

Announcing the Winners of the IWI Summer 2025 Writing Contest

Description

In late June, IWI announced [our first writing contest](#) that focused on a tailored, real-world scenario. We were excited to follow through on a [key priority](#) for our editorial team and the impact we hoped it would have on the community of practitioners, academics, and policymakers that comprise IWI.

As our team and our judges reviewed the substantial number of thought-provoking essays that we received, we were thrilled with the overwhelming response, both in quantity and quality of the submissions to our contest. We are pleased to be publishing our top three articles this week and to be working with more authors from the IWI community to bring their ideas forward for publication. It is our hope to encourage more creativity, rigorous research, and policy-relevant insights from our community of interest, whether that is through another contest or calls for articles in the future.

Before our judges identified their top three essays, they deliberated over a wide variety of articles that addressed our writing prompt:

How can the United States and its partners use IW to strengthen security cooperation, build trust, and enhance resilience among Indo-Pacific nations — particularly those with limited conventional military capacity?

The ideas that emerged in response to this prompt were wide-ranging, encompassing all warfighting domains, the spectrum of conflict, and varied approaches across all corners of the Asia-Pacific region. The range and richness of our contest's entrants created multiple dilemmas for our judges in attempts to separate essays from the pack.

Our judges evaluated all articles based on their writing quality, the strength of argument, the originality, the analysis of Irregular Warfare, and the relevance to the Indo-Pacific. In the coming days, we will publish the top three articles that distinguished themselves against these criteria, and recognize the authors for their achievement and contribution to our community at IWI:

- **Third Place:** ["Austronesian Identity as Networked Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific,"](#) by Bailey Galicia.

- **Second Place:** [Applying the Alaska Territorial Guard Concept to Modern Indo-Pacific Irregular Warfare](#), by Patrick Latham.
- **First Place:** [Maximizing the Indigenous Approach: Using Secondment to Enable Our Partners and Constrain Our Adversaries](#), by Wyatt Thielen.

We are deeply appreciative for all who took part in the writing contest and hope our community enjoys the outputs of the contest as much as we have, both for our winners as well as other pieces that we hope to publish in due course. For those interested in a next contest with IWI, please stay tuned in 2026.

As always, we look forward to your engagement, feedback, and contributions to keeping warfare irregular.

Main Image generated by ChatGPT using DALL·E, OpenAI (Sept 18, 2025).

The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the official position of the Irregular Warfare Initiative, Princeton University's Empirical Studies of Conflict Project, the Modern War Institute at West Point, or the United States Government.

If you value reading the Irregular Warfare Initiative, please consider [supporting our work](#). And for the best gear, check out the [IWI store](#) for mugs, coasters, apparel, and other items.

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