Grey Zone Conflicts: *Redefining Victory Without Conflict*

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Preamble

This second paper in CACI's irregular warfare (IW) series shifts from defining the environment that IW can occur in to describing how to operationalize campaigns within what many have come to call the "gray zone" — the competitive space where adversaries pursue strategic aims through primarily non-kinetic, coercive, persuasive, ambiguous, and/or incremental means while either avoiding conventional escalation, or as a supplement that supports conventional uses of power. Written from a practitioner's perspective, we examine how the Joint Force can compete and prevail in this domain, informing professional concept development across U.S. Combatant Commands, the Services, defense agencies, civilian agencies, and our allies and partners. Our purpose is not to offer capabilities, but rather to illuminate useful concepts and stimulate discussion and debate on how the U.S. should organize, authorize, integrate, and conduct IW campaigns in the gray zone.

This dialogue is urgent. U.S. adversaries no longer wait for open conflict to advance their interests. They employ an expanding set of integrated operations that merge information warfare, economic coercion, influence operations, legal manipulation, and proxy activity to reshape the strategic environment in ways that can confound conventional U.S. approaches to conflict and competition, all while remaining below the threshold of war. Said more simply, a growing list of U.S. competitors and adversaries are already demonstrating rapidly advancing skill and ability to "win without fighting" against America and our allies.

Operating in this ambiguous space carries both opportunity and risk. Missteps can escalate crises, misattribution can erode legitimacy, and partners may perceive U.S. actions as hesitant or heavy-handed. Policymakers and commanders alike must understand that gray zone campaigns demand operational skill, political legitimacy, proportionality, and reversibility. Persuading an ever-expanding group of U.S. government stakeholders is often as challenging as executing the campaign itself.

Success in this realm depends less on force and more on influence — the ability to shape perceptions, control tempo, and dictate relevance across a complex human terrain. In this environment, the terrain includes:

- Adversarial states, proxies, or ideological movements.

- The U.S. and its friends, partners, and allies across military, diplomatic, and informational spheres.

- Neutral populations and institutions whose loyalties shift with perception.

- Ambiguous and ungoverned spaces, emergent actors, or digital influencers operating in the margins.

Victory here is not achieved through destruction but through the denial or surpassing of adversarial influence, the establishment or strengthening of America's partnerships and alliances, and the non-kinetic and/or surreptitious reordering of the physical and virtual environments in America's favor. These outcomes are measured less by physical control than by relative influence — the degree to which key audiences, decision-makers, and partner networks align with U.S. objectives over those of our competitors. In this sense, the contest resembles a campaign for market share in the information and political domains. Success depends on maintaining durable preference and alignment within the populations and institutions that shape outcomes in our favor.

Introduction: Conflict without combat

The American military way of war has historically emphasized confrontation over persuasion — projecting power, achieving dominance, and seeking decisive engagements to secure strategic objectives. However, adversaries such as China, Russia, Iran, and various non-state actors, while certainly retaining their traditional reliance on kinetic power, have adopted non-kinetic approaches, operations, and campaigns with speed and breadth that, in too many cases, eclipse what the U.S. and our allies can do today. While retaining conventional military capabilities, these adversaries now employ integrated strategies and asymmetric tools to offset U.S. strengths and exploit seams across the competition continuum. They are shaping conditions now, establishing positional advantage long before conflict begins.

Today's competition unfolds through sustained campaigns of coercion, disruption, and influence below the threshold of open war. Whether through maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea, disinformation operations, or economic leverage, these actors manipulate perception, constrain choices, and erode U.S. credibility. Their decisive instrument is not firepower — it is influence.

These campaigns are continuous, multi-domain, and synchronized across diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of power. They do not culminate in a declared victory, but in altered norms, restricted access, and diminished legitimacy of U.S. and allied positions. This is a strategic maneuver under the cover of ambiguity — a tool used to shape the operating environment by manufacturing uncertainty about attribution, intent, facts, and thresholds to enable action, delay responses, and negate effects (e.g., using proxy actors to mask state involvement and stall proportional retaliation).

