



Irregular Warfare Center

Spotlight

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National Security Officials and Maritime Leaders Convene to Combat Irregular Warfare at the Maritime & Transportation

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



MIAMI — July 14, 2026 - National security and maritime leaders convened at Port Miami, Fla. on July 14-15 to discuss measures and strategies to counter irregular warfare threats targeting U.S. ports and shipping. Hosted by the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC), the workshop focused on identifying critical strategic gaps and building a cross-functional network between public and private sectors to counter and identify emerging threats like port sabotage, cyberattacks, and foreign exploitation of commercial logistics networks.

The conference sought to address vulnerabilities across U.S. ports, inland waterways, and maritime logistics networks. Organizers emphasized the urgent need for integrated solutions to protect the homeland from asymmetric tactics that blur the lines between commercial maritime activity and nation-state security threats.

Senior Advisor for Global Sustainment, Contested Logistics and Offensive Supply Chain Operations U.S. Army Maj. Gen Retired Edward Dorman III, IWC Contractor said that it takes a joint, interagency, multinational, and commercial effort to secure our ports and that the IWC has been given guidance through documents like the National Defense Strategy to deter the pacing threat, known as the People’s Republic of China, while increasing burden-sharing and partnerships with partners and allies.

“When you think about the maritime domain, and you’re asking about the infrastructure, it is predominantly privately owned, but there are strategic ports that are designated in the United States,” said Dorman.

Day one sessions delved into severe domestic maritime vulnerabilities, including insider threats within logistics companies, the convergence of maritime information technology (IT) and operational technology (IT/OT), and the rising risk of cyberattacks. Security experts highlighted specific tactics used by adversaries, such as Automatic Identification System (AIS) spoofing, Global Positioning System (GPS) manipulation, and hacking into critical port systems like cranes and automated cargo networks.

U.S. Navy Capt. Vincent D’Eusanio, Office of Strategic Sealift, U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration Liaison, said that there is a culture gap between the shipping industry and their local, federal law enforcement and defense agencies and that gap is the expectation of being a target.

“When you’re in the military and you see an adversary coming, you know you’re a target, you have a different posture, you set your security differently, your training is different,” said D’Eusanio

He also spoke about the awareness of civilian employees about the threats all around them. D’Eusanio stated that civilian workers go to a nine-to-five job thinking that they’re just going to operate a crane, drive the truck or pull the ship in and out. However, they are not aware of the possibilities of being targets.

“Some of the vulnerabilities, you have good people going to do good work, and they could be either threatened by something that they don’t normally expect to happen at work, or they could even be assisting with some of that stuff unknowingly,” said D’Eusanio.

Another discussion topic was the insider threat and human intelligence or HUMINT in maritime operations. Panelists from the FBI and Department of War agencies and commands spoke about the limitations of baseline credentialing systems like transportation worker identification credential cards, which only verify identity rather than actively monitoring insider threat risks. They emphasized the rising threat of non-traditional collectors, specifically from adversarial nations such as China, Russia, and Iran who exploit academic, business, and logistics networks to target and manipulate unwitting port personnel.

The discussion focused on how these threat actors co-opt civilian workers through financial stress, blackmail, or deceptively legitimate business ventures to steal sensitive technology and intellectual property. Ultimately, panelists advocated for a layered security model that incorporates role-based access, active behavioral monitoring, and stronger, trust-based collaboration with federal agencies like the FBI to identify these human vulnerabilities before they are exploited.

The remainder of the workshop centered on looking toward the future of maritime mobility and defense. Discussions focused on the deployment of uncrewed underwater and surface vehicles (UUVs/USVs), data defense strategies using advanced artificial intelligence and satellite imagery, and protecting physical vulnerabilities like undersea cables, pipelines, and bridge chokepoints.

In the Irregular and Hybrid Maritime Warfare: Implications for Special Operations panel, panelists discussed the U.S. special operations’ role in the littoral environment, maritime sabotage prevention, counter-UUV operations, and uncrewed maritime threats.

