



Irregular Warfare Center

Spotlight

Irregular Warfare Center Concludes 4th Annual Scholars Colloquium

Focused on Homeland Defense

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



WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Department of War (DoW) Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) concluded its fourth annual Scholars Colloquium at the National Defense University in Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., bringing together a select cohort of emerging scholars and defense practitioners to address irregular warfare’s growing impact on homeland defense.

The two-day event held Sept. 1–2, 2026, directly advanced the 2026 National Defense Strategy Line of Effort 1 by cultivating early-to-mid-career researchers and generating actionable concepts for national defense and the DoW. Selected participants delivered research findings across five critical threat domains including operations in the information environment, medical intelligence, logistics and emerging technology, threat finance, and strategy.

“During the planning phase of the colloquium, the Center puts out a global call for papers, and interested students submit their focused research for evaluation,” said IWC Functional Area Network (FAN) Program Manager Nathalie Lorentzen. “These submissions undergo a rigorous review process based on quality, policy and practitioner relevance, originality, and the capacity to introduce novel concepts. Out of numerous global submissions, only 10 papers are selected for the colloquium.”

The colloquium opened on Tuesday with a keynote address and open discussion led by IWC Director Dr. Dennis Walters. Following Dr. Walters’ keynote, presenters examined critical infrastructure and healthcare vulnerabilities, including assessments by TeNesha McGraw on foreign supply chain risks within domestic healthcare procurement, Reagin Jones on medical biological early warning systems, and U.S. Army Maj. Spencer Bates on systemic cyber and regulatory gaps across U.S. transit and maritime networks. A 12-member research team also evaluated the emerging asymmetric homeland strike threat posed by 3D-printed commercial off-the-shelf drones.

Jones, a Marster’s Candidate at Seton Hall University’s School of Diplomacy and International Relations, was impressed with the span and the quality of research presented by her peers. She also felt justified by standing in front of the senior scholars

and practitioners in attendance.

“I think, starting personally, this is so fulfilling. As a student, you put in way too many hours writing papers and doing the research. So, this helps show that not only is it justified, but also it’s worth something,” said Jones. “On a professional level, I’m able to expand my research and take it and refine it in a way that it’s even more relevant and hopefully now going forward, we had someone talk to us about how to get it published, the steps on doing that and realistic ways we can go about it.”

The second day honed in on societal resilience, non-kinetic targeting, and economic levers, featuring analyses by Tom Johansmeyer on disaster-related disinformation, Giovanni Capasso on psychological operations, Charles Sclater-Booth on fintech as modern statecraft, and Derrick Lagoy on Bayesian modeling of subnational foreign influence targeting. Scholars also evaluated European strategic sabotage precedents and neoclassical realist frameworks for whole-of-society defense.

Throughout the event, researchers worked directly with IWC leadership, including Functional Area Network (FAN) representatives, Contractors Dr. Sandor Fabian and Matthew Heidel, in small working groups to refine their findings into operationally relevant recommendations.

Strategic Initiatives Program Manager at New York City Emergency Management Mr. Luke Boyce underscored the importance of connecting research on irregular warfare with the challenges faced by state and local practitioners, particularly as the effects of foreign threats increasingly intersect with emergency management.

“Irregular warfare may originate far beyond a city’s borders, but its consequences can ultimately present themselves as local emergencies,” said Boyce. “A cyberattack, disinformation campaign, disruption to critical infrastructure, or other hostile action may be part of a much broader strategic campaign, but at the local level, we experience those actions through their effects on people, infrastructure, essential services, and the economy. For emergency managers, that means understanding irregular warfare not only as a national security challenge, but as something we need to consider as we prepare our communities for the emergencies of the future.”

Established by Congress under 10 U.S. Code § 345, the IWC serves as the Department’s central mechanism for developing irregular warfare concepts, doctrine, and partner integration. Through collaborative initiatives like the Functional Area Networks the IWC continues to expand the nation’s irregular warfare capacity to outpace asymmetric global threats.

Director’s Corner



Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director



From Abstract Complexity to Concrete Action

In the rapidly evolving landscape of modern conflict, securing our national interests requires more than just material capabilities; it demands cognitive agility. A core part of the Irregular Warfare Center’s (IWC) mission is helping the joint force and U.S. national security stakeholders develop abstract thinking about complex challenges in ways that make concrete policy actions apparent, actionable, and attainable.

