
Air Reconnaissance



U.S. Marine Corps

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FOREWORD

Air reconnaissance supports the Marine air-ground task force's (MAGTF's) intelligence warfighting function because it provides critical intelligence that supports the MAGTF's operational planning process. The MAGTF commander uses air reconnaissance to gain intelligence that is vital to the shaping of the battlespace. This intelligence assists the commander in understanding the tactical situation, alerts him to new opportunities, and allows him to assess the effects of MAGTF operations on the threat. Through the proper use of manned and unmanned air reconnaissance assets, commanders within the MAGTF can maximize their forces' effectiveness by optimizing friendly strengths and exploiting the threat's critical vulnerabilities.

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-26, *Air Reconnaissance*, addresses basic air reconnaissance tactics, techniques, and procedures for the planning and execution of air reconnaissance operations. This publication provides commanders and their staffs, aircrews, unmanned aerial vehicle operators, and intelligence analysts with air reconnaissance operational principles and capabilities.

This publication supersedes Fleet Marine Force Manual 5-10, *Air Reconnaissance*, dated 20 May 1991.

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

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Chapter 1

Overview

Marine aviation consists of six functional areas: antiair warfare, offensive air support, assault support, electronic warfare, air reconnaissance, and control of aircraft and missiles. As one of the six functions of Marine aviation, air reconnaissance is an essential warfighting tool because it employs visual observation and/or sensors in air vehicles to acquire critical battlespace information for commanders and decision-makers at all levels. This information is then converted into intelligence to reduce uncertainties in the planning and execution of Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) operations. To be effective, air reconnaissance must be responsive, flexible, survivable, and produce imagery products in all weather conditions.

Levels of War

Although air reconnaissance primarily supports the intelligence warfighting function, it also contributes significantly to command and control (C2), maneuver, fires, logistics, and force protection. The information derived from air reconnaissance not only shapes military plans and operations, but it also influences national strategy and policy and military plans and operations. Therefore, air reconnaissance assets, although typically tactical in nature, support decisionmakers at all levels of war; all Marines must be cognizant of their ability to observe and report relevant and valuable information.