For the U.S., the challenge is no longer awareness; it is adaptation. The nation must campaign deliberately and persistently in the space between peace and war to shape, deter, and, when necessary, prevail. That requires moving beyond linear models of conflict toward integrated campaigning that synchronizes influence, capability, and resilience to sustain decision advantage.

If mobilization once defined the transition to war, perception now defines the contest for initiative. Failing to shape the narrative cedes strategic ground before the first shot is fired. The task ahead is clear: reclaim influence, integrate efforts across domains and instruments of power, and compete effectively in the cognitive and informational spaces that define modern warfare.

Success in this competitive space is not measured in destroyed targets or seized terrain, but in denied adversary influence, sustained alliances, and a global order aligned with U.S. values and interests.

Gray zone campaigning: The execution layer of IW

Actions below the threshold of armed conflict are not precursors to war — they represent a distinct form of strategic contest. IW operations achieve campaign objectives in the same domain where competition unfolds daily. While Western doctrine has long treated this environment as a gray area between peace and war, adversaries regard it as the primary battlespace where relevance is contested and legitimacy is decided.

Gray zone campaigns serve two functions. Some operate as standalone strategies, achieving policy objectives without military escalation. Others act as preparatory campaigns, shaping perceptions, fracturing alliances, and establishing positional advantage before hostilities begin. While some actors employ these tools opportunistically rather than through deliberate sequencing, the effect is the same: to impose costs, deny maneuver, and alter the strategic calculus of target nations — all while avoiding the triggers that would provoke a conventional response.

This is the true arena of IW: not as a supplement to traditional operations, but as the competition itself. Here, success depends on synchronization — political, informational, and psychological above all — integrated with economic, military, and other instruments of national power, rather than on mass or momentum.

Adversaries design gray zone campaigns to exploit ambiguity and bureaucratic hesitation. They manipulate perception, stall decision-making, and complicate escalation. Their campaigns blend synchronization and sequencing — aligning actions in time and effect to generate cumulative strategic advantage rather than a single decisive moment.

The U.S. must campaign with the same integration and tempo our competitors already demonstrate. Gray zone campaigning demands mastery of narrative, agility of action, and persistence of presence — winning the struggle that happens before war ever begins. Because these contests are positional and cumulative rather than decisive and episodic, they require a campaign logic built on initiative and placement. CACI's Positional Play Planning (PPP) framework provides that logic, treating competition as a deliberate effort to gain position, shape perception, and create dilemmas that constrain adversary choices long before conflict begins.

Positional Play Planning (PPP) for gray zone effects

Conventional campaigns are linear – shape, seize, dominate, and stabilize. Those phases map cleanly to physical objectives, terrain, forces, and infrastructure. Sub-threshold competition doesn't follow that logic. Its decisive points are cognitive, legal, and economic,

not geographic. In this space, "movement to contact" becomes the deliberate exposure of one's narrative to contest and reaction, and "response to contact" is the rapid synchronization of message, policy, and action to regain initiative and, ultimately, legitimacy. In the information environment, contact is measured in narrative collisions and perception shifts, not rounds fired. Success comes from positioning, not contact.

PPP is the campaign logic suited to this reality. PPP treats competition like a positional contest — a game of initiative and tempo rather than attrition. The objective is to arrange a durable advantage across multiple domains so an adversary's options narrow and their costs rise before kinetic confrontation becomes necessary.

PPP emphasizes three principles:

- Position Over Destruction: Secure cognitive and systemic footholds — narrative control, partner access, and economic ties — rather than defeating enemy forces outright.

- Tempo, Initiative, and Intentionality: Act early and deliberately to define terms, frame legitimacy, and create dilemmas for opponents. Understanding the opponent's system and approach ensures that speed serves a purpose, as opposed to metrics-driven motion that confuses activity with effect.

- Audience-centric Effects: Begin with audiences and outcomes — not orders of battle. Identify which actors must change behavior, how they perceive risk, and what mix of influence, incentives, and pressure will create that shift.

PPP produces three operational artifacts for every campaign:

- A narrative baseline: The story established before opponents move.

- An audience map: Key populations, decision nodes, and institutions whose perceptions shape outcomes.

