

By Joe Byerly

Much like many of the biggest comedians today can trace their beginnings back to the same comedy club, there are countless national security writers and senior military leaders who can trace their intellectual roots back to [Small Wars Journal](#). The Platform founded by retired Marine Corps Officer Dave Dillege has served for over 15 years as place where professionals could argue the merits of tactics, leadership styles, or key strategic issues.

Dave gave me the opportunity to share my early writings on his site in 2013, always encouraging me to keep writing and promoting professional discourse.

In 2014, I asked Dave to share his story for a blog over at the Defense Entrepreneurs

Forum. The blog is no longer active, but I kept the original document.

[After hearing about his recent passing](#), I wanted to share his thoughts with you as an example of how a single person can shape an entire generation of military leaders.

Origins of Small Wars Journal

By: Dave P. Dillege

In the mid and late '90s, I was working urban operations issues to include supporting concept development, experimentation, and development of tactics, techniques and procedures for the Marine Corps.

Most of what the Marine Corps required had to be open source (unclassified). I did a lot of online research and began to get numerous requests for what I found. In 1998, tired of sending out laundry lists of web addresses, I created what I called my electronic file cabinet - The MOUT Homepage on Geocities - and it quickly became a must-read site for Joint, Marine and Army personnel working urban operations issues. This effort morphed into the Urban Operations Journal, my private open-to-anyone site, and an official use only version funded by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

In 2003, I became a project officer for the Marine Corps-Joint Forces Command's Joint Urban Warrior program that included seminars, workshops and an annual war-game and was lucky enough to be assigned an office that I shared with then Marine Major Bill Nagle. The two of us often chewed the fat over the terms MOUT (Military Operations on Urban Terrain) and urban operations - on how they had a "last 300 yards", kicking down doors and clearing rooms feel about them thus diverting attention away from the larger issues associated with why we were in cities and villages in the first place and what we needed to be seriously thinking about.

We thought 'Small Wars' or 'Irregular Warfare' was more inclusive in describing what we were then doing in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as a likely future operating environment. Being Marines, and in deference to the USMC's 1940 *Small Wars Manual*, we decided to rebrand the Urban Operations Journal as the Small Wars Journal. SWJ was launched in February of 2005.

Dave P. Dillege is the director of the Small Wars Foundation and Editor-in-Chief of the Small Wars Journal.


Dave found a need for the defense community and instead of complaining about it at work to his colleagues, he took the initiative and launched his own solution. Since 2005, Small Wars Journal has been a forum which leaders have leveraged to spread ideas about the fighting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the military profession, and the greater defense community. Their contributing author list is a who's who in the national security establishment.

Could the solution to your current problem be the next Small Wars Journal and have a major impact on the defense community? We challenge all of our readers to do what Dave did and take the initiative-you never know where it will lead!

Dave, Thanks for everything

-Joe

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