# The Joint Force Maritime Component Command and the Marine Corps
## Integrate to Win the Black Sea Fight

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**Abstract:** Marine integration with the Navy contributes to meeting vital U.S. naval operational requirements, especially when organized as a Joint Force Maritime Component Command (JFMCC) in the Black Sea against Russian threats. The global operating model addresses integration across escalating levels of competition and conflict called contact, blunt, and surge layers. In the contact layer, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to maintain regional access, assure allies, and counter expanding Russian influence. In the blunt layer, Marine integration supports the JFMCC's operational objectives of denying Russian sea control and freedom of movement. Finally, in the surge layer, a Navy and Marine integrated JFMCC gains a greater ability to project power against a robust antiaccess and area-denial network and decisively defeat Russian aggression. This article contends that naval integration is also an important component of defense against Russian expansion in the Black Sea region.

**Keywords:** Joint force maritime component command, JFMCC, Navy and Marine Corps integration, Black Sea, Russia, global operating model, antiaccess, area denial

Russian surface groups, sortied from their naval bases around the Black Sea, have been operating in the region with impunity for years. Russia's goals with theses naval operations is to create space between the Black Sea North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states, demonstrate

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*Journal of Advanced Military Studies* vol. 11, no. 2
Fall 2020
www.usmcu.edu/mcupress
https://doi.org/10.21140/mcuj.20201102005

**Map 1.** Black Sea region


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overt control of the economic levers in the region, and maintain access to Syria through Tartus, Russia's only naval base in the Middle East.[1] These goals are a significant aspect of Russia's overall strategy to challenge the 70 years of U.S. dominance in the Mediterranean and expand its influence throughout the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

These Russian actions serve as a reminder that great power competition is not solely focused on China. Russia remains a strategic competitor and military threat. In turn, the U.S. Marine Corps is a valuable player, not just in the Pacific against China but also in the Black Sea against Russia. The global operating model (GOM) provides a cognitive and operational framework to explore the validity of Navy and Marine Corps integration in this region through the three of the four layers: contact, blunt, and surge.[2] For the Joint Force Maritime Component Command (JFMCC), the GOM also provides leaders an operational warfighting framework that doubles as a sea control and power-projection model.

Could the current initiative for naval integration in the Pacific also be the best way to win in competition and armed conflict against Russia in the Black Sea, especially when organized as an integral part of a JFMCC? In the contact

layer, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to compete against Russian influence despite limitations imposed by geography and international conventions while maintaining regional access. As a blunt layer force, Marine integration supports the JFMCC's operational objectives of denying Russian sea control and freedom of movement despite lacking a persistent force in the region. Finally, in the surge layer, a Navy and Marine integrated JFMCC gains a greater ability to project power against a robust antiaccess and area-denial (A2/AD) network and decisively defeat Russian aggression.

## Why Does This Region Matter?

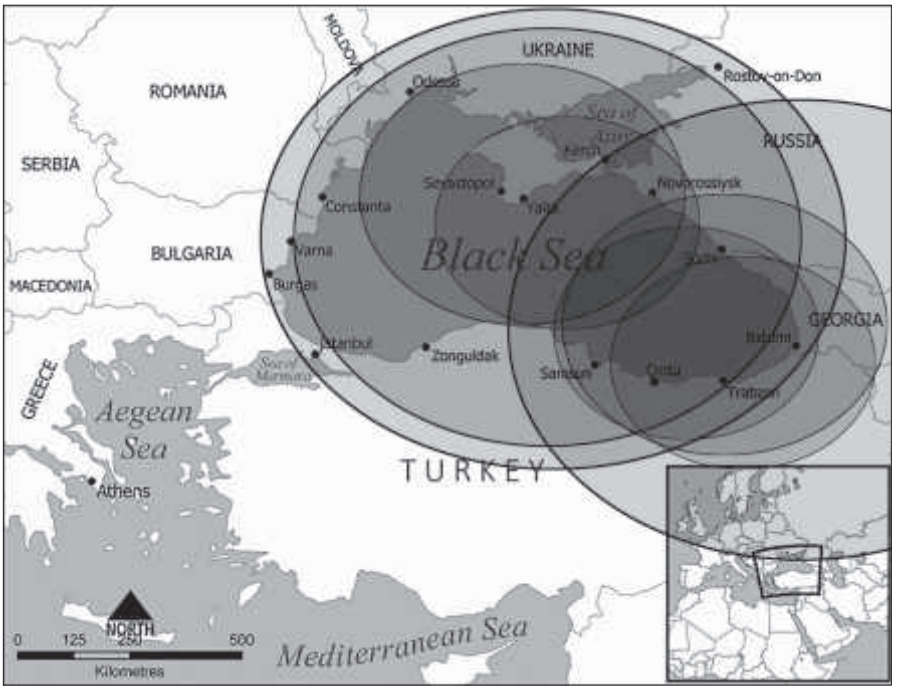
The geographic and economic importance of the Black Sea outweighs its relatively small size. First, sea routes across the Black Sea are the most efficient way for bulk commercial goods to move between dozens of countries. Each day, more than 450 bulk merchant ships transit into or out of the Black Sea. These ships are responsible for moving more than 500 million tons of goods per year.[3] While trade in the Western Pacific dwarfs these numbers, the rate of trade in the Black Sea region is increasing significantly.[4] As the rate of trade increases, the need for influence over and control of trade in the area will increase proportionally as well.