- A positioning timeline: Synchronized and sequenced actions designed to entrench advantage while preserving deniability and reversibility.

These artifacts discipline planning conversations across interagency partners and allies, forcing planners to think in terms of leverage — legal, economic, and informational — rather than attrition. In PPP, a diplomatic initiative, targeted sanctions, and covert influence operation become mutually reinforcing positions on a single strategic board.

PPP doesn't reject force; it reframes it. Military posture and limited kinetic actions signal resolve and shape perceptions — but influence via Operations in the Information Environment (OIE) remains the main effort, framing the story surrounding kinetic action well before the event takes place. By doing so, the perceptions of the event match the intended outcome of the plan, creating advantage. The alternative is a passive approach — relying on assessment and hope rather than shaping the environment in advance. The PPP framework is akin to using artillery fires before advancing the forward line of troops, and then supporting fires as maneuver unfolds — setting conditions for success in both the cognitive and physical domains. In gray zone contests, these cognitive and informational axes determine outcomes long before the first engagement.

Gray zone success through multi-domain maneuver

If PPP supplies the logic, multi-domain maneuver supplies the method. Gray zone maneuver is the deliberate, sequenced/synchronized application of effects across cognitive, digital, legal, economic, and physical realms to shape decisions and produce a durable advantage.

This maneuver differs from conventional movement in two ways:

- It targets minds and systems rather than geography.

- It relies on distributed, deniable, and persistent effects rather than concentrated mass.

To operationalize maneuver in this non-kinetic domain, planners must integrate five critical aspects:

- Cognitive (information and narrative): Influence how populations, partners, and adversaries interpret events through PSYOP, strategic communication, and persistent narrative campaigns that preempt adversary framing.

- Cyber (digital ecosystems): Shape information flows — disrupt adversary propaganda, amplify partner narratives, and strengthen digital resilience.

- Legal (lawfare and norms): Employ legal instruments to delegitimize adversary actions and embed favorable norms within international and domestic frameworks.

- Economic (statecraft and supply chains): Use market access, investment, and trade policy to coerce, incentivize, or deny. Economic levers reshape elite incentives and constrain adversary options.

- Physical presence (partners and forces): Forward presence — special operations teams, advisors, and attaches — multiplies influence when combined with narrative and cyber effects. Physical proximity enables credibility and rapid signaling.

True multi-domain maneuver synchronizes these elements for a cumulative effect. Example: A targeted cyber operation suppresses an adversary propaganda outlet just as a partner government enacts legislation undercutting that narrative, while discreet U.S. advisors sustain local stability. The combined effect denies adversary legitimacy and strengthens partner resilience without open conflict. This type of cognitive maneuver and OIE in the gray zone require actions that are:

- Persistent: Influence compounds over time; episodic efforts yield limited return.

- Adaptive: Campaigns must evolve faster and with greater accuracy than adversaries can attribute or counter — disrupting their decision cycle and forcing a reactive posture.

- Preemptive: Act first to shape choices and impose political cost — use synchronized informational "preparatory fires" (narrative, cyber, legal, and economic) to set conditions and amplify effects before operations begin.

Operational agility and nimble authorities are essential. Without them, bureaucratic friction and legal uncertainty blunt maneuver. The U.S. must align authorities, posture, and capabilities to act at the speed of relevance.

Core capabilities for gray zone dominance

Prevailing in this irregular domain requires purpose-built capabilities that treat information and influence as central, not peripheral. They fall into three categories: operational influence, institutional integration, and human competence.

1. Operational influence — Integrated OIE as a strategic maneuver

In the gray zone, narrative dominance is an operational objective — not a public affairs campaign. OIE must function as a principal maneuver arm, fusing cognitive, technical, and human effects to shape outcomes as decisively as kinetic means. This architecture combines MISO/PSYOP messaging, cyber shaping, electronic warfare, and military deception to obscure intent, civil-military engagement to build legitimacy, and clandestine influence for persistent shaping. Together, these elements allow influence to serve as the main effort while fires and maneuver in the operational environment remain supporting activities.

