

# John Spencer joins the Misgav Institute's International Advisory Council

written by Misgav Institute | 01.08.2026

John Spencer is an award-winning scholar, professor, author, combat veteran, and military analyst. An internationally recognized authority on urban warfare, military strategy, and modern conflict, he is widely regarded as one of the world's leading experts on urban warfare. During his Army career, he served as an advisor to the Army's senior four-star general and other senior leaders as part of strategic research organizations spanning the Pentagon and the United States Military Academy at West Point. Since retiring from the Army, he has continued to advise senior military leaders, heads of state, and militaries around the world.

Spencer is co-founder and Executive Director of the Urban Warfare Institute, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing the study of urban environments and military operations. He served as the Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at the Modern War Institute at West Point, co-director of the Urban Warfare Project, and host of the Urban Warfare Project podcast. He is also co-founder and executive director of the Urban Warfare Institute, Chair of War Studies at the Madison Policy Forum, and a founding member of the International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare.

For more than a decade, Spencer's research has focused on military operations in dense urban terrain, megacities, and subterranean environments. His work combines academic scholarship with field research in active and recently concluded conflicts, including Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, India, Israel, and Gaza.

He is the author of four books: *Understanding Urban Warfare* (2022); *Connected Soldiers: Life, Leadership, and Social Connections in Modern War* (2022), winner of the 2023 Military Writers Society of America Gold Medal for Best Military History Memoir; *The Mini-Manual for the Urban Defender* (2022); and *Twenty Times I Almost Died: Life Lessons from the Edge of Survival* (2026), a memoir of survival and resilience.

Spencer has published more than 200 book chapters, case studies, and professional articles. His work has appeared in *TIME*, *The New York Times*, *The*

Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, WIRED, Politico, Foreign Policy, Defense One, The Hill, Army Magazine, and numerous other publications. He is also a frequent military analyst for CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, the BBC, and other international media outlets.

In February 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Spencer wrote The Mini-Manual for the Urban Defender to help Ukrainian civilians defend their cities. The guide was translated into Ukrainian and distributed widely throughout the country. It has since been translated into 16 languages, with additional translations underway.

Spencer served more than 25 years on active duty as an infantry soldier and officer, rising from private to major. His assignments included service in the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and the 4th Infantry Division. He completed two combat deployments to Iraq as an infantry platoon leader and company commander, served as a Ranger Instructor with the Army's Ranger School, a Joint Chief of Staff and Army Staff action officer, fellow with the Chief of Staff of the Army's Strategic Studies Group, and co-founded the Modern War Institute at West Point, where he later served as deputy director. While teaching at West Point, he received the Apgar Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Following active duty, Spencer continued his service as a colonel in the California State Guard, assigned to the 40th Infantry Division, California Army National Guard, as Director of Urban Warfare Training. There, he co-founded, designed, and continues to teach the world's only course dedicated to preparing division- and brigade-level commanders and staffs to plan, conduct, and sustain large-scale urban operations.

Spencer holds a Master of Policy Management from Georgetown University.