In addition to its increasingly powerful economic engine, the region also has significant geopolitical implications for the United States, a leading member of NATO. The Black Sea region is a contact point between NATO members and Russia. The proximity between NATO members and Russia results in a direct struggle for influence and strategic positioning. NATO's recent support to Ukraine and Georgia in their conflicts against Russia has highlighted this regional competition. Another primary reason the Black Sea remains of interest to NATO and the United States is that it provides a southern access point into Russia. These reasons make the entire region strategic key terrain for NATO should offensive action against Russia become necessary.[5] The Black Sea will remain a strategically important region for the United States as competition continues or in the event of military escalations between Russia and NATO.

## The Russian Problem

In both competition and armed conflict, the JFMCC faces a set of operational problems due to the strategic importance of the Black Sea. Russia is using the Black Sea as an operational hub to consolidate and project power into neighboring countries and the Eastern Mediterranean. To support power projection, Russia is developing a powerful Black Sea Fleet (BSF) and significant sea-denial capabilities in the region.[6] Russia has implemented a modernization program for its BSF that includes six modern submarines, three guided-missile frigates, six missile corvettes, and dozens of smaller combatants. These vessels are spe-

**Map 2.** Russian weapons systems and ranges in the Black Sea




*Source: Courtesy of the author, adapted by MCUP.*

cially designed for the Black Sea littorals and are capable of carrying Russia's most advanced antiship and antiair systems.[7] Elements of this fleet are already projecting power into Syria from the Eastern Mediterranean, demonstrating Russia's ability and interest to expand its operational reach.[8] The Black Sea Fleet has quickly become a modern and capable adversary in the region.

In addition to modernizing its fleet, Russia is developing an imposing set of sea-denial capabilities, which it calls its "counter-navy." This sea denial force, the BSF's operational center of gravity, blankets nearly the entire Black Sea region with antiship and antiair missile systems, integrates capable land-based aircraft, and employs a robust electronic warfare capability (map 2).[9] In previous decades, U.S. naval forces could project power to nearly anywhere in the world while its capital assets were safe from enemy action. Should conflict erupt in the Black Sea region, this may no longer prove true.

## JFMCC Operational Goals and Shortfalls

The U.S. European Command has an opportunity to establish an enduring JFMCC to meet the challenges associated with competition and armed conflict against Russia in the Black Sea, rather than maintaining a peacetime Service component structure. This JFMCC will likely be assigned the objectives in the maritime domain around the Black Sea. These objectives align with the GOM's

layers found in the *2018 National Defense Strategy*.[10] These layers also serve as an effective framework to examine JFMCC requirements and challenges as they pursue their objectives.

In the contact layer, the JFMCC must maintain access to the region, assure allies, and compete against Russian influence. International combined naval exercises, like the Sea Breeze iterations, contributed to these goals as a way to compete against Russia without armed conflict.[11] To continue to meet these goals, the JFMCC must overcome unique challenges presented by the Black Sea region. The Montreux Convention (1936) is one of these challenges. It is an international agreement that limits the size, number, and operational duration of ships in the Black Sea from nonlittoral Black Sea nations.[12] Adhering to this convention, as U.S. forces must, means that Russia, a Black Sea nation, will almost always have a numerical naval advantage within the Black Sea. The Montreux Convention, along with constrained geography, also prevents the JFMCC from moving anything more substantial than a cruiser into the Black Sea, significantly reducing potential U.S. military capabilities.