Because influence operates across visible and invisible planes, planning must enable seamless transition between overt shaping and covert action. The covert lane — executed under protected authorities and on classified systems — must be legally grounded, operationally deniable, and synchronized with public messaging. Adversaries already blend covert influence with open narratives — the U.S. must match and outpace them, not react after the fact.

Clandestine influence deserves explicit definition and governance. At its foundation, clandestine influence is the discrete application of capabilities — often under sensitive or classified authorities — intended to shape local behavior and create observable effects consistent with strategic objectives. These effects can range from amplifying indigenous grievances or building access to fostering visible public actions that alter perception and opportunity within the operational environment. Because much of this work is sensitive by design, it depends on codified authorities, transparent oversight mechanisms, and matched resourcing to ensure legality, proportionality, and risk management.

Gray zone maneuver demands concrete and resourced action: secure, scalable clandestine and overt tools; clear and lawful authorities; resilient platforms; and trained operators able to act with discretion and built-in deniability where necessary. OIE must be integral to campaign design from inception — a lead planning line, not an annex.

Commercial support and using proxies come with their own set of risks and requirements. Leveraging commercial channels or third-party actors to extend influence can be effective, but it also introduces legal, ethical, and reputational risks — authority creep, exposure, and unintended consequences for local populations. Any policy that contemplates using non-governmental or commercial actors to advance influence must include strict vetting, contractual safeguards, and oversight to prevent exploitation, corruption, or blowback.

2. Institutional integration for gray zone operations

Effective gray zone maneuver depends on deliberate institutional integration, not ad-hoc coordination. These challenges cross organizational and classification boundaries; unresolved seams degrade narrative coherence and create exploitable vulnerabilities. Achieving sustained influence requires integration by design rather than temporary liaison, and will require:

- Posture and persistence: Pre-positioned joint-OIE and planning teams, shared data environments, and interoperable narrative and messaging constructs must be established. These form persistent connective tissue across departments and partners — maintaining rhythm and security while avoiding the friction of episodic liaison. Standing capabilities for rapid transition between overt and covert lanes and a resourced positioning timeline (synchronized and sequenced actions) should be included to entrench advantage while preserving deniability and reversibility.

- Legal, policy, and oversight agility: Frameworks must enable timely, lawful action. Modern competition requires clear authorities and flexible policy constructs that allow rapid execution within defined bounds. This includes authorities for clandestine influence, vetted use of commercial or third-party channels, and robust oversight mechanisms to manage legal, ethical, and reputational risk. Streamlined decision loops permit coordinated action without wholesale legal rewrite, preserving both agility and accountability.

- Repeatable, intentional planning frameworks: Institutionalized, repeatable templates that build on PPP and Capabilities, Access, Partnerships, Information, and Authorities (CAPIA) embed intentionality (acting early with system-specific design), integrate OIE as a lead planning line, and scale across persistent competition and crisis response. These templates should translate strategy into synchronized, auditable tasks that combine sequencing and synchronization to achieve positional advantage.

Standing joint teams, shared infrastructure, agile authorities, and standardized, intentional planning templates ensure interagency action that is rapid, lawful, and strategically coherent.

3. Human competence

Even the most advanced tools cannot guarantee success. Outcomes hinge on people — those able to read human terrain, anticipate behavior, and influence outcomes without provoking escalation. Some traits are innate; most can be developed through deliberate selection, education, and employment.

- Cognitive targeting and audience understanding: Practitioners must understand how audiences think, decide, and react. This requires integrating behavioral science, cultural insight, and data analytics to expose motivations, vulnerabilities, and leverage points. The aim is precision: shaping perceptions through narratives that align logic, identity, and emotion while remaining synchronized with broader OIE and PPP frameworks.

- Developing the gray zone cadre: The ideal planner and operator is a hybrid professional — intellectually agile, ethically grounded, and fluent across domains. This cadre should blend skills drawn from HUMINT, ARSOF disciplines (PSYOP, Special Forces, Civil Affairs), cyber operations, lawfare, and statecraft. Training must emphasize critical thinking, intentional planning, cross-domain integration, and legal literacy. Rotational assignments between operational units, interagency staffs, and partner institutions build a cohort able to design and execute complex, synchronized, and sequenced influence campaigns.

