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Confronting Irregular Challenges

"The US Navy will meet irregular challenges through a flexible, agile and broad array of multi-mission capabilities."
– Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations

A variety of “irregular” global challenges confront the United States and its partners and friends including: terrorism; piracy; the smuggling of people, drugs and weapons; man-made and natural disasters; illegal exploitation of marine resources and environmental degradation in ungoverned global commons; proliferation of dangerous weapons; and regional instability and crisis.

Irregular challenges in a maritime environment differ markedly from irregular threats on land. They are complex and ambiguous, with the seas and littorals serving as highways for a broad spectrum of transnational military and non-military threats. Irregular warfare is part of the regular mission-set for the Navy.

The U.S. Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges

- The *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* framed the Navy’s vision for confronting irregular challenges. This vision emphasizes the importance of maritime contribution to addressing irregular challenges in a dynamic and evolving global security environment. The steps taken to implement the vision are key to ensuring the Navy remains ready to work with partners to stabilize, strengthen and secure regions at risk and, if needed, to dissuade, deter and defeat those who would undermine security, stability and prosperity.
- The ability to confront irregular challenges flows from the Navy’s regular engagement in traditional and non-traditional naval missions and tasks. By repeatedly deploying to regions of interest, naval forces develop valuable local knowledge and expertise. Established long-term relationships and partnerships give greater insights into how regional forces operate, how they train and how they are organized.

Operationalizing the Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges:

- Operationalizing this vision requires a Navy-wide approach, one that also reaches out to the joint services, the interagency, other nations, and non-governmental organizations.
- The Navy’s Vision includes three objectives: Reorient – advance the Navy’s doctrinal, strategic and operational approaches to addressing irregular challenges; Rebalance - organize, train and equip our Navy to confront irregular challenges by balancing shifts in our investments; Refine - emphasize interoperability and effectiveness for confronting irregular challenges across U.S. government, public, private and international partners.

Key Messages

- The Navy confronts irregular challenges globally through exercising freedom of navigation, ballistic missile defense, maritime interdiction, preventive security engagement, counter-drug, counter-piracy, and other operations in the littoral maritime domain to include projecting capacity ashore.
- The Navy’s agility, capability, and flexibility support goals of development, diplomacy, and defense. The ability to confront irregular challenges ensures the regular security of the global maritime commons.
- The Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges will guide efforts to prevent, limit, and interdict irregular threats and adversaries.

Facts & Figures

- The U.S. Navy Irregular Warfare Office (NIWO), located in the Navy Staff, is the CNO’s leading office to develop policy; influence investments; rapidly field capabilities to meet emerging warfighter needs; and assist in the development of strategies, policies, and operational concepts to confront irregular challenges.
- There are Expeditionary Training Teams and Global Fleet Stations in Africa, South America and the Pacific dedicated to security force training and assistance through employment of ships, aircraft and Sailors.
- The U.S. Navy’s *Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges*, signed in January 2010, can be viewed online at: <http://www.navy.mil/features/iwob.pdf>