In the blunt layer, denying Russian sea control and preventing a fait accompli similar to their recent annexation of Crimea is a likely task the JFMCC must support. To do this, the JFMCC must maintain a persistent and credible presence in the region. This task is becoming increasingly difficult as U.S. defense priorities continue to shift to the Pacific. As a result of this shift, most of the Navy's assets are assigned to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, with less than 40 percent left to distribute between the remaining five combatant commands.[13] There simply is not enough Navy to always be in the Black Sea to counter Russian aggression.

In the surge layer, the JFMCC might be responsible for quickly projecting power into the Black Sea region and decisively defeating Russian aggression. Russian A2/AD systems, combined with the littoral geography of the region, make power projection a daunting task. The JFMCC must set conditions for power projection, sustain operational logistics, and support naval campaigns through combat force projection ashore.

As a result of the emerging global challenges, emphasis on competition, and directed missions described in the *2018 National Defense Strategy*, the Commandant of the Marine Corps released planning guidance for the next decade.[14] In *Force Design 2030*, the Commandant made a case for enhanced naval integration. In the past, naval integration appeared as a one-way street. The Navy supported the Marines with transportation, logistics, and fires during land missions and campaigns. The Marine Corps did not, either by capability or will, provide significant support to the Navy's sea control and denial missions. By refining force design, warfighting concepts, education and training, core values, and command and leadership, the Marine Corps, focusing on likely JFMCC

tasks in conjunction with the Navy, is developing a force that will seamlessly shift between support to actions on land and campaigns for sea control. If done correctly, an integrated Navy and Marine JFMCC will provide a unity of effort across land and sea actions that will win in competition and armed conflict against Russia in the Black Sea region.

Even the smallest Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) is capable of significantly enhancing the JFMCC's ability to meet its objectives in the Black Sea. The smallest MAGTF is generally a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) numbering approximately 2,400 Marines. The MEU includes a battalion-size ground combat element, a robust aviation squadron of fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, and a logistics battalion. All three elements work in conjunction under a common MAGTF headquarters to support a single battle, able to deploy to and from naval shipping and expeditionary land-based locations. Additionally, MAGTFs can be further task-organized and scaled in size to achieve specific mission sets both with and separate from naval shipping. These MAGTFs will provide the JFMCC with operational fires, scouting, command and control (C2), and other supporting functions to assist with sea control or sea denial mission sets by reinforcing aviation, long-range fires, and scouting capabilities.[15] This will "[supply] the [JFMCC and] joint force with an 'any sensor, any shooter' capability that persists within an adversary's threat rings."[16] Marine integration with the JFMCC in each of the layers will help to overcome regional challenges, leading to strategic and operational success in the region.

## The Contact Layer

In the contact layer, defined as competition between nations below the level of armed conflict, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to maintain regional access, assure allies, and counter expanding Russian influence despite limitations imposed by geography and international conventions. Specifically, Marine integration increases the JFMCC's capability and capacity to meet these requirements through maritime interdiction operations and establishment of naval infrastructure across the Black Sea region. These actions align well within the contact layer because they serve to compete with Russia while also preventing potential escalation. Professor James Holmes of the U.S. Naval War College describes the contact layer as "armed competition that casts a shadow across an adversary's decision-making process."[17] Integrating Marine capabilities into the JFMCC as part of the contact layer provides an opportunity to rebalance the factor of force while complicating Russia's strategic thinking on how and where to compete or potentially escalate into conflict.