- Sustained partner engagement: Influence grows through trust and continuity, not episodic contact. Persistent engagement — across the U.S. government, allied and partner nations, industry, and local populations — builds shared understanding and amplifies legitimacy. Embedded advisors and enduring relationships reinforce U.S. credibility, expand access, and enable collective action in contested environments.

Ultimately, human competence is about quality over quantity — selecting and empowering the right people, equipping them properly, and trusting their judgment in the world's most complex cognitive battlespace, where quality is expressed in speed, accuracy, and disciplined initiative.

Developing institutional integration, operational influence, and human competence builds the foundation for success in gray zone competition. But execution alone is insufficient; strategy demands feedback and measurement. The next section addresses how to assess success in this domain.

Assessing success in the gray zone

Gray zone operations demand metrics that reflect strategic effect rather than conventional measures of performance. Traditional indicators — casualties inflicted, sorties flown, territory held — are poor proxies for campaigns fought through perception, legitimacy, and influence. Success here is often defined by what does not happen: crises avoided, adversary narratives blunted, or partners who remain aligned despite pressure.

Effective assessment must connect actions to outcomes, measuring progress, not activity.

Measures of performance (MOPs) track tempo, reach, and synchronization — how well tools and processes are employed:

- Penetration and persistence of influence content across target demographics and digital ecosystems.

- Frequency and consistency of partner engagements and coalition messaging.

- Execution rate of information, diplomatic, or cyber initiatives within planned timelines.

- Responsiveness — how quickly U.S. or partner elements act to exploit or counter adversary moves.

Measures of effectiveness – influence (MOEi) gauge the strength and trajectory of U.S. and partner influence relative to competitors. They answer the question, "Are we gaining or losing market share of perception?"

- Innovative mapping of audience belief systems, emotions, and perception across key populations and digital ecosystems.

- Integration of commercial data analytics, sentiment tools, and direct population engagement to track shifts in cognition and behavior.

- Continuous monitoring and analysis of trends in the information environment to detect inflection points and emerging opportunities.

MOEi measures relative advantage — our position in the contest for narrative dominance — well before outcomes reach binary form.

Measures of effectiveness (MOEs) evaluate whether those cumulative shifts achieve desired cognitive, behavioral, or strategic results:

- Observable changes in partner policies, voting behavior, or diplomatic posture.

- Reduced resonance or reach of adversary narratives within key audiences or institutions.

- Strengthened perceptions of legitimacy, trust, and resilience among partners and populations.

- Observable adversary hesitation, redirection, or withdrawal from contested objectives — whether in the information environment, operational environment, or both.

Ultimately, success in this environment cannot be captured by activity counts or operational outputs. The most meaningful indicators are subtle — stability maintained, escalation avoided, partnerships strengthened, and adversary influence eroded over time. Winning in this space means shaping the environment so that conflict never fully materializes — and when it does, it unfolds on terms favorable to the United States.

Considerations for institutionalizing gray zone advantage

If the United States is to sustain advantage in the gray zone, success will depend less on any single initiative and more on how institutions evolve to think, plan, and act in this environment. The preceding sections outlined what effective gray zone campaigning requires; what follows are issues meriting professional discussion as policymakers and practitioners consider how to institutionalize these capabilities as a durable element of national power.

1. Moving toward a national gray zone strategy

A recurring theme is the absence of an integrated framework aligning Defense, State, Treasury, the Intelligence Community, and partners around shared objectives. A coherent national strategy — one that treats influence as a strategic effect, not a supporting function — would provide unity of purpose and speed of action. The question is not whether such a strategy should exist, but how it can balance coherence with agility.

2. Repeatable and scalable planning frameworks

Operations often begin faster than institutions can organize a response. Frameworks rooted in PPP and IW principles can offer a repeatable structure for cross-domain campaign design — translating strategic objectives into synchronized, auditable actions without stifling flexibility.

