

4th Annual Stockton Center Law of Armed Conflict Conference

Russia-Ukraine: Full-Spectrum Conflict and International Law

U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI



Marine Corps Support to Joint Operations in Contested Littorals

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Force Design 2030

- 10 U.S.C. § 8063(a): ... The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, **for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.** In addition, the Marine Corps shall provide detachments and organizations for service on armed vessels of the Navy, shall provide security detachments for the protection of naval property at naval stations and bases, and shall perform such other duties as the President may direct. ...



Force Design 2030

- Threat Technology – Rise of the Mature Precision Strike Regime
- Gray Zone Strategies
- Imperative for Maritime Campaigning





Stand-in Force

- Stand-in Forces defined:

Small but lethal, low signature, mobile, relatively simple to maintain and sustain forces designed to operate across the competition continuum within a contested area as the leading edge of a maritime defense-in-depth in order to intentionally disrupt the plans of a potential or actual adversary. Depending on the situation, stand-in forces are composed of elements from the Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, special operations forces, interagency, and allies and partners.

- A Concept for Stand-in Forces (Dec 2021)




Stand-in Force

- Enabling the Naval and Joint Force Commander
- Scouting and screening
- Reconnaissance/Counter-Reconnaissance

Preparing for the Future Marine Corps Support to Joint Operations in Contested Littorals

Gen. David H. Berger, U.S. Marine Corps



Over the last five years, the U.S. defense establishment has begun to grapple with the implications of the advent of a radically more complex and challenging strategic epoch. The return of great power competition and the continuing threats of regional rogue states and violent nonstate actors challenge our Nation's interests amid an ongoing "revolution in technology that poses both peril and promise."

Consideration of the challenging future these changes are likely to produce has sparked an energetic focus on developing new operating concepts, technologies, and force structures in all the military services. The U.S. Marine Corps is no exception. In close partnership with the U.S. Navy, our thought in recent years has converged around the concepts of *littoral operations in contested environments* and *expeditionary advanced base operations*, and their implications for the full range of Title 10 service functions in organizing, training, and equipping the forces necessary to execute them. During my predecessor's tenure as commandant, the U.S. Marine Corps embarked upon a campaign of learning to draw out these implications, a campaign that has continued and accelerated on my watch. Our learning to this point has led us to some interesting initial conclusions and hypotheses. One of the most interesting is the possibility that a major role for Marine Corps forces in *critical future scenarios may revolve around enabling naval and joint force commanders as a dedicated multi-domain reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance force.*

Reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance are precisely defined in joint and service doctrine. Reconnaissance operations in any domain use the full range of available "detection methods to obtain information about the activities and resources of an enemy or adversary."² Counterreconnaissance seeks to prevent adversaries from doing the same to us; it comprises "all measures taken to prevent hostile observation of a force, area, or place."³ In the maritime context, it is wise to marry these current doctrinal definitions with the broader perspective conveyed in two "navy words of distinguished lineage": *scouting and screening*. The distinguished naval tactician Capt. Wayne P. Hughes Jr. defined scouting as "reconnaissance, surveillance, code-breaking, and all other ways to obtain and report combat information to commanders and their forces," and screening as "all measures used to frustrate the enemy's scouting effort ... including the possibility of attacking a threatening enemy."⁴ This broader naval understanding of the mission informs my understanding of reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance in the pages that follow.

The most recent phase of the U.S. Marine Corps' learning process began with my Commandant's Planning

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Task Force 61/2

- Sixth Fleet Headquarters, Naples, Italy
- Task Force 61 Naval Amphibious Forces Europe/2d Marine Division (TF 61/2)
- Led by a Marine General Officer, command and control of:
 - Amphibious Ready Group (ARG)
 - 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)
 - Reconnaissance/Counter-Reconnaissance Forces



Reconnaissance/Counter-Reconnaissance

- Reconnaissance
 - A mission undertaken to obtain information about the activities and resources of an enemy or adversary, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, geographic, or other characteristics of a particular area, by visual observation or other detection methods. (DoD Dictionary)
- Counter-Reconnaissance
 - All measures taken to prevent hostile observation of a force, area, or place. (MCDP 1-0)



Reconnaissance/Counter-Reconnaissance

- TF 61/2 Recon/Counter-Recon Forces
 - Initially focused on theater exercises, but RUS-UKR conflict brought increased Russian naval activity
 - Marines on deck of USS Kearsarge helped increase Fleet commander's maritime domain awareness
- Recon/Counter-Recon constructed deliberately to be used anywhere
 - Pacific, Baltics, Mediterranean, Persian Gulf, etc.
 - European theater waterways: Suez Canal, Dardanelles, Bosphorus, Straits of Sicily, Strait of Gibraltar to the Gulf of Finland



Legal Issues

- Access – based on partner engagement
 - HN laws and customs
 - SOFA, ACSA, etc.
- Targeting – always involves legal analysis
 - Shore-to-ship
 - Authority to engage
 - Rules of Engagement
- Intelligence Collection
 - SIGINT
- Cyber authorities (or lack thereof)



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Questions?

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