

Major General Lewis G. Irwin, USA (Ret)

*34th Commandant, Joint Forces Staff College
National Defense University*



MG Lew Irwin relinquished command of the Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC) on August 3, 2020 and retired from active service in November. As a component of the National Defense University (NDU), JFSC consists of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School (JAWS); the Joint and Combined Warfighting School (JCWS); and the Joint Command, Control & Information Operations School (JC2IOS). These schools develop joint warfighters and other national security leaders to plan and execute operational-level military operations in a joint, multinational, and interagency environment, while instilling in the students a primary

commitment to joint, multinational, and interagency teamwork, attitudes, and perspectives.

Early in 2019, MG Irwin also assumed a “dual hat” as the inaugural Director of the newly established Joint Force Development and Design Center (JFDDC), in Suffolk, Virginia. With a primary goal of forging a collaborative partnership between DoD’s intellectual centers and a strengthened Joint Force development enterprise, this Center is comprised of the Joint Staff J-7’s Futures and Concepts Division, Joint Wargaming and Experimentation Division, Joint Training Division, and Joint Education and Doctrine section. MG Irwin relinquished these duties to the permanent Director in December 2019.

A native of Claysville, Pennsylvania, MG Irwin is a 1986 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and he holds a doctorate in political science from Yale University as well as a master’s in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. In his civilian career, he is a professor of public policy and government at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He is the author of four books on American politics and policy, as well as various articles on national security and American politics. One book analyzes the NATO mission in Afghanistan and the U.S. government’s strategic and interagency challenges there, while his current research interests have him examining the increasingly polarized nature of American society and politics, and the implications of those divisions for the future.

During more than 34 years of service in the Army and Joint assignments, MG Irwin served overseas in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan, in addition to a variety of stateside locations. His active duty service included tours in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault); service with the 3rd Armored Division during Operation “Desert Storm”; Sapper company command in the 1st Armored Division in Germany; faculty service in West Point’s Department of Social Sciences; and joint duty with the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, while working with the Afghan National Police and NATO’s international partners. Other brief overseas missions included conducting research for the Center for Army Lessons Learned in Bosnia and gathering “lessons learned” in Iraq for 1st Army. He also served as an Adjunct Professor for Research at the U.S. Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute and on the Secretary of Defense’s Reserve Forces Policy Board.

Other command assignments included the 2nd Battalion, 312th Regiment; the 301st Regional Support Group; the 926th Engineer Brigade; and the 416th Theater Engineer Command, comprised of more than 12,500 Soldiers assigned to 175 units across 26 western states. He also served as the officer-in-charge of a Joint Deployable Team in the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC) in Norfolk, Virginia.

MG Irwin’s military awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (w/OLC), Bronze Star Medal (w/OLC), and various other awards. He is Airborne, Air Assault, Sapper, and Jungle Warfare qualified, and holds the Army’s “3H” Joint Planner designation.

Lew and his wife Marcia have been married for over 32 years and have three adult children. Two of their children currently serve in the U.S. Army, and the third is a teacher and coach at Fort Belvoir.