

Irregular warfare (IW) is not new. The US military has IW experience dating back to our Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Before the birth of our Service, Airmen conducted IW, beginning with the Carpetbagger and Air Commando operations in World War II, soon followed by the use of Air Force advisors to the Greek government in the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and to the Philippine government in their suppression of the Hukbalahap rebellion (1946-1954). The Air Force gained more experience in IW during the Vietnam War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, our [defense strategic guidance](#) requires the military to maintain the capability to engage in IW.

The Air Force revised its IW doctrine document, AFDD 3-2, *Irregular Warfare*, in 2013. This revision expands the previous edition's focus on counterinsurgency to a more complete perspective encompassing stability operations, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, and unconventional warfare. ***AFDD 3-2 is based on the premise IW is both different from and complementary to traditional warfare, and that IW is not a lesser, included form of major combat operations.*** AFDD 3-2 replaces the old AFDD 3-24, *Irregular Warfare*. Key / New discussions within AFDD 3-2 are:

IW Definition (page 2)

- IW is “a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will.”

Principle IW Activities (page 5-8)

- Counterinsurgency (COIN). The “comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.”
- Counterterrorism (CT). “Actions taken directly against terrorist networks and indirectly to influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks.”
- Foreign Internal Defense (FID). The “participation by civilian and military agencies of government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security.”
- Stability operations. The “various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.”
- Unconventional warfare (UW). “Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.”

Other IW Activities (page 5)

- Other activities used to counter irregular threats include security force assistance, information operations, civil-military operations, support to law enforcement, intelligence, medical, and counterintelligence operations.

Airman’s Perspective of IW (page 9)

- These *overarching concepts* provide a foundation for employing Air Force capabilities in IW:
 - **Be prepared to simultaneously conduct irregular and traditional warfare.**
 - Though combat is often present in IW, traditional strategies that seek continuing advantage through combat alone are seldom appropriate or successful in IW.
 - In IW, winning the population’s support for the desired end state is paramount.
 - The adversary may be highly complex and adaptive.
 - The struggle for legitimacy and influence over a relevant population is the primary focus of operations, not the coercion of key political leaders or defeat of their military capability.
 - IW is intelligence-intensive.
 - IW is about “right-tech,” not about high- or low-tech.
 - Operational effectiveness can be very difficult to measure; thus, feedback through a strong operations assessment and lessons learned process is essential to strategic success.

IW Operating Environments (page 29)

- IW may occur in many different operational environments. Adversaries are likely to operate in and from states that can be characterized as failed, cooperative, or non-cooperative. The environment influences the types of actions to be taken as well as the ability to conduct these actions. (see Figure 3.1 to the right)

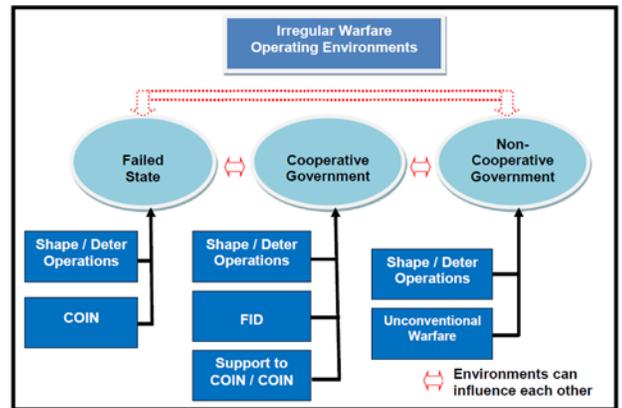
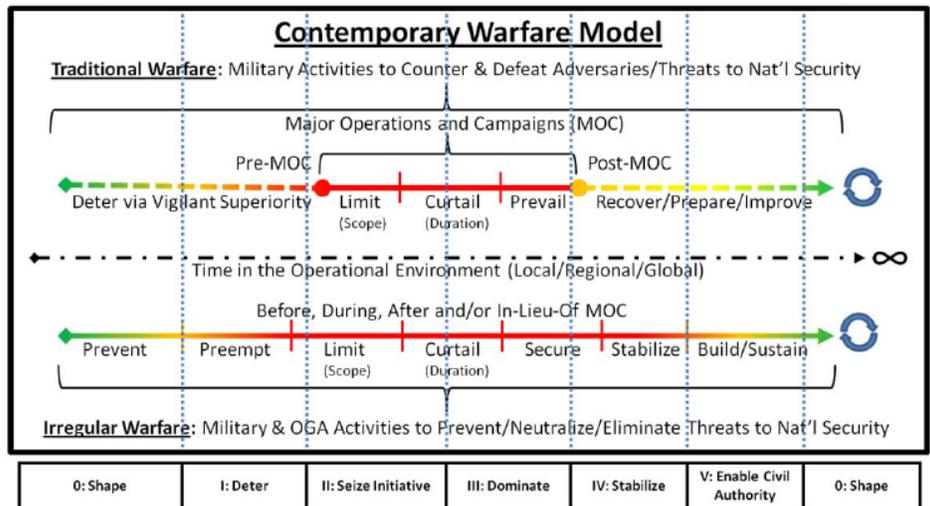


Figure 3.1. Irregular Warfare Operating Environments

USAF Special Operations School Contemporary Warfare Model (CWM) (page 47)

- Most military professionals lack a conceptual framework to blend IW and traditional warfare into a holistic campaign vision.
- The CWM is one intellectual model that bridges the gap in the context of phases of warfare. It addresses IW and traditional warfare within one conceptual model (see figure to the right).

Strategic Imperatives in Traditional/IW -&- Phases of War



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To view AFDD 3-2, *Irregular Warfare*, [click here](#).

