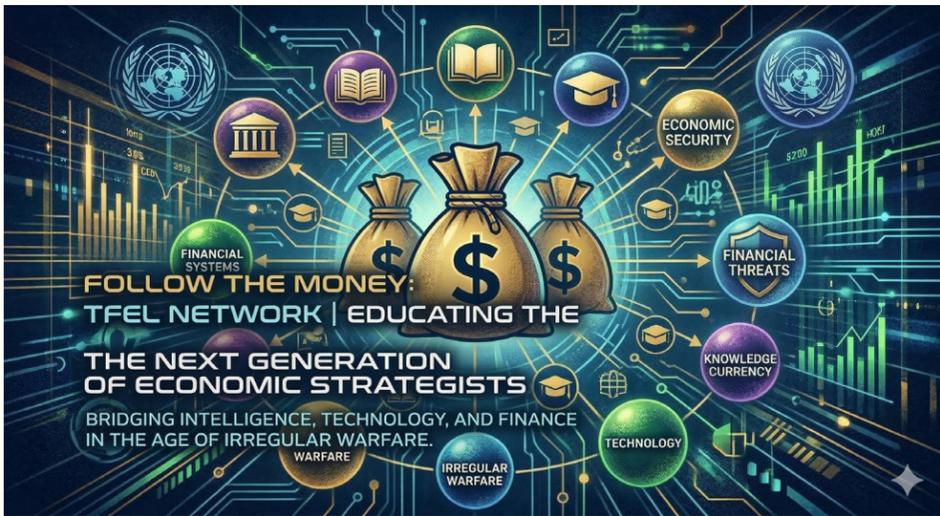




Money as a Mission: Inside the TFEL FAN

By: Pedro A. Rodriguez, IWC Public Affairs, CTR



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ARLINGTON, Va. - To understand modern conflict, one must look beyond traditional battlefields and into the complex world of global commerce. The Irregular Warfare Center is helping civilians and industry professionals alike do just that through its Threat Finance and Economic Levers (TFEL) Functional Area Network (FAN). This initiative is primarily an educational and collaborative network rather than an operational action group. Its mission is to bridge the gap between traditional financial intelligence and the unique, often hidden and illicit financial activities in the grey zone. By bringing together a wide swath of professionals, the TFEL FAN seeks to empower the U.S. government and its partners with the connections and knowledge necessary to navigate a world where financial tracks are increasingly difficult to follow.

“Like all IWC’s functional area networks, the TFEL FAN is aimed at a wide swath of professionals. Irregular warfare is a global challenge and IW threat actors are creative in obfuscating their financial tracks,” said Matthew Heidel, IWC Analysts for Europe/Africa and Functional Area Networks, CTR.

The core of this educational mission is fostering a deeper understanding of how “economic levers” function in a digital age. Through guest lectures, targeted panels, and input provided to global combatant commands, the network emphasizes that resiliency and preparation are the most vital keys to success.

“The TFEL FAN seeks to empower key participants and the U.S. government with the connections and knowledge to be successful while advancing U.S. interests. Past engagements have included guest lectures, providing input to a global combatant command on the role of counter threat finance, and targeted panels at IWC events. Additionally, IWC looks to leverage FAN member expertise to meet bespoke needs across the U.S. government alongside key partners or Allies,” said Heidel.

Rather than focusing on the total financial collapse of an adversary, the TFEL network defines a “win” through the lens of education and connectivity. Success means connecting the right individuals to thought-provoking ideas that allow them to better counter malign actors. It also means identifying “solution providers” who can meet specific needs across the U.S. government and among international Allies. By leveraging the expertise of members in fields like intelligence, emerging technology, and information operations, the network ensures that the right knowledge is available to advance the capacity of the United States and its partners.

“While the fundamentals in many ways remain the same, we are seeing growing complexity in the space,” added Heidel. “From digital currency to new vectors to attack or hijack the financial systems underpinning modern life, the options for IW threat actors have only increased. However, it is a double-edged sword, since many of these same options can be exploited to track or counter IW threat actors. As with many other aspects of IW, resiliency and preparation are key to success.”

Ultimately, the TFEL network is a multi-disciplinary community dedicated to understanding both friendly and adversarial financial networks. It provides a space for experts to explore the capabilities and vulnerabilities that contribute to the irregular warfare mission. By focusing on education and the exploitation of economic levers, the FAN helps its members stay ahead of the curve in a rapidly evolving global landscape. This collaborative environment ensures that the U.S. and its partners and Allies are not just reacting to financial threats but are also proactively prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

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

Director’s Corner



Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director



Director’s Corner: Doctrine, Dialogue, and the Path Forward

This month offered valuable opportunities to deepen partnerships and sharpen our collective understanding of irregular warfare’s role in strategic competition.

