



ANNEX 3-04 COUNTERSEA OPERATIONS

TERMINOLOGY

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Air Force personnel operating in the [maritime domain](#) will likely do so in conjunction with maritime forces. Understanding Navy and Marine Corps terminology will contribute greatly to clear communication while minimizing confusion during operations. The following discusses Navy/Marine Corps terms used for comparable Air Force functions, missions, or capabilities. For more information regarding Naval or Marine Doctrine, see, Naval Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (NTTP) 3-03.4 (Rev A), *Naval Strike and Air Warfare* and Marine Corps Doctrine Publication (MCDP) 1-0, [Marine Corps Operations](#).

Air Warfare vs. Counterair

Air warfare is a term used by Navy forces to indicate the action required to destroy or reduce to an acceptable level the enemy air and missile threat. The Marine Corps term, *anti-air warfare*, uses the same definition. It includes use of fighters, bombers, ship anti-aircraft guns, ship surface-to-air missiles, air-to-air missiles, cruise missiles launched from ships or submarines, as well as electronic attack to destroy, disrupt, delay, or deceive the air or missile threat before or after it is launched. It also includes measures taken to minimize the effects of hostile air action using cover, concealment, dispersion, deception (including electronic), and mobility.

Naval and Marine aviators label and define operations such as [offensive counterair](#) (OCA), [defensive counterair](#) (DCA), and [suppression of enemy air defenses](#) (SEAD) in line with Air Force and joint terminology. What is different is the Navy and Marine Corps, outside of the aviation community, identify all or partial employment in this operational function as either “air defense” or “anti-air warfare.” Thus, doctrinally the terms “air defense/anti-air warfare” and elements of “counterair” are similar. Air Force doctrine and joint doctrine identify this function solely as [counterair](#).

Air Defense/Anti-Air Warfare vs. Defensive Counterair

[Air Defense](#) (AD) is not only a mission performed by the carrier strike group (CSG) but a command and control authority (air defense commander) within the CSG and is usually located on an AEGIS-equipped surface combatant. The Navy definition of air defense is nearly synonymous with DCA.

Further confusion for Air Force forces could come from the Marine Corps definition of *anti-air warfare* (AAW) used to indicate those actions required to destroy or reduce to an acceptable level the enemy air and missile threat. This definition is more in line with Air Force function of counterair (and the Navy operational function of *air warfare*). The

Marine Corps breaks down AAW to offensive AAW (OAAW) and air defense (AD), which parallels the OCA and DCA elements of counterair respectively.

Strike Warfare vs. Counterland and Strategic Attack

Strike warfare is another potentially confusing and encompassing term Navy/Marine Corps forces use to describe what the Air Force typically refers to as counterland or [strategic attack](#). It involves Navy and Marine Corps assets (aircraft, cruise missiles, naval surface fire support, and special forces) to destroy, disrupt, delay, or neutralize enemy targets ashore. Strike warfare includes attacks against targets such as manufacturing facilities and operating bases from which an enemy is capable of conducting or supporting air, surface, or undersea operations against friendly forces. Strike warfare also includes [close air support](#) (CAS). Therefore the doctrinal term “strike warfare,” depending on its intended effect, is similar to either counterland or strategic attack.

Air Operations in Maritime Surface Warfare (AOMSW)

Air Operations in Maritime Surface Warfare (AOMSW) encompasses the following missions that break down the concept formerly known as Maritime Air Support (MAS).

- ✦ War-at-sea (WAS) strike is the execution of deliberate attacks which are offensive in nature against symmetric enemy surface combatants and materiel.
- ✦ Armed reconnaissance (AR) is a mission with the primary purpose of locating and attacking targets of opportunity (i.e., enemy materiel, personnel, and facilities) in assigned general areas or along assigned lines of communication, and not for the purpose of attacking specific briefed targets.
- ✦ Air interdiction (AI) is defined as air operations conducted to divert, disrupt, or delay the enemy’s surface capabilities before it can be brought to bear effectively against friendly forces. AI is generally conducted at such distances from friendly forces that detailed integration of each AI mission with the fire and movement of friendly forces is normally not required.
- ✦ The purpose of strike coordination and reconnaissance (SCAR) is detecting targets and coordinating or performing attack or reconnaissance of those targets.
- ✦ Counter- fast attack craft (FAC)/fast inshore attack craft (FIAC) is conducted in direct defense of maritime assets and requires increased integration between air- and surface-delivered fires and the movement of maritime forces.