The JFMCC must integrate the Marine Corps into maritime interdiction operations (MIO) and visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) activities to compete in the Black Sea under Russian sea-denial umbrellas. Marine inte-

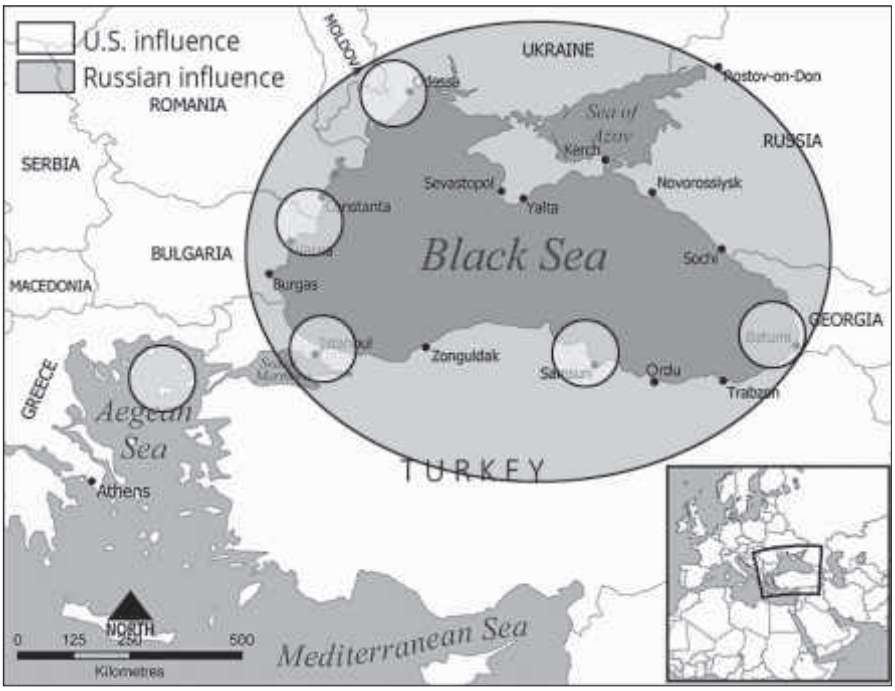
gration into MIO provides the JFMCC additional capacity and capability to compete against Russia while not directly challenging them. Using Marines to conduct MIO through VBSS missions frees up sailors to perform their primary ship-fighting duties. This reduces the risk to the mission a ship's commander takes by keeping sailors at their primary jobs and makes the JFMCC more capable.

At an operational level, a MAGTF task-organized for MIO uses its logistic and air assets to operate independently from the standard Navy Amphibious Readiness Group. Integrating in this manner frees up JFMCC shipping assets for other missions. As MAGTFs expand the locations they operate from, including allied countries and nontraditional shipping, it becomes more difficult for Russia to track and harder for malign actors to avoid interdiction. A MEU, integrated with the JFMCC in this manner, adds the ability to conduct up to six additional VBSS actions a day.[18] This integration adds capacity and supplements the JFMCC's capability to compete with Russia in the contact layer.

In addition to MIO, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to prepare for armed conflict by using opportunities presented in the contact layer to set the theater should Russian forces escalate into armed conflict and assures regional allies by demonstrating U.S. commitment. *Setting the theater* is a term often used in the context of Army operations in support of land campaigns to create the logistical conditions for military operations before those operations are required.[19] However, its principles also apply to naval operations. Setting the theater allows the JFMCC to prepare for potential armed conflict by establishing needed infrastructure across the region. This infrastructure needs to be in place before hostilities commence because Russian sea-denial systems will prevent additional development, and the Montreux Convention and the Black Sea geography will limit access by major naval assets.

To overcome this shortfall, integrating Marine infrastructure development as part of the contact layer allows the JFMCC to be ready should competition escalate into armed conflict. The Navy and Marine Corps' expeditionary advanced base operations (EABO) concept, while generally designed for the Pacific, describes JFMCC support requirements and how Marine integration can meet those requirements in the contact layer in other areas.[20] To do this in the Black Sea, Marines integrate into existing combatant command campaign plan exercises to build and leave behind completed infrastructure. Examples include Marine Wing Support and Air Control Squadrons, integrated with Navy Seabees, constructing and repairing runways in the Aegean Sea, building long-term aviation fuel storage containers on the east coast of Romania, and conducting partner training with Bulgarian allies to develop radar installations that cover the southern portion of the Black Sea. Marine Engineer Battalions also expand hasty port facilities capable of reloading of vertical launch systems and build

**Map 3.** Competition for influence in the contact layer




*Source: Courtesy of the author, adapted by MCUP.*