This month, I want to highlight two distinct efforts that demonstrate how we are advancing this mission: cultivating the next generation of strategic thinkers and designing sophisticated exercises to prepare our current decisionmakers for multidimensional crises.

Cultivating the Next Generation: The 4th Annual Scholars’ Colloquium

On September 1-2, the IWC hosted our fourth annual Scholars’ Colloquium at Ft. McNair in Washington, D.C. Bringing together brilliant young minds from universities across the nation, this event provided a collaborative environment for junior scholars to present their work to an audience of seasoned academics and IW practitioners.

Together, these scholars worked to refine research projects in various stages of completion, shaping them into publication-ready articles with direct, practical relevance to today’s IW decisionmakers. Seeing this level of rigorous, abstract thinking applied to real-world problems gives me immense hope for the future, and it reinforces my pride in the IWC’s role in developing the next generation of IW scholars and practitioners.

Furthermore, this effort directly supports the National Security Strategy’s (NSS) emphasis on harnessing our nation’s unmatched intellectual and academic capital. By bridging the gap between academia and the national security apparatus, we are building the resilient intellectual foundation required to out-think and out-compete our strategic rivals.

Operationalizing Complexity: Layered Threats in the Indo-Pacific

Abstract thinking must ultimately translate into concrete operational decisions. To that end, the IWC is currently collaborating with other thought leaders in the IW space to develop a highly sophisticated tabletop exercise (TTX).

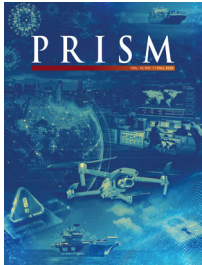
This TTX is designed to address over 70 distinct irregular challenges—all highly plausible in our current strategic environment—running concurrently with a kinetic contingency on Taiwan. Future conflicts will not afford us the luxury of addressing conventional and irregular threats in isolation. This exercise forces decisionmakers to grapple with the sheer complexity and multidimensionality of irregular threats that will almost certainly be layered over any kinetic action in the region.

By mapping out these overlapping variables, we are helping policymakers identify concrete, attainable actions amidst the chaos. This initiative aligns seamlessly with the National Defense Strategy’s (NDS) core concept of Integrated Deterrence, ensuring our leaders are prepared to campaign effectively against pacing threats across all domains and spectrums of conflict.

As we continue to navigate an era of persistent strategic competition, the IWC remains committed to providing the Joint Force with the intellectual tools and rigorous frameworks needed to turn complex challenges into decisive advantages.

-DW

PRISM



The latest issue (12.1, fall 2026) of PRISM: The Journal of Emerging Threats | Complex Statecraft is now available in the Irregular Warfare Center’s Publications Tab, under PRISM.

Media Highlights

Fighting in Yemen Intensifies, and Houthis Launch More Attacks on Saudi Arabia
by: Associated Press, Abdunnasser Alseddik and Samy Magdy, Sept. 14

Chinese Defence Forum Set to Open Amid Roiling Regional Tensions
by: Greg Torode and Mei Mei Chu



Irregular Warfare Center

SPOTLIGHT

Amplify | Illuminate | Address

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Deter | Defend | Defeat

IWC Engagements

Global Special Operations Forces Conference

IWC Subject Matter Expert, Contractor Mohammad Mirghahari attended the Global Special Operations Forces Foundation Symposium Pacific in Honolulu, engaging international special operations partners to advance the Irregular Warfare Center's (IWC) mission across the Indo-Pacific theater. Throughout the symposium, Mirghahari promoted core IWC offerings such as Resistance Courses, Ridge Healer, and online curricula to delegations from Sweden, Japan, the Philippines, and Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC). He guided interested foreign partners through the formal Request for Support process to secure training access. In addition, he had several senior-level engagements.

Arctic Lawfare, Counter Lawfare, and Strategic Competition Course (ALCLSC) – Lawfare Types Panel

IWC Deputy Regional Advisor for NORAD/NORTHCOM/Homeland Defense, Contractor Dr. Robert Redding presented established working definitions for gray-zone competition, hybrid warfare, and irregular warfare while positioning lawfare across each domain. Dr. Redding also moderated a discussion featuring Professor Orde Kittrie, Professor Jonathan G. Odom, and Cmdr. Kathryn A. Paradis. Together, the panelists analyzed broad lawfare taxonomies, economic and financial levers, maritime and environmental norm-shaping, and legal vulnerabilities surrounding defense industrial base supply chains. Dr. Redding concluded the event by outlining a campaign-focused framework to evaluate cumulative strategic effects.

