
Aviation Ground Support



U.S. Marine Corps

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FOREWORD

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-21.1, *Aviation Ground Support*, applies the philosophy in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 4, *Logistics*, and MCDP 3, *Expeditionary Operations*, to Marine aviation ground support. It is the link between MCWP 3-2, *Aviation Operations*, and the tactics, techniques, and procedures contained in other Marine aviation and logistic publications. In establishing the doctrinal basis for the planning and execution of aviation ground support, this publication provides the basis for employment of aviation ground support of the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) air combat element (ACE) during the prosecution of war and other operations in support of the Marine Corps mission.

This publication is intended primarily for commanders and staff officers who are responsible for the planning and execution of aviation operations. The MCWP 3-21.1 should be read by Marines supported by or involved in the execution of aviation operations. It is also intended for other doctrine centers, joint and multinational staffs, professional military educational activities, and other activities requiring an understanding of Marine aviation ground support. The MCWP 3-21.1 provides a common basis for understanding Marine aviation ground support and the manner in which the MAGTF can tactically exploit those capabilities. Marine aviation ground support is an integral part of the MAGTF as it extends the ACE's tactical reach and flexibility.

This manual is authoritative in nature but requires judgment in application.

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

/s/
EDWARD HANLON, JR.
Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps
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To Our Readers

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Additional copies: A printed copy of this publication may be obtained from Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, GA 31704-5001, by following the instructions in MCBul 5600, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publications Status*. An electronic copy may be obtained from the Doctrine Division, MCCDC, world wide web home page which is found at the following universal reference locator: **<http://www.doctrine.usmc.mil>**.

Unless otherwise stated, whenever the masculine gender is used, both men and women are included.

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Chapter 1. Fundamentals

As the nation's force in readiness, the Marine Corps provides great versatility and flexibility to deal with situations across the range of military operations. Fighting as an integrated air-ground team, the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) is a task-organized force comprised of four elements: command element; ground combat element (GCE); aviation combat element (ACE); and combat service support element (CSSE).

The MAGTF's ability to project power is heightened by the ACE's ability to deploy and operate in close proximity to the fighting. Potential operating sites range from urban areas containing established aviation facilities to areas with the crudest and most austere facilities. The MAGTF requires responsive air support for all types of operating areas.

MAGTF SUPPORT

Marine aviation provides the MAGTF commander with a unique force. The ACE is ready for deployment and capable of fulfilling the MAGTF fire support and maneuver requirements across the spectrum of war. This can range from military operations other than war to large-scale, sustained combat operations.

Marine aviation performs six functions in support of the MAGTF: anti-air warfare, offensive air support, assault support, electronic warfare, air reconnaissance, and control of aircraft and missiles. Through these six functions, the ACE greatly enhances the MAGTF's capabilities to conduct maneuver warfare.

Marine aviation provides significant advantages in terms of speed, flexibility, shock, and technology allowing the Marine Corps to impose its will upon the enemy. Through Marine aviation's function of offensive air support, accurate and destructive firepower can be brought to bear upon the enemy. Used at the right time and place, Marine avia-