



# Basic and Operational Doctrine for Airpower in Irregular Warfare

Robert M. Chavez

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The US Air Force, and the U.S. armed forces separate service air arms, have historically wrestled with how to apply air and space power to non-traditional forms of warfare, such as insurgency and counterinsurgency. While the airplane was used as early as 1916 in such a context in the Punitive Expedition against Francisco "Pancho" Villa, U.S. military doctrine has struggled to keep pace with the ever-evolving nature of warfare, especially with regard to air and space power's role within it. The U.S. joint community's latest development of the warfare spectrum includes insurgency and counterinsurgency under the construct of irregular warfare, delineating it from traditional war, which is characterized by conventional, state-on-state major combat operations. This monograph explores and evaluates the history of airpower doctrine in irregular warfare and assesses the current state of that doctrine, asking the question: what is the best synthesis of ideas for creating a basic and operational irregular warfare airpower doctrine? The study establishes a set of criteria for evaluating irregular warfare airpower doctrine based on analytical studies by several prominent and recent small war airpower researchers. Finally, the paper evaluates current and past irregular warfare airpower doctrine through this analytical lens, providing recommendations for the improvement of USAF and joint airpower in irregular warfare doctrine.



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