Michael Poppa from Atlas Motion Systems emphasized the importance of quick production to counter maritime threats and the challenges this can face when attempting to deploy assets.

“The ideal solution is clear: we need low-cost, mass-producible, and easily deployable systems capable of rapid target detection,” said Poppa. “However, the real challenge lies in execution. Navigating bureaucratic procurement cycles and getting regulatory bodies to deploy these assets into the correct Areas of Operations (AOs) especially given the complex geopolitical relationships within some of these AOs is a slow process.”

Through this conference the IWC was able to convene key stakeholders in the IW field and the maritime security domain and create a framework for ongoing cooperation to protect the homeland against maritime IW threats.

Director’s Corner



Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director



Director’s Corner: Beyond the Department: A True Whole-of-Government Approach to IW

Welcome to the July Director’s Corner. Recently, the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) concluded our annual planning process for Fiscal Year 2027. If there was one resounding theme that emerged from these intensive sessions, it was this: effectively competing in the modern irregular warfare (IW) environment demands expanding our cooperation far beyond the Department of War (DoW) to seamlessly integrate the broader interagency and civil society.

In June, I argued that the Department requires an empowered IW proponent capable of reaching across the interagency to synchronize our efforts. However, the insights from our planning sessions compel us to push that logic even further. Responding to irregular threats and conducting irregular campaigns is not just a military task; it is a holistic undertaking that requires coordination across the entire U.S. Government (USG) enterprise.

This whole-of-government imperative is not just a best practice; it is strictly essential to executing the four main priorities of the National Defense Strategy (NDS):

- Defending the Homeland: As the homeland becomes a contested IW environment, defending it requires the integration of homeland security, law enforcement, and civil society to protect critical infrastructure from cyber intrusions and economic coercion.
- Deterring Strategic Attacks: Deterrence below the threshold of armed conflict relies heavily on diplomatic pressure, informational statecraft, and economic levers wielded by the State, Treasury, and Commerce departments, not just military posture.
- Deterring Aggression and Prevailing in Conflict: Competing effectively globally necessitates synchronized interagency operations, intelligence sharing, and unified messaging to bolster allies and counter adversary malign influence.
- Building a Resilient Defense Ecosystem: We cannot build national resilience without robust, localized partnerships with the private sector, academia, and civil society to drive technological innovation and harden our societal vulnerabilities.

When our adversaries look at the United States, they do not see individual departments; they see target surface with myriad gaps and seams. Yet, we continue to organize our defense around institutional stovepipes. As long as our responses remain trapped within these boundaries, we cede the advantage.

Therefore, I ask you to consider a provocative possibility: To truly circumvent entrenched interdepartmental and interagency silos, might we need an overarching IW coordinating entity that sits outside the Department of War? A national-level interagency directorate or fusion center, perhaps situated within the Executive Office of the President or the National Security Council, could bridge the gaps between military, diplomatic, intelligence, and civil authorities.

The character of irregular warfare extends across all sectors of society. If we are to secure our strategic advantage, our organizational architecture must evolve to match it.

Just to remind everyone, our annual symposium is August 4-6. We’ll have a powerhouse lineup of speakers and industry leaders sharing their ideas and solutions to the irregular problems we are facing in the homeland defense.

-DW



Media Highlights

Zelenskyy accuses Russia of assisting Iran with satellite imagery of U.S. bases in Middle East
by: Mark Osborne, CBSNews.com

Kim Jong Un Is Upgrading His Spy Network
by: Dasl Yoon, Wall Street Journal Online



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Irregular Warfare Center Launches the PRISM Publications Program



The Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) is pleased to announce the launch of the PRISM publications program, unifying its editorial portfolio under a single, trusted brand. Going forward, the Center’s flagship journal, PRISM, will be joined by PRISM Insights and PRISM Perspectives, creating a cohesive family of publications dedicated to advancing thought and dialogue on irregular warfare. This initiative strengthens the Center’s publications portfolio by bringing all editorial products together under one recognizable identity while preserving the distinct purpose and voice of each publication.

