



[ANNEX 3-04 COUNTERSEA OPERATIONS](#)

**THE MARITIME DOMAIN**

Last Updated: 7 November 2014

From a military perspective, the maritime domain is not limited to the open seas. Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, [DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms](#) defines the [maritime domain](#) as “the oceans, seas, bays, estuaries, islands, coastal areas, and the airspace above these, including the littorals.” “[Littoral](#)” comprises two segments of the operational environment: 1. Seaward: the area from the open ocean to the shore, which must be controlled to support operations ashore. 2. Landward: the area inland from the shore that can be supported and defended directly from the sea. [Countersea operations](#) are equally relevant to “brown” water (navigable rivers, lakes, bays and their estuaries), “green” water (coastal waters, ports and harbors) and “blue” water (high seas and open oceans) environments. (Naval Doctrine Publication 1, Naval Warfare)

The inclusion of “the airspace above these” in the domain definition indicates the decisiveness of air operations within the maritime domain. Although the “airspace above” could be considered the air domain, **nothing in the definition of that domain implies or mandates exclusivity, primacy, or command and control of that domain.** Command and control is established through command relationships within the various operational areas as described in JP 1, [Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States](#), and is the authority of the [joint force commander](#) based upon most effective use of available resources to accomplish assigned missions.

With the potential emergence of a credible naval opponent, maritime operations are once again focusing on defeating enemy naval forces while retaining a focus on the role of [power projection](#) ashore from the littorals. Airpower provides a rapid, maneuverable, and flexible element in this environment. **Air Force capabilities can extend the reach and increase the flexibility of naval surface, subsurface, and aviation assets, playing a key role in controlling the maritime domain. Air Force and Navy capabilities synergistically employed enable the joint force to control the maritime domain.**