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Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups 2018 Symposium Report

“Very informative; CIWAG left me thinking about the gaps our adversaries are exploiting and how we can address key problems facing our military today.”

“Dark Sciences was both fascinating and truly terrifying.”

“It’s amazing that CIWAG has been doing this for a decade, and they continue to get better each year.”

“I’m always impressed that CIWAG can attract a wide range of high-level keynote speakers and experts.”

The Center for Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups at the U.S. Naval War College presented its 10th annual symposium, **“Access and Influence,”** on June 26-27, 2018. Over 90 U.S. and international academics, practitioners, and operators from the U.S. Navy and other services attended to discuss the strategic and operational challenges associated with irregular warfare and armed groups. Attendees also included representatives from DHS, DIA, FBI, the intelligence community.

Keynote Addresses:

- ⇒ **ADM Tim Szymanski (Commander, Naval Special Warfare)**
- ⇒ **Honorable Joseph D. Kernan (Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence)**
- ⇒ **Mr. Andrew F. Knaggs (DASD for Irregular Warfare & Combating Terrorism)**

Highlighted Panels:

**Al-Qaeda & ISIS:
Dr. Michael W. S. Ryan & Mr. Jacob Zenn (Jamestown Foundation)**

Key Findings:

- ⇒ ISIS has lost its territorial caliphate in Syria and Iraq, but they are far from defeated. They have transitioned into a dispersed organization that leverages social media and local grievances for recruitment.
- ⇒ Al-Qaeda is stronger than ever. The group has patiently played the long game, strengthening its core and satellite groups while the U.S. and its allies are focused on defeating ISIS.
- ⇒ The fight against modern Islamic extremism is against a social system, not just a network, and requires the employment of complex kinetic and non-kinetic tactics to effectively combat the threat.

**Access & Influence: Southeast Asia:
Prof. Shyam Tekwani (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies)**

Key Findings:

- ⇒ Violent extremist organizations are not new to Southeast Asia, but this wave of religious extremism is a relatively new and particularly challenging phenomenon.
- ⇒ Rising intolerance, religious nationalism, and political instability are creating gaps for external non-state actors to exploit.
- ⇒ ISIS is seeking access and influence in the Indo-Pacific and the Rohingya of Myanmar may be the next targeted group for recruitment.

**Dark Sciences Part II:
Dr. Diane DeEuliis (National Defense University) & Dr. William So (FBI's Weapons of Mass
Destruction Directorate's Biological Countermeasures Unit)**

Key Findings:

- ⇒ Shifting to biologically based critical infrastructure could create new security vulnerabilities, which current biosecurity policies fall short of protecting. The threat space is widening due to technological advancements/convergences, and the rapid pace of biotechnology continues to outpace policy development.
- ⇒ Biological capabilities are now accessible to a wider range of actors. What was considered graduate level technologies only a few years ago are now practiced by DIYers at home, and global community labs afford private citizens the opportunity to conduct experiments, often without government oversight.
- ⇒ Novel threats in the form of bioweapons for tactical use and industry sabotage can be effective in causing 'mass disruption' rather than 'mass destruction,' and these forms of attacks make detection and attribution challenging.

Additional Panels Included:

- ⇒ **Access & Influence: Russia: Dr. David Stone (NWC)**
- ⇒ **Access & Influence: Libya: Amb. Jonathan Winer (Middle East Institute) & Dr. David Knoll (Center for Naval Analyses)**

Maritime Irregular Warfare & Gray Zone Workshop:

Following the symposium, CIWAG hosted a workshop bringing together experts from across the NWC, Navy, and academia to consider regional maritime irregular warfare and gray zone challenges in various geographical regions, and how to combat them.

Maritime Irregular Warfare Forces Chair:

Dr. Andrea J. Dew, CIWAG Co-Director, was awarded the inaugural Maritime Irregular Warfare Forces Chair at the symposium by President of the Naval War College, RADM Jeffrey Harley. The chair is funded through an endowment at the Naval War College Foundation (NWCF), and the anchor donor, Mr. George O'Connor of Chime Media, was also awarded a certificate of appreciation from the NWCF.

**Center on Irregular Warfare and
Armed Groups**

U.S. Naval War College

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The Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups (CIWAG) at the U.S. Naval War College was created in 2008 using grants from private philanthropic foundations to ensure that education and research on irregular warfare and armed groups remains timely and easily accessible to military officers and their interagency counterparts who devise strategies for dealing with armed groups around the world.



“Bringing Operators and Academics Together”