National Defense University Alumni Continuing Education Seminar

Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) Pacific Command Deputy Regional Advisor, Contractor Dr. Josh Hastey, represented the IWC as part of an 18-member inter-institutional faculty delegation at the National Defense University (NDU) Alumni Continuing Education Seminar in Seoul, South Korea. Organized alongside United States Pacific Command and United States Forces Korea (USFK), the strategic forum convened approximately 100 international and U.S. alumni, predominantly partner-nation General and Flag Officers. Following opening remarks highlighted by public recognition of the IWC from NDU President U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Peter A. Garvin, Dr. Hastey delivered an elective course titled "Irregular Warfare in the South China Sea" to a capacity audience. Throughout the week, he facilitated seminar breakout working groups to prepare attendees for their final capstones. The engagement concluded with capstone read-outs, a keynote address from UNC/CFC/USFK Commander General Xavier Brunson, and an After-Action Review where senior leadership repeatedly acknowledged the IWC's faculty contributions from the podium.

Irregular Warfare Crossword Patriot Day Edition



Across

3. The ultimate offering of one's life in service to others.
4. The capital region targeted on September 11, 2001.
6. Nickname state moniker associated with New York and its resilient spirit.
9. Headquarters of the U.S. Department of War, struck by Flight 77.
10. High respect, privilege, and integrity shown to fallen heroes.

Down

1. Sacred site in Lower Manhattan, Shanksville, and the Pentagon dedicated to remembering those lost.
2. Core American value central to the name of the tower rebuilt at Ground Zero.
5. An act, statement, or light installation honoring the fallen.
7. Great courage and bravery shown by first responders in the line of duty.
8. The state of standing together as one nation in the face of tragedy.

Current Initiatives, Upcoming Events & IW Educational Offerings

***Oct. 7, 2026 1200pm - 1:00pm EDT - Irregular Warfare Conceptualization of South and Central America Virtual Lecture

***Don't miss the latest Tab D edition! This month's Tab D includes a look at the narrative effects of new income disparity in North Korea, under-reported incidents of resistance in Iran, and hypocritical corruption reform in China. To receive Tab D and inclusion in IWC's OIE communications send us an email here: dsca.iwc-fan@mail.mil

***The IWC will be launching the IWC Future Threats Certificate, an eight-course learning pathway consisting in the following e-Learning courses launching on the following dates: IW-121 (Oct. 26-30), IW 122 (Nov. 16-20), IW 123 (Nov. 23-27), IW 124 (Dec. 14-18), IW 125 (Jan. 18-22), IW 126 (Jan. 25-29) and IW 127 (March 1-5).

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, USPACOM Dr. Joshua Hastey

Crossword answers: 1. Memorial 2. Freedom 3. Sacrifice 4. DC 5. Tribute 6. Empire 7. Valor 8. Unity 9. Pentagon 10. Honor

This Month in the History of Irregular Warfare

September's historical milestones in irregular warfare reflect the impact of non-state asymmetric strikes, the institutionalization of specialized doctrine, and the persistent power of indigenous resistance movements against superior conventional adversaries.

-September 4, 1886 – Surrender of Geronimo & The Apache Campaigns: Geronimo's surrender in Skeleton Canyon marked the culmination of decades of asymmetric resistance against both Mexican and U.S. forces. Operating in small, highly mobile bands across punishing terrain, Apache war parties leveraged decentralized leadership, local intelligence, and ambush warfare classic hallmarks of irregular resistance.

-September 1, 1950 – Establishment of the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD): Brigadier General Robert A. McClure was named chief of the newly established PWD of the Army G-3, institutionalizing psychological and unconventional warfare capabilities during the Korean War that directly paved the way for modern Army Special Forces and Special Operations doctrine.

-September 11, 2001 – The 9/11 Attacks and the Strategic Asymmetric Shift: The coordinated attacks executed by al-Qaeda inflicted catastrophic strategic shock using low-tech civilian assets, fundamentally redefining modern global security and precipitating two decades of counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, and counterinsurgency campaigns worldwide.

-September 26, 2001 – CIA Jawbreaker Infiltrates Afghanistan: Just fifteen days after 9/11, the CIA's Northern Afghanistan Liaison Team (code-named "Jawbreaker") inserted covertly into the Panjshir Valley. Working "by, with, and through" the Northern Alliance, this mission laid the unconventional warfare groundwork for Army Special Forces A-Teams and the rapid collapse of the Taliban regime.

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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