



THE MARITIME DOMAIN

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From a military perspective, the maritime domain is not limited to the open seas. Joint Publication (JP) 3-32, [Joint Maritime Operations](#), defines the maritime domain as “the oceans, seas, bays, estuaries, islands, coastal areas, and the airspace above these, including the littorals.” The littoral comprises two segments of the operational environment: seaward (the area from the open ocean to the shore, which must be controlled to support operations ashore) and 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 environments (navigable rivers, lakes, bays, and their estuaries), green water environments (coastal waters, ports, and harbors) and blue water environments (high seas and open oceans).

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, or the use of the term, 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 (JFC) based upon most effective use of available resources to accomplish assigned missions. Air operations within the maritime domain inevitably overlap with air operations in the air domain, which are normally conducted by the [joint force air component commander](#) (JFACC). Although it is the clear authority of the JFC to designate whomever is best qualified to be the JFACC, experience has shown that the JFC normally designates the [commander, Air Force Forces](#) (COMAFFOR) as the JFACC. Further, in keeping with joint doctrinal recommendations that recognizes the close interrelationship of the three positions, the JFC normally also designates the JFACC as the airspace control authority (ACA) and the area air defense commander (AADC).

With the emergence of a credible peer / near-peer naval opponent, maritime operations are once again focusing on defeating enemy naval forces while retaining a focus on the role of [maritime 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; particularly in a contested peer or near-peer conflict. Air Force and Navy capabilities synergistically employed enable the joint force to control the maritime domain.
