Irregular Warfare Center

Spotlight

Amplify | Illuminate | Address Vol. 5 Ed. 11 | November 2026 Deter | Defend | Defeat

A Shared Mission: Expanding the Reach of Irregular Warfare Education

Courtesy Story: Center for Homeland Defense & Security Public Affairs

Many of the threats facing the homeland today do not look like traditional threats. Through a partnership between the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) and the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC), homeland security professionals are gaining broader access to the education and expertise needed to understand and respond to those evolving challenges.

"This partnership works well because each organization brings something important to the table," said CHDS's Master's Program Instructor and Self-Study Program Lead Lauren Fernandez. "The Irregular Warfare Center brings deep subject-matter expertise, while CHDS can help make that expertise accessible to a broad community of homeland security and homeland defense practitioners."

Since October 2025, CHDS has added six irregular warfare (IW) courses to its self-study program, representing more than 72 hours of courseware and more than 1,700 enrollments. Participants represent more than 100 organizations, including international partners. Eighty-three percent of respondents rated the courses "Excellent," and 91 percent said they would recommend them.

The courses span basic and intermediate instruction on irregular warfare, strategic competition, IW approaches in homeland defense, and IW campaign planning. All courses align with the Joint Chiefs of Staff curriculum development guidance for IW.

The partnership began as IWC looked for ways to expand irregular warfare education beyond Department of War audiences. A growing national focus on homeland defense prompted the center to develop IW-110: IW Approaches for Homeland Security and Defense, a course examining hybrid threats, interagency collaboration, and ways to counter threat networks.

"Irregular warfare is directly relevant to homeland defense because many of the threats we face do not fit neatly into traditional definitions of conflict," Fernandez said. "State and non-state actors can use information, economic pressure, proxies, and networks to create vulnerabilities at home."

But reaching the people confronting those challenges required a different approach.

"We wanted to reach people that were not in the Department of War," said Dr. Jeffrey Gardner, IWC Chief of Curriculum. "There are 40 different federal agencies that touch on homeland security and homeland defense, Department of War is only one of them, and 85 percent of our critical infrastructure is with state and local officials. So how do we reach them?"

When IW-110 launched through CHDS self-study in October 2025, it immediately expanded IWC's reach. Because registration does not require a federal government common access card, practitioners outside traditional defense channels could access the material. CHDS also provided the infrastructure behind the courses, including hosting, technical support, assessments, participant feedback and completion certificates.

The partnership is also shaping how the material is delivered.

For IW-301, CHDS enhanced its self-study platform so participants can complete practical exercises and compare their work with exemplar scenarios illustrating existing IW challenges in homeland defense and multiple combatant command areas of responsibility. This pioneered an approach to take learning that is normally only done in-person and adapt it to an online format.

CHDS developed a customized dashboard showing IWC course enrollments and feedback, giving faculty insight into how the courses are being used and where they can be refined.

"We are not simply hosting the courses," Fernandez said. "We expand access to important material, they gain information that can help them refine it, and the participants ultimately benefit."

Many participants use the courses for agency training, share lessons with colleagues, and apply what they learn to challenges facing their own communities. Roughly one-third of those who completed an irregular warfare course also completed another CHDS self-study course.

"The real value comes when they take what they have learned back to their organizations, share it with colleagues, and use it to ask better questions about the threats and vulnerabilities they are seeing," Fernandez said.

CHDS leaders and faculty recently participated in IWC's annual Irregular Warfare Symposium, creating new opportunities for professional networking, discussion and collaboration.

Looking ahead, the IWC is developing a modular future threats series and capstone focused on artificial intelligence, cyber operations, and other emerging challenges. Rather than a single course, the series will consist of standalone modules that allow participants to explore specific threat areas while building toward a comprehensive capstone exercise focused on future homeland security and defense challenges.

CHDS will support the program through its self-study platform. Building on innovations already implemented in courses such as IW-301, CHDS's flexibility and technical expertise will help IWC deliver a more interactive learning experience as the series expands.

"My hope is that self-study participants come away with a broader way of thinking about threats to the homeland," said Fernandez. "Irregular warfare gives them another lens for recognizing activities that may fall below the threshold of conventional conflict but can still have significant consequences for their agencies, communities, and the country."

Director's Corner



Dr. Dennis Walters, IWC Director

Welcome to the November edition of the Director's Corner. As we move deeper into the fall, the Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) continues to translate complex strategic concepts into actionable readiness and robust educational partnerships. This month, I want to highlight our recent participation in a critical interagency exercise and our expanding collaboration with the National Defense University's College of International SecurityAffairs (CISA).