I had the privilege of joining an exceptional panel at the National Defense Industrial Association’s 36th annual Special Operations Symposium entitled “A New Vision of Irregular Warfare.” Alongside Dr. Richard Tilley, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict; LTG Laurence Ferguson, Commanding General of US Army Special Operations Command; and Shawn Chenoweth, Director of Cognitive Advantage at the National Security Council, we explored how doctrinal understanding of irregular warfare connects directly to burden-sharing in support of the National Defense Strategy.

The conversation reinforced a fundamental truth: irregular warfare isn’t an alternative to conventional capability—it’s a force multiplier that enables partners to shoulder more of the security burden in their own regions. When we help allies and partners build irregular warfare capacity, we’re not just addressing today’s threats; we’re creating sustainable security architectures that reduce long-term demand on U.S. forces.

Just as IW amplifies efforts with partner nations, it’s also an essential element of intra-departmental cooperation. At the IWC, we recognize the need for rapid, flat communications, and mutually supporting efforts in responding to the irregular threats of the day. To that end, we had the opportunity to support several key engagements furthering the Department’s IW objectives. In one of these, the IWC team helped tackle the wicked problem of sustainment in potential Taiwan contingencies. I believe the results of our collaboration will provide vital information to build solutions for this problem.

In the coming months, I look forward to supporting SOCNORTH efforts and participating in the Spring Security Cooperation Training and Education Working Group. These engagements keep the IWC connected to operational priorities and ensure our work remains relevant to the challenges facing the joint force.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention current events and how they relate to irregular warfare. To say there have been monumental changes in our security environment would be understating the obvious. Many, if not all of these changes could impact the United States and our key allies in irregular ways. Together with our growing functional networks, the IWC will continue to support the Department of War as well as our key allies in preparing for and countering irregular challenges at home and abroad.

Until next time,

DW

IW Courses

The recent launch of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security’s (CHDS) 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 CHDS 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

USSOUTHCOM Conducting Operations in Ecuador
by: USSOUTHCOM

China, Russia, Terrorist Networks Destabilizing Africa
by: David Vergun, DOD News



Irregular Warfare Center SPOTLIGHT

Amplify | Illuminate | Address

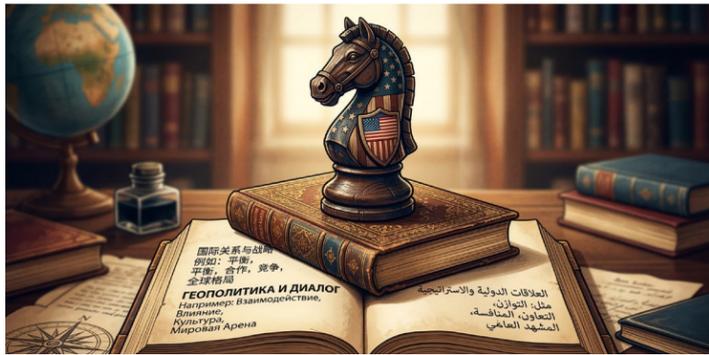
Vol. 5 Ed. 3 | March 2026

Deter | Defend | Defeat

Irregular Warfare Center Online Course Offerings and Educational Partnership with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security by: Dr. Jeffrey V. Gardner, PhD; IWC Chief of Curriculum and Senior Faculty

The Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) has developed online courses to provide flexible, self-paced learning for individuals seeking to enhance their understanding of irregular warfare (IW) concepts. Current courses include IW101: Irregular Warfare, IW110: IW Approaches to Homeland Security & Defense, and IW201, and just surpassed the 4,000 enrollments mark in March 2026. These high quality and engaging self-paced virtual courses address important cornerstone education about the principles and employment of indirect, asymmetric and non-attributable warfare that has become the predominant method nations and non-state actors employ when seeking to achieve their goals.

The IW101 course provides a foundational understanding of irregular warfare, its concepts, and the global actors involved (~90 minutes). Building on this, the IW110 course delves into the application of IW principles and approaches for homeland defense and security, a priority underscored by the 2026 National Defense Strategy (~3-4 hours). The IW201 course expands upon IW 101 to: 1) compare and contrast different IW definitions and conceptualizations, 2) discuss IW missions, operations and activities and 3) provides vignettes of IW in practice such as China's IW strategy in the South China Sea, the Russian IW campaign to seize Crimea in 2014 and Iranian use of proxies as an asymmetric strategy (~5 hours). Finally, the IWC also offers a short, online course covering the fundamentals of effective writing for a Department of War audience called IW105 (~60 minutes).



