

Irregular Warfare Initiative Writing Contest: “Irregular Allies: Strengthening Regional Partnerships through Unconventional Means”

Description

Note from the Editor: This is our first writing contest emphasizing short responses to a tailored, real-world scenario. We hope this challenge will pull forward research ideas and professional observations, and focus them into actionable recommendations for policymakers or practitioners to take to the next level. We are also pleased to announce a small award for the First-, Second-, and Third-place submissions as decided by our contest’s selection panel, and will publish these pieces in a short series later this year.

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? Recommendations should explore ways to employ training, intelligence sharing, resource protection, and irregular force development to create a more united regional network of like-minded partners across all domains.

Submissions should offer clear solutions or opportunities that apply practical, unconventional strategies. Some examples may include:

- **Establishing Civilian-Led Maritime Watch Programs:** Partnering with local fishing communities to report suspicious activity to extend maritime domain awareness in under-resourced coastal nations.
- **Developing Regional Human Intelligence Networks:** Using security cooperation programs to cultivate trusted relationships and information-sharing channels with irregular forces, law enforcement, and local officials in areas vulnerable to foreign influence or coercion.
- **Deploying Mobile Training Teams to Build Irregular Capacity:** Embedding small, culturally attuned teams to train partner forces.
- **Creating Combined Information Operations Cells:** Partnering with Indo-Pacific allies to co-develop and co-deliver counter-disinformation campaigns that reinforce shared values and expose malign influence.

Submission Guidelines:

Realism: Proposals should reflect current constraints and available resources. Avoid idealistic suggestions or calls for massive budget increases. Vague appeals for “more interagency cooperation” are unlikely to be persuasive. We’re looking for practical, cost-effective solutions.

Originality: All submissions must be original and unpublished. If your piece is adapted from a peer-reviewed article you authored, please disclose that in your submission.

Evidence-Based: Support your recommendations with data, case studies, or sound analysis. Use hyperlinks for citations rather than endnotes.

Clarity and Accessibility: Use clear, jargon-free language to ensure your ideas are accessible to a broad audience.

Length: Maximum 800 words (title, author bio, and by line do not count toward the over all total)

Deadline: August 1, 2025

Format: Submit as a Word document and ensure your work aligns with [Irregular Warfare Initiative’s publication guidelines](#). Any failure to meet these criteria could result in disqualification from the writing contest.

- Participants must submit a brief bio (3-4 sentences), which does not count towards the word count.

Publication: Selected submissions will be published on the Irregular Warfare Initiative website. There will be a monetary award announced for the winner and first two runners-up as decided by the contest’s review panel.

- Submissions are subject to IWI’s standard editorial process and may be revised from their original form prior to publication.

How to Submit: Submit your essay as a Word document via [this link](#)

We look forward to your insights.

Image Description and Credit: *U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Daniel Donlon, assistant intelligence officer for Marine Rotational Force-Southeast Asia, speaks to Philippine Marines during an intelligence subject matter expert exchange as part of Exercise Sama Sama 2024 at Fort Bonifacio, Manila, Philippines, Oct. 10, 2024. Sama Sama is a bilateral exercise hosted by the Philippines and the United*

States, with participants from Australia, Canada, France, and Japan, designed to promote regional security cooperation, maintain and strengthen maritime partnerships, and enhance maritime interoperability. [Courtesy of DVIDS.](#)

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