Anticipating Threats and Building Resilience

We participated in the Inverted Rook tabletop exercise in order to give us a foundation to provide policy makers a range of responses to the complex irregular threats facing the nation. Our intent is to spend more time in this intellectual space in order to stay ahead of these asymmetric challenges. The National Defense Strategy identifies defending the homeland and deterring strategic attacks as our absolute foremost priorities. By rigorously analyzing how adversaries might layer non-kinetic and irregular tactics within our borders to disrupt our power projection during a crisis, the IWC is helping the Department operationalize the concept of Integrated Deterrence. Identifying these vulnerabilities in a simulated environment allows us to proactively develop the concrete policy frameworks and strategic options necessary to ensure homeland resilience.

As we continue to improve our understanding of future threats, our need for a robust, global irregular warfare network will increase, and we will address that by continuing our collaboration with CISA.

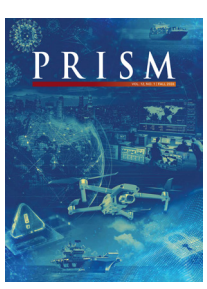
Fostering International Academic Collaboration

Our commitment to preparing the joint force extends to how we educate and integrate with our global allies and partners. I am pleased to announce a new Fiscal Year 2027 initiative that builds on our ongoing and highly productive partnership with the CISA.

The IWC will work alongside CISA to bring a cohort of international students to conduct dedicated irregular warfare research directly aligned with Departmental priorities. This initiative provides a dual benefit, it generates valuable research on critical IW topics while serving as a strategic investment in interoperability. We look forward to building long-term, enduring relationships with these future international leaders and continuing our successful, long-standing collaboration with CISA.

Securing the homeland and deterring adversaries has never been a more complex task; our commitment to global networks and partner education will leave the force and partner nations better equipped to address these wicked problems than ever before. Thank you for your continued support as we work to secure the homeland and build vital global partnerships.

-DW



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 Highligts

Thousands demonstrate in Haiti's capital to praise Bukele and Salvadoran troops fighting gangs
by: The Associated Press

U.S.-Russia Nuclear Rivalry Expands to Include Beijing
by: Josh Chin and Niharika Mandhana

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IWC Engagements

IWC Discusses Arctic Deterrence and Gray-Zone Competition at Anchorage Security Dialogue

From Oct. 26-31, 2026, Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) Deputy Regional Advisor for NORAD/NORTHCOM/ Homeland Defense Robert Redding traveled to Anchorage, Alaska, to attend the Anchorage Security and Defense Dialogue, hosted by the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies. The conference convened 400 U.S. and allied military leaders, government officials, researchers, Indigenous representatives and industry stakeholders from nine allied nations under the theme "Peace Through Strength: Deterrence in the Circumpolar North." During the three-day program, Redding served as a panelist on gray-zone competition, addressing irregular warfare campaign recognition, jurisdictional seams and operational options for U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command partners. Discussions across the forum highlighted Russian and Chinese dual-use activities, undersea infrastructure vulnerabilities, extreme environmental constraints and the critical role of Alaska Native communities and dual-use infrastructure in homeland resilience.

IWC Examines Homeland Resilience and Infrastructure Defense at Inverted Rook 2026

Nov. 3-5, 2026, Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) Deputy Director Dr. Lori Leffler and Senior Advisor Adam Silvers, retired U.S. Army Brig. Gen. (contractor) participated in Inverted Rook 2026, a tabletop exercise hosted by the RAND Corporation in Bethesda, Md. Building on previous RAND research regarding coordinated attacks on U.S. critical infrastructure during overseas military contingencies, the exercise addressed preparedness gaps, competing domestic and military resource demands and fragmented interagency information sharing. To address identified vulnerabilities, the IWC recommended expanding Department of War cooperation efforts to state, local and private-sector infrastructure operators, establishing national processes to prioritize competing combatant command requirements and clarifying statutory authorities for defense support of civil authorities.