3. Building and sustaining a gray zone cadre

The U.S. lacks a defined professional community for irregular campaigning. Cultivating a joint cadre fluent in influence, lawfare, cyber, and interagency integration is essential. Whether this expertise resides in specialized units or diffuses across the force remains a critical design question — but rotational assignments, credentialing, and education programs are key to maintaining agility and institutional memory.

4. Balancing investment between kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities

Resource allocation still heavily favors traditional deterrence tools. Yet competition increasingly turns on influence, access, and perception. A modest rebalance toward information operations, digital influence infrastructure, and economic statecraft would yield disproportionate returns in the gray zone — not as a budget issue, but as a matter of priority.

5. Legal and policy agility

Operational tempo often outpaces legal authority. The U.S. system rightly prizes oversight, but that structure can inhibit timely action. The challenge is preserving accountability while enabling lawful agility in environments where adversaries maneuver freely below the threshold of conflict.

6. Embedding influence in planning and assessment

Influence objectives are too often annexed to broader plans instead of embedded within them. Integrating perception effects and influence metrics from the outset ensures campaigns measure success by strategic outcomes, not activity levels.

Each of these areas builds on earlier themes: integration, agility, human competence, and measurable effect. Together, they suggest institutional advantage will emerge not from new tools alone but from evolving how the United States organizes and authorizes competition itself.

The urgency of adaptation

The United States no longer has the luxury of treating gray zone operations as peripheral. Adversaries have institutionalized them as their primary mode of competition — shaping the environment daily while Washington debates definitions and authorities.

China's Belt and Road Initiative is not merely infrastructure; it is a global influence architecture that fuses economic dependence, digital control, and intellectual property theft. Its extensive network of state-backed and quasi-commercial cyber actors relentlessly targets U.S. industry and critical infrastructure, extracting innovation that directly reinforces China's military and economic power.

Russia has weaponized integration across domains — combining private military forces, lawfare, disinformation, and economic coercion. It has also outpaced the United States in securing and controlling critical and rare minerals, converting resource leverage into geopolitical influence and industrial advantage. These actions have redrawn borders, reshaped energy markets, and eroded democratic resilience — without triggering NATO's Article 5.

Iran's use of proxies, information operations, and religious diplomacy has extended its reach far beyond its material power, creating regional influence networks that endure even under sustained sanctions and military pressure.

These actors exploit the seams between peace and war, overt and covert, civilian and military. The gap is not technological — it is institutional. The United States remains the world's most capable military power, yet in the gray zone, that advantage is dulled by slow adaptation, fragmented authorities, and risk-averse decision cycles.

Competing effectively requires reframing how the United States conceives, authorizes, and applies power in the spaces between wars. We must accelerate intellectually, legally, and operationally — or risk losing initiative not through defeat, but through default.

The imperative to evolve

The challenge now is not acknowledgment — it is adaptation. Gray zone competition is a contest of systems — how nations organize thought, authority, and influence. Adversaries have evolved their institutions to exploit ambiguity; the United States must evolve its own to preserve initiative. That evolution requires integrating influence as a core instrument of power, accelerating interagency coordination, and developing the human and conceptual agility to operate effectively in the space between peace and war.

Conclusion

Gray zone competition is not a prelude to conflict — it is the conflict. Adversaries exploit this space to redraw borders, manipulate institutions, and erode legitimacy while staying below the threshold of war. The United States can no longer afford to treat it as secondary to deterrence.

This paper outlined key elements for competing and prevailing in that environment:

- Understanding the Terrain: recognizing the gray zone as a cognitive and political battlespace defined by ambiguity, perception, and influence.

- Adopting Positional Play Planning (PPP): employing campaign logic that prioritizes initiative, strategic positioning, and narrative control.

- Executing Multi-Domain Maneuver: synchronizing effects across cognitive, cyber, economic, legal, and physical domains.

- Building Core Capabilities: institutionalizing influence as a central element of strategy.

- Measuring Outcomes: focusing on legitimacy, resilience, and adversary denial, not attrition.

- Reforming Institutions: adapting authorities, policies, and processes to act at the speed of relevance.

Victory in this space is not the absence of conflict — it is the presence of strategic control: partners who remain aligned, adversaries who hesitate, and norms that favor freedom over coercion. The task ahead is not simply to respond faster, but to think differently — to integrate influence, agility, and initiative into the fabric of national power.