The unified PRISM Publications Program reflects the IWC’s continued commitment to providing timely, relevant, and accessible analysis of the complex threats shaping today’s strategic environment. By aligning its publications under a single identity, the IWC enhances discoverability, reinforces brand recognition, and provides military professionals, policymakers, academics, and practitioners with a trusted source for scholarship and informed perspectives on irregular warfare.

Authors interested in contributing to PRISM, PRISM Insights, or PRISM Perspectives are encouraged to visit the Irregular Warfare Center website for submission guidance and publication information for each publication at the following link <https://irregularwarfarecenter.org/submissions/> or scan the QR code below.



Irregular Warfare Center to Pilot IW401, an Advanced Course in Integrated Interagency Campaign Design

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Tampa, Fla. (July 14, 2026) — The Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) has developed the in-person IW401 Integrated Interagency Irregular Warfare (IW) Campaign Design advanced course as a follow on to the online IW301 IW Campaign Planning course. IWC faculty will be conducting an IW401 pilot to be offered as a three-day resident course, at the Joint Special Operations University at MacDill Air Force Base from 18 to 20 August 2026. The course is open to military officers and government civilians who have completed IW301.

IW401 is a response to a lesson from the past three decades of operations made simple. The American instruments of national power sit in separate departments, each with its own authorities, culture, and tolerance for risk, often leading to failed campaigns. There are many reasons for unattained policy goals; this course will help planners learn to identify the correct problem to be solved and integrate the efforts of multiple agencies against the problem. The course places campaigning at its center and pairs it with two supporting disciplines. Design frames the right problem before anyone tries to solve it. Interagency cohesion establishes who owns that problem and how to work through them rather than around them.

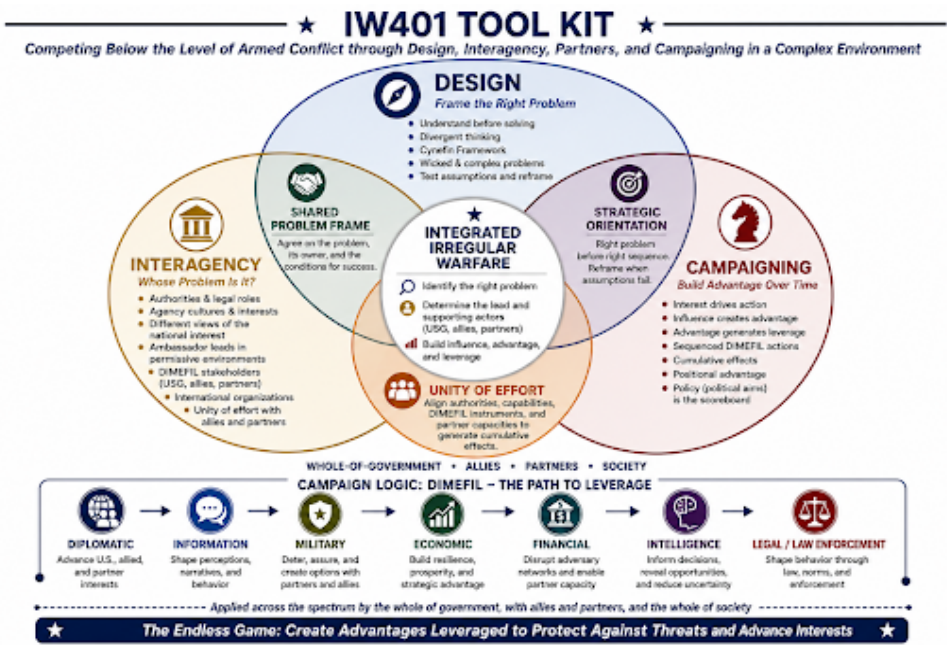


Figure 1. The IW401 Tool Kit: design, the interagency, and campaigning, and the advantage that emerges where they meet.