C2 of the above missions will usually be exercised by the Surface Warfare Commander (SuWC) through a maritime air controller (MAC). Additionally, any available and suitably loaded aircraft may conduct AOMSW missions in order to provide a rapid response. The MAC is responsible for the coordination, tactical employment, and safety of on-scene reconnaissance and/or strike platforms. The MAC provides search and/or targeting data to achieve mission objectives against a dynamic target. Detailed integration gains importance if air and surface fires are coordinated closer to the defended unit.

WAS can be preplanned or immediate, depending on the response time and urgency required. Preplanned requests are made early enough to be included on the [air tasking order](#) (ATO). Immediate requests arise from situations that necessitate an urgent requirement for air support or to exploit a time-sensitive opportunity. Primary consideration is rapid response to counter immediate threats and attack targets of opportunity. For more on AOMSW, see Air Land Sea Application (ALSA) *Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for [Air Operations in Maritime Surface Warfare](#)* (AOMSW), AFTTP 3-2.74, NTTP 3-20.8, and MCRP 3-25J, dated 15 Jan 2014.

BATTLE OF THE BISMARCK SEA (14 MARCH 1943)



Throughout July and August, Allied aircraft that had survived the Japanese invasion of the Philippines were now operating out of Australia. During the summer of 1942, Japanese forces landed on New Guinea's Papuan peninsula and began a drive toward Port Moresby. Ground fighting was fierce and, because of limited numbers operating from far away, air support was sporadic. Allied aircraft were unsuccessful in their attempts to counter Japanese shipping because they were using high level bombing techniques, which proved to be very inaccurate against ships at sea.

Fifth Air Force was organized in September 1942. Due to the archipelagic nature of the Southwest Pacific operating area, General George C. Kenney, Fifth Air Force commander, realized that the means to successfully attack shipping had to be developed.

Fifth Air Force began experimenting with different ideas to improve their lethality. Their A-20s were modified by the addition of four .50-caliber, forward firing machine guns in the nose and two 450-gallon fuel tanks to extend their range. Parafrog bombs were acquired. The A-20s then enjoyed remarkable success against targets in the jungles of New Guinea. Kenney then directed that several B-25Cs be modified in a similar fashion. Since they were to operate at low altitude, the tail and belly turrets were removed. Fifth Air Force shifted from the traditional high altitude bombing to low altitude bombing. American and British tests of skip bombing showed promise. Eventually, the bombers of Fifth Air Force perfected the technique of two aircraft attacking at masthead height. One aircraft would strafe to reduce the antiaircraft artillery coming from the ship under attack, while the other would strafe and bomb at mast height.

In January and February 1943, Allied intelligence indicated that the Japanese were beginning to assemble a convoy in Rabaul for the reinforcement of Japanese forces fighting in New Guinea. On 28 February, word came that 14 ships were coming down from Rabaul. On 1 March, a B-24 Liberator spotted the convoy and for the next two days it was shadowed and harassed by the longer-range heavy bombers. Escorting P-38s engaged aircraft from Japan's Eleventh Air Fleet destroying 25 of 30 aircraft. The convoy came within range of the medium bombers on the third. Coordinated attacks by long range bombers dropping bombs from 3,000 to 6,000 feet, followed by low-level skip bombing releases from the Beaufighters and B-25s resulted in the loss of eight transports and four destroyers, along with all of the Army Division's equipment and nearly half of the unit's 7,000 men. Japanese ground forces at Lae were not reinforced, effectively ending any chances of a renewed Japanese offensive. The victory confirmed General MacArthur's growing confidence in Fifth Air Force and demonstrated the dominance of air power in the Southwest Pacific.

—Various sources

Battlespace Dominance vs. Battlespace Control

Naval forces describe *battlespace dominance* as a critical operational capability they can provide. Navy and Marine Corps operations encompass air, surface, undersea, land, space, and time. Dominance of these dimensions continues to be an important factor in the survival and combat effectiveness of their forces. Command and control integrates ships, submarines, aircraft and ground forces, to effectively extend their full range of capabilities throughout the battlespace. ([Naval Doctrine Publication 1](#) [NDP1])