About this series

The CACI Irregular Warfare Series is designed to advance professional dialogue on competition below armed conflict. Each paper reflects the perspective of practitioners with experience across Special Operations, Information Warfare, Intelligence, and Strategic Planning. The intent is to stimulate discussion and collaboration across the Defense and Intelligence communities — not to advocate programs or promote capabilities.

About the authors

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Lieutenant General Michael K. Nagata (Retired) served in the US Army for 38 years; 34 of which were in US Special Operations Forces. He works today as the Strategic Advisor and a Senior Vice President for CACI International.

His final government position was Director of Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counterterrorism Center until 2019. Previously, Lieutenant General Nagata served as the Commander, Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) in US Central Command, from June 2013 to October 2015.

A native of Virginia, and graduate of Georgia State University, Lieutenant General Nagata initially enlisted as an Army Private, and later received a commission from the Army's Officer Candidate School as an Infantry Officer in 1982. He initially served as a Platoon Leader in the 2d Infantry Division before volunteering for Army Special Forces in 1984.

During his Special operations career he served in various positions in both Army and Joint Special Operations. These included: Detachment Commander, Executive Officer, Battalion S-3, Battalion Executive Officer, and Group Operations Officer. Later, he served as the Commander of 1st BN, 1st Special Warfare Training Group, responsible for the Special Forces Qualification Course. In 1990, he volunteered and assessed for a Special Missions Unit (SMU), in which he served at various times as a Troop Commander, Operations Officer, Squadron Commander, and SMU Commander.

After graduating from the National War College, Lieutenant General Nagata served in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. He then served in the Intelligence Community as a Military Deputy for Counter Terrorism. As a general officer, he has served as the Deputy Chief, Office of the Defense Representative to Pakistan (ODRP), the Deputy Director for Special Operations and Counter Terrorism (J-37) on the Joint Staff, and Commander, SOCCENT, before his final assignment at NCTC.

Lieutenant General Nagata today resides in Arlington, Virginia with his wife Barbie, and their five adult children and two grandchildren are the lights of their lives.

Mark Haselton

Mark Haselton is a retired U.S. Army Special Forces officer with 23 years of service, including 18 years in Special Forces and a culminating assignment as Chief of Strategic Concepts for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. After six years in the intelligence community focused on unconventional warfare planning, he joined CACI in 2007 through its acquisition of The Wexford Group. He formerly led CACI's 1,100-person Special Operations and Asymmetric Solutions Group supporting USSOCOM missions globally. He now serves as a Subject Matter Expert and Solution Developer, contributing to CACI's ongoing research and assessments of irregular warfare threats to the United States.

Nick Wilcox

Nick Wilcox is a Senior PM at CACI and one of our lead practitioners supporting multiple geographic combatant commands, USD (I&S), the FBI, HSI, and Department of Commerce law enforcement elements, and coordinating across other government agencies and departments.

Nick started his career in the Department of Defense as an Analyst in the 82nd Airborne Division, and quickly advanced to serve as a Special Forces Engineer in both 5th Special Forces Group and 19th Special Forces Group. Nick has met with many challenges over his career both in contracting and in service, most notably in developing an HVI list partnered with the Iraqi Ground Force Command, supporting the establishment of multiple Task Force elements to include an Integrated Deterrence Task Force, TF 4025, the SREC, and the JICC. He has served as a Sensitive Activities Advisor with emphasis on great power, and as an analyst at SOJTF-A covering both the north and the west of Afghanistan. Most recently he has applied the knowledge and skills gained over the past two decades as a Program Manager providing commercial support to a range of SOF activities.

Nick continues to be a voice for application of Irregular Warfare across the whole of government by enabling planners and staffs alike as they apply multiple capabilities from the perspective of both an analyst and an operations professional.

A native of California's Central Valley agricultural center, Nick has completed a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, a Master of Business Administration, and an Executive Juris Doctorate along with several certifications including Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, Advance Scrum Master, Lean Portfolio Manager, and the Project Management Professional Certification.