



"WHAT IS IRREGULAR WARFARE TO YOU?"

This edition of Special Warfare Magazine focuses on Irregular Warfare and Large-Scale Combat Operations as part of the overall theme for 2024 How ARSOF Fights. Irregular Warfare, a new proponent under the SWCS footprint, is part of the SWCS 2030 Strategy initiative. We asked members from the academic and SOF communities what Irregular Warfare means to them, and this is what they said.

"If we accept 'warfare' as a set of methods employed during conflict to achieve desired outcomes, then 'regular warfare' is comprised of methods that actors employ with generally identifiable formations and weapons against other actors also with recognizable formations. There, one can usually distinguish the good guys from the bad guys. Irregular warfare is different. Actors employ methods to operate among populations to mask their activities, or actors use methods to identify and separate opponents from those populations. IW methods could be used in the physical, informational, or digital domains."

Col. Ian Rice, Retired
U.S. Army Special Forces

"Irregular Warfare is a strategic tool that presents unique options for policymakers to defend and advance national interests. It involves a combination of lethal and non-lethal actions to exert influence in a broader politico-military campaign. The specific objectives of irregular warfare are not strictly military but vary between classical military ones, gaining political influence, protecting economic interests, and neutralizing specific threats. Thus, irregular warfare is an instrument that policymakers can employ to achieve grand strategic objectives in competition, crisis, and conflict."

Lt. Col. Ben Gans, PhD
Visiting Faculty, The Netherlands
Defense Analysis Department, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School

"Irregular warfare deals more with the art of war than the science of it. Individuals can be educated on irregular warfare and they can take training courses in various important techniques, but mastery of it can only be achieved over time by interacting with partners, competitors, and enemies. Irregular warfare is a thinking-person's game first and foremost. It is the realm in which the weak can defeat the strong, and the moral dethrone the immoral."

Douglas A. Borer, PhD
Executive Director, Global ECCO Project
Associate Professor, Department of Defense Analysis,
U.S. Naval Postgraduate School

"Irregular warfare are activities short of conventional war that directly target a country's population with the goal of exploiting divisions within a population, undermining trust between the population and the government, and weakening a country's ability to project power internally and internationally. These activities are often difficult to detect and even more difficult to attribute to an actor, making a response difficult. Irregular warfare is the principal means of strategic competition today because it offsets U.S. conventional capabilities and exploits our conventional ways of preparing for and fighting wars."

Dr. Heather Gregg, PhD
Professor of Irregular Warfare and Hybrid Threats,
George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

"Irregular warfare is all about the indirect approach. Where I can apply the least amount of combat power to impose the damaging cost on my adversary? Oftentimes, it's not through the military lens, it's through another instrument of national power such as economic or information."

Maj. Kris Levy,
Commander Fox Company, 91st Civil Affairs Battalion
(Special Operations) (Airborne)

"To me, Irregular Warfare is the intersection of at least two out of the following: One, special or non-conventional units, working in; Two, non-kinetic domains (human, informational, financial, virtual, etc.), against; or three, asymmetric threats."

Michael Freeman,
Professor, Associate Chair for Instruction,
Defense Analysis Department, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School