IWC Chief of Curriculum Dr. Jeff Gardner, Ph.D. said that the course is more practical than lecture based.

“Students will be applying their regional campaign plan developed in IW301, learn to read it critically, test whether it addresses the right problem, and then rebuild and defend it under interagency scrutiny,” Gardner said. “Roughly nine hours across the three days are devoted to that group work, which ends in an adjudicated review board where each team presents and defends its redesigned campaign against a structured challenge.”

The course also inverts a familiar pattern in which an irregular warfare effort becomes a military planning session with a few interagency participants attached. In IW401 the interagency leads and uniformed officers take part in a process they do not run, the arrangement that competition below the level of armed conflict usually demands.

Faculty for the pilot includes IWC contractors, Dr. John Pennell as interagency lead, with IW SMEs Jeremiah Monk teaching design, Monte Erfourth teaching campaigning, and Paul Burton directing the practical exercise.

Registration for the pilot is open through the IW401 tab of the IWC website at <https://irregularwarfarecenter.org/education/iw401/> Participation in IW401 requires prior completion of the online IW301.



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IWC Engagements

IWC Participates and Drives Alignment at the US-Only Invincible Sentry 27 Initial Planning Conference

IWC Contractor Analyst Ms. Anneliese Preske collaborated at the U.S-only Invincible Sentry 27 exercise planning conference in Tampa, Fla. Planners gathered to develop foundational concepts and storylines for an independent US Field Training Exercise (FTX), prioritizing the identification and alignment of training audiences to ensure all defined US objectives are met. Preske actively engaged across multiple focus areas throughout the event, contributing to operational concept development and storyline alignment in the operations group, threat scenario construction and intelligence integration in the intelligence group, and the drafting and synchronization of non-kinetic options in the non-kinetic effects group. While the exercise remains in its early phases of development, it is designated as a stand-alone US event, distinct from the Combined Invincible Sentry 27 exercise scheduled to take place in 2027.

IWC Medical SMEs Advance Irregular Warfare Training at Ridge Healer 26-03

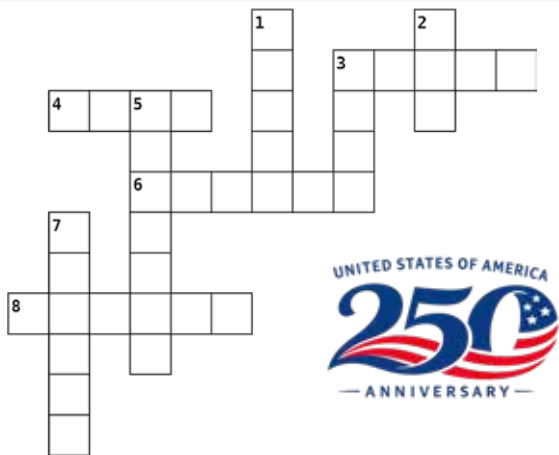
From June 22-30, 2026, Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) subject matter experts contractors John Osborn, MD, Jean-Paul Carcenac, Cally Wood, and Joe Saloma deployed to Camp Dawson, West Virginia, to support the Ridge Healer Irregular Warfare Exercise, while IWC Contractor Dr. Epstein provided remote classroom instruction via video teleconference.

The team delivered academic instruction, operational advisory support, and embedded mentorship to participating Special Operations and Conventional medical elements throughout a complex, evolving scenario. Marking a major advance in scope and realism over previous iterations, the exercise simulated a deteriorating operational environment transitioning from permissive to denied conditions, where conventional medical infrastructure was unavailable and care relied on a distributed, clandestine network managed by US SOF and non-SOF elements. Across all phases, from foundational academics and TTP refinement to recovery and after-action reviews, the IWC team supported continuous multi-day operations focusing on prolonged casualty care under austere conditions, resistance network integration, contested logistics, and in-flight damage control surgery. During the demanding field training exercise phase, a deliberate crawl-walk-run tempo tested participants with continuous patient care and physical environmental challenges to validate critical operational concepts.

