

EVENTS CALENDAR

National Security Speaker Series

WILL RENO



The Challenges of Armed Group Organization in Socially Fragmented Environments

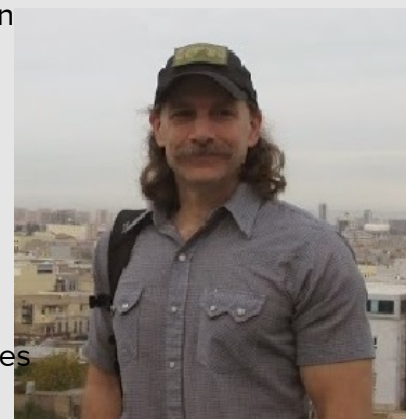
Thursday, February 04, 2016, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Avenue | Room 120 Columbus, Ohio 43201

Register here for this event

William Reno is professor of political science and director of the Program of African Studies at Northwestern University. He is the author of *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge, 1995), *Warlord Politics and African States* (Lynne Rienner, 1999), *Warfare in Independent Africa* (Cambridge, 2011), and various other works on the politics of conflict and the organization of armed groups in failed states. More information about his research is available at <http://www.willreno.org>.



ABSTRACT

This research explains variations in how armed groups organize their relations with surrounding communities in the context of conflict in collapsed states. The collapse of central state authority tends to generate multiple armed groups that reflect and further promote social fragmentation. The norm is a situation of multisided competition, of symmetrical irregular warfare akin to violent competition among gangs. This environment creates obstacles to the formation of socially encompassing and mobilizing armed groups. Yet a few armed groups that appear in this context are able to assert their own guiding narratives and organizational codes.

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The argument is that variations in armed group autonomy to organize its own relations with communities in conditions of state collapse is related to the nature of pre-conflict relationships between community clandestine commercial activities and state regimes, and the pre-conflict relationships of armed group leaders to regime strategies of social control. This presentation draws from research in Iraq and Somalia and broader comparisons with contemporary and historical conflicts.