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Symbiotic strategic partnership

A strategic partnership between the Department of War's IWC and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) at the Naval Postgraduate School in 2025, has led to the successful relaunch of the IWC's series of online courses in Irregular Warfare on the CHDS self-study courses page including IW101, 110 and 201. This partnership has made critical IW education accessible to a wider audience to those in the Department of War, homeland security professionals, and foreign partners and students.

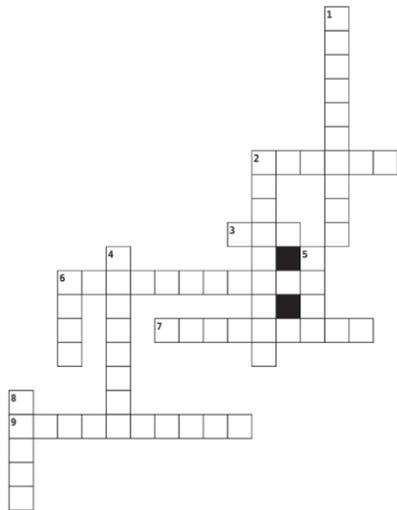
The collaboration between IWC and CHDS has successfully elevated the visibility of the IW self-study curriculum, with IW101 emerging as a frontrunner, boasting the highest number of active participants (of the 40 different online courses offered at CHDS). The partnership between organizations leverages the IWC's specialized knowledge in irregular warfare as well as CHDS's proven platform for delivering high-quality, non-credit homeland security education. The CHDS, located at the Naval

Postgraduate School, offers a variety of programs and resources to advance the study and practice of homeland defense and security. This collaboration between the IWC and CHDS represents a significant step forward in providing accessible and relevant education on the complexities of modern security challenges. To access these valuable courses, individuals can create an account on the CHDS self-study course platform at <https://www.chds.us/selfstudy/>

Future Courses:

The IWC will be launching a new course in Spring 2026 called IW301 that is for graduates of IW101 and 201 to apply that foundational knowledge and use it to develop integrated interagency IW campaign plans. The IWC is also working on additional new courses including IW120 on the Future of Conflict, IW and Homeland defense that will paint the picture of what we can expect 5-10 years from now. IW120 will address threats such as advanced cyberwarfare and cognitive warfare as well as autonomous attacks (across the air/land/sea/space domains) and all of these fueled by AI and Quantum computing. There are also plans to offer graduates of the IW101-201-301 series a follow on in-person three-day course on advanced integrated interagency IW campaign planning that we will call IW401, and offer the course as mobile training for requesting organizations.

Irregular Warfare Crossword



Across

- 2. Individuals or items used to achieve an objective, often in intelligence.
- 3. Acronym for "Foreign Internal Defense" helping a host nation's security.
- 6. Operations conducted in a way that keeps the activity itself a secret.
- 7. Irregular soldier who uses hit-and-run tactics against a larger force.
- 9. The act of undermining a government's authority from within.

Down

- 1. An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government.
- 2. The support element of a resistance that provides logistics and intel.
- 4. Intentional destruction of an enemy's infrastructure or equipment.
- 5. A small, autonomous unit within a clandestine organization or underground.
- 6. Common military shorthand for counterinsurgency operations.
- 8. Operations intended to influence the emotions or reasoning of a population.

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*. Follow the link for the latest issue!



This Month in the History of Irregular Warfare

- March 1, 1943: The Civil Affairs Division was established in the War Department. This was a critical step in the institutionalization of what we now recognize as the "stabilization" and "governance" pillars of Irregular Warfare.
- March 5, 1943: Navy LCDR Charles "Chick" Parsons landed by submarine in Mindanao to link up with Colonel Wendell Fertig, leader of one of the largest guerrilla units in the Philippines during WWII. This operation was vital for providing logistics and communications support to irregular forces behind Japanese lines.
- March 6, 2016: March marks significant milestones for the FARC in Colombia. Historically, this month has seen the movement's difficult transition from a feared Marxist guerrilla group to a participating political party, highlighting the "ballots over bullets" phase of an insurgency's lifecycle.
- March 19, 1962: The signing of the Évian Accords marked the end of a eight-year conflict characterized by urban guerrilla warfare and rural insurgencies. The Frente de Liberacion Nacional (FLN) which translates to National Liberation Front successfully used Maoist principles of integrating with the population to sustain a long-term resistance against French forces, eventually forcing a diplomatic resolution and Algerian independence.
- March 20, 2003: The start of the Iraq War. While the initial phase was conventional, it rapidly transitioned into one of the most significant modern counterinsurgency (COIN) challenges for the U.S., marked by improvised explosive device attacks, urban ambushes, and the rise of non-state actors.

Crossword answers: 1. Insurgency, 2. Assets, Auxiliary 3. FID, 4. Sabotage, 5. Cell, 6. Clandestine, Coin, 7. Guerrilla, 8. Psyop, 9. Subversion

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