



MCWP 3-24

Assault Support



US Marine Corps

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FOREWORD

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-24, *Assault Support*, provides a framework for the development and employment of assault support assets in peace, crisis or war. While this publication covers all aspects of assault support, it focuses on the employment of vertical lift support for Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) operations. The doctrine applies across the full range of military operations—from support to civil authorities and/or foreign humanitarian assistance to general war.

Assault support doctrine is based on a common understanding of the nature of war and on our warfighting philosophy as described in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, *Warfighting*. This doctrine provides for fast, flexible, and decisive action in a complex environment characterized by friction, uncertainty, fluidity, and rapid change.

This publication is for commanders and their staffs as a guide to plan assault support missions. It forms the basis for specific tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) found in MCDPs, assault support aircraft Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization (NATOPS) manuals, and tactical manuals within the naval warfare publication (NWP) 3-22.5 series.

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

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CHAPTER 1

ROLE IN THE MARINE AIR-GROUND TASK FORCE

Marine aviation is renowned for its close relationship with the ground combat element (GCE). When in support of a MAGTF scheme of maneuver, Marine aviation has the ability to provide significant firepower and mobility. This helps the MAGTF commander to maneuver within the battlespace to engage and destroy the enemy.

The aviation combat element (ACE) provides combat power and operational capability to the MAGTF. Individual aircraft combined and task-organized into an ACE provides a highly capable, responsive, force multiplier to the MAGTF commander. The ACE's unique capabilities complement other MAGTF elements. The ACE is not a substitute for any MAGTF element. The ACE contributes to mission accomplishment by providing all or a portion of the six functions of Marine aviation to the MAGTF commander.

The functions of Marine aviation should not be confused with capabilities of USMC aircraft. The six functions of Marine aviation—antiair warfare (AAW), offensive air support (OAS), electronic warfare (EW), air reconnaissance, control of aircraft and missiles, and assault support—are broad descriptions of missions that may be performed by the ACE.

Capabilities are what the aircraft are able to do. A UH-1N can conduct assault support by providing combat assault support of personnel or control aircraft using organic radios. An AH-1W can conduct OAS by firing an AGM-114 Hellfire missile at an enemy armored vehicle, and it can provide aerial reconnaissance using the night targeting system. The ACE provides multiple mission capability to the MAGTF through air crew training and skillful use of its aircraft. See appendix A for more information on aircraft capabilities.

Assault support uses aircraft to provide tactical mobility and logistical support for the MAGTF. It may be used to enhance the rapid buildup of MAGTF combat power and to facilitate rapid ground force maneuver. Assault support's uses are normally tactical, logistical or administrative in nature. Assault support enhances the MAGTF commander's ability to—

- Concentrate strength against the enemy's selected weaknesses using speed and surprise.
- Focus combat power at the decisive place and time and exploit opportunities created during combat.
- Sustain combat power.

By conducting assault support operations, the commander can take full advantage of fleeting opportunities throughout the battlespace.

Speed and focus of effort are essential elements of maneuver, both of which the MAGTF commander can apply using assault support. Assault support provides the MAGTF commander with the capability to move assets over long distances quickly. The MAGTF can rapidly bring together assault support assets from multiple locations to mass forces in a single focus of effort. This ability to rapidly concentrate forces is a hallmark of naval expeditionary power projection.

Mobility and flexibility, gained by extensively using assault support aircraft in tactical operations, are an important part of Marine aviation doctrine. Helicopters enhance the mobility and sustainability of Marine forces during operations well removed from their rear areas for extended periods of time. Improved aircraft design has increased the combat radius and load capacity of assault support aircraft, providing more flexibility and fire support to the MAGTF.