IWC Partners with Philippines Public Safety College to Enhance Capabilities Against Hybrid and Asymmetric Threats

From July 13 to 15, 2026, Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) team members USPACOM Regional Advisor, Ctr. Josh Hastey, Elizabeth Turnage, USPACOM Analyst, Ctr., and IWC Chief of Operations Erik Herr executed a three-day Countering Asymmetric and Hybrid Threats (CHAT) course for the Philippines Public Safety College (PPSC). Aligned with the 2026 National Defense Strategy focus on ally burden-sharing, the course equipped future Philippine public safety administrators, policy analysts, and scholars with critical theoretical knowledge, practical tools, and ethical frameworks to counter irregular warfare (IW) and hybrid threats in the Indo-Pacific. Throughout the engagement, they met with PPSC leadership and key embassy officials, spurring discussions for the PPSC to establish a dedicated Philippines Irregular Warfare Center supported by a potential future IWC-guest lectures. The course culminated in practical syndicate briefings on economic, political, and maritime coercion presented to high-level panelists across the Philippine Department of National Defense, National Security Council, and Department of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, meetings with Embassy Manila and Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) personnel established pathways for future collaboration, including a requested IW101 course for embassy staff, further strengthening U.S.-Philippine strategic co-

Irregular Warfare Crossword 250th Birthday Edition



Across

3. Historic 1765 tax act that sparked colonial protest.
4. Iconic symbol of freedom that rang out in Philadelphia.
6. “Star-Spangled” symbol flown high.
8. Fifty components of the modern Republic.

Down

1. “In order to form a more perfect ____.”
2. Uncle who famously points to recruiting posters.
3. “____-Spangled Banner”
5. Ideal championed in the Declaration, along with Life and Pursuit of Happiness.
7. What 13 colonies became in 1776.

Current Initiatives, Upcoming Events & IW Educational Offerings

***August 19, 2026 @1200 EST Join IWC researchers Dr. Alicia Ellis and Sarah Shoer for a virtual lecture on their new article, “Agriculture as a Domain of Hybrid Warfare,” now published in the current issue of PRISM.

***September 28-29, 2026 - Save the Date! The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security in partnership with the Irregular Warfare Center, is excited to host our next Intelligence Support to Irregular Warfare Symposium. The series of Symposiums look at our existing capabilities within the Intelligence Community. For more details follow us on Linked In and X.

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Crossword answers: 1. Union 2. Sam 3. Stamp, Star 4. Bell 5. Liberty, 6. Banner 7. Nation 8. States

This Month in the History of Irregular Warfare

July has been a pivotal month for key developments in irregular warfare (IW), from classic partisan resistance and covert raid operations to formation operations and strategic counterinsurgencies.

-July 1775 - Continental Navy & Intelligence Beginnings (American Revolution)

*July 1: Massachusetts authorized its first naval forces, turning to armed privateers and irregular maritime operations to disrupt British supply chains.

*July 6: Continental forces intercepted an encoded letter from Dr. Benjamin Church, revealing early counterintelligence operations to root out British spies within the Sons of Liberty.

-July 8, 1943 - Jean Moulin, the unified leader of the French Resistance (National Council of the Resistance), died after being captured and tortured by the Gestapo. Sent by Charles de Gaulle to unify fractured underground networks, Moulin’s work remains a benchmark case study in operational security, network building, and insurgency coordination under enemy occupation.

-July 19, 1979 - The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) entered Managua after overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship. The victory laid the groundwork for the 1980s Contra War, which became one of the defining Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and Unconventional Warfare (UW) proxy struggles of the Cold War.

-July 11, 1995- The capture of Srebrenica by Bosnian Serb forces marked a major turning point in the Balkan conflict. Beyond regular troop movements, the conflict demonstrated how paramilitary groups, psychological operations, and proxy militias operate in the gray zone prior to NATO’s intervention.

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