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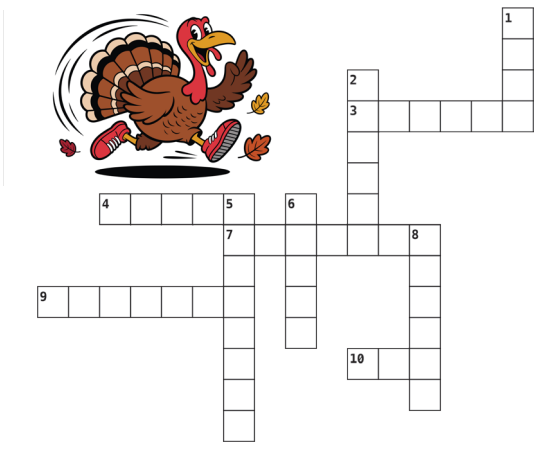
IWC Representatives Explore Contested Logistics at Annual NDTA/TRANSCOM Fall Meeting

From Oct. 26-29, 2026, Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) Contractors Deputy Regional Advisor for U.S. Central Command and U.S. Southern Command Tom Searle and Analyst Anneliese Preske traveled to Grapevine, Tx., to attend the annual National Defense Transportation Association (NDTA) and U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) Fall Meeting. The event drew more than 1,800 registrants, including representatives from the U.S., the Philippines and South Korea, for three days of symposium panels and a fourth day of organizational meetings. During the conference, IWC's Contractor Senior Advisor for Global Sustainment, Contested Logistics, and Offensive Supply Chain Operations Ed Dorman, retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen., moderated a discussion on an artificial intelligence simulation designed to anticipate and mitigate contested logistics challenges, while Searle led a panel examining lessons from U.S. Central Command and TRANSCOM logistics operations during the conflict with Iran and their implications for a potential conflict with China. Moving forward, the IWC plans to connect NDTA and TRANSCOM experts with its Contested Logistics Functional Area Network.

Irregular Warfare Crossword Thanksgiving Edition



Across

3. Season of Thanksgiving.
4. Large celebratory meal.
7. Gathering of autumn crops.
9. Orange squash for baking.
10. Classic baked dessert.

Down

1. Harvest grain side dish.
2. Thanksgiving Day procession.
5. Feeling of gratitude.
6. Savory dinner sauce.
8. Traditional main dish.

Crossword answers: 1. Corn, 2. Parade, 3. Autumn 4. Feast, 5. Thankful, 6. Gravy, 7. Harvest 8. Turkey, 9. Pumpkin, 10. Pie

Current Initiatives, Upcoming Events & IW Educational Offerings

***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 (Available), IW 122 (Available), 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).

*** CALL FOR PAPERS: The Irregular Warfare Center (IWC) is seeking unclassified papers on Operations in the Information Environment (OIE) in Support of Homeland Defense. Submissions should engage the critical operational, legal, and policy complexities surrounding U.S. Government messaging directed at domestic audiences; treating frameworks like the Smith-Mundt Act, Executive Order 12333, Posse Comitatus, and First Amendment principles not merely as compliance hurdles, but as fundamental design parameters. Find more information in our Linked In page.

Spotlight Team

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This Month in the History of Irregular Warfare

November's historical milestones in irregular warfare highlight how unconventional insurgency, strategic psychological operations, and high-risk special operations raids have repeatedly reshaped modern warfare and institutional doctrine.

- November 1, 1954 – Outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence: The National Liberation Front (FLN) launched coordinated guerrilla attacks across Algeria on Toussaint Rouge ("Red All Saints' Day"), igniting an eight-year revolutionary insurgency that became a foundational case study in modern urban terrorism, counterinsurgency (COIN) theory, and information warfare.

-November 4, 1979 – Seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran: Militant Iranian students stormed the U.S. Embassy and took 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. The crisis demonstrated the strategic leverage of state-sponsored irregular proxies and directly catalyzed the creation of modern U.S. joint special operations and hostage-rescue capabilities.

-November 8, 1950 – Activation of the 1st. Radio Broadcasting & Leaflet (RB&L) Group: Activated at Fort Riley, Kansas, and deployed to Tokyo during the Korean War, this unit formalized strategic psychological warfare operations for the Far East and United Nations Commands—laying key groundwork for modern Military Information Support Operations (MISO).

-November 7, 2004 – The Second Battle of Fallujah Begins (O eration Phantom Fury): U.S., Iraqi, and British forces launched a major urban assault to clear entrenched insurgents from Fallujah, Iraq. The battle remains a defining modern benchmark for high-intensity urban counterinsurgency and adapting conventional combined-arms tactics against asymmetric networks.

-November 20–21, 1970 – Operation Ivory Coast (The Son Tay Raid): Fifty-six U.S. Army Special Forces operators executed a daring night helicopter raid 23 miles west of Hanoi to rescue American POWs. Although the prisoners had been moved prior to the assault, the mission succeeded without a single U.S. fatality and set the gold standard for deep-penetration special operations planning and interagency intelligence integration.

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