



# CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



## [ANNEX 3-04 COUNTERSEA OPERATIONS](#)

### AIR FORCE COUNTERSEA OPERATIONS

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**US military airpower is particularly suited to dominating the [maritime domain](#) by virtue of its inherent offensive character, precision, speed, range, and flexibility.** Long ago, maritime forces realized the power and flexibility of aircraft carrier operations over battleship operations and the distinctive advantage of using airpower to dominate the maritime domain. Subsequently, Navy and Marine aviation further developed by fielding a formidable array of carrier-based air capability enabling the maritime forces to achieve strategic, operational, and tactical effects through airpower. Today, Air Force capabilities protect and complement maritime operations. Air Force forces, by design, can augment naval forces by providing additional protection; extended reach; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and strike capability with air, both manned and unmanned, and space platforms.

Due to their inherent flexibility and versatility, **Air Force forces can provide rapid and large area coverage and often engage the adversary long before other forces arrive, transitioning swiftly from defensive to offensive roles to dominate the maritime domain.** In certain situations Navy and Marine airpower alone is insufficient, remotely piloted aircraft are well suited to provide large littoral or open ocean area surveillance and reconnaissance over long time periods that would normally require several aircraft and air-refueling resources to accomplish. Air Force forces will likely be called upon to counter adversary maritime threats. Air Force forces should be prepared to conduct warfare in the maritime domain independently or together with Navy and Marine aviation.

Air Force [countersea](#) operations use Air Force strengths in traditional air interdiction, close air support, and counterair missions to accomplish effects in the maritime domain. From a tactical perspective, these traditional missions can be quite different in the maritime domain than missions conducted over land. Countersea operations require familiarity with naval air warfare, terminology, and command and control. This familiarity will be key in successful countersea operations in the maritime domain, and is one reason why joint training is vital.