



CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-04 COUNTERSEA OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO COUNTERSEA OPERATIONS

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GENERAL

Our nation depends on assured access to the world's waterways and coastal regions for global economic trade, as well as providing a stabilizing military presence abroad. These waterways, along with our maritime fleet, provide the means for projecting the bulk of our heavy forces forward, sustaining them over the long term, and projecting force ashore from the seas. Where airpower is the key to rapid forward presence and striking power over long distances, sea power is key to extended forward presence, maritime [power projection](#), mass force deployment, and sustainment through sealift. Protecting sea lanes, littorals, and our maritime assets operating within them are vital to US defense posture, economic prosperity, and national security.

Definition of Countersea

[Countersea](#) operations are those operations conducted to attain and maintain a desired degree of maritime superiority by the destruction, disruption, delay, diversion, or other neutralization of threats in the maritime environment. The main objective of countersea operations is to secure and dominate the maritime domain and prevent opponents from doing the same.

The countersea function entails Air Force operations in the maritime domain to achieve, or aid in the achievement of, superiority in that medium. This function fulfills Department of Defense (DOD) requirements for the use of Air Force forces to counter adversary air, surface, and subsurface threats, ensuring the security of vital sea and coastal areas, and enhancing the maritime scheme of maneuver. More importantly, it demonstrates the teamwork required of Service forces working together in a joint environment. **Air Force forces achieve effects in the maritime domain through the integrated employment of [airpower](#).** The overarching effect of countersea operations is maritime superiority—denial of this domain to the adversary while assuring access and freedom of maneuver for US and allied maritime forces. To this end, Air Force operations can make significant contributions to maritime components in support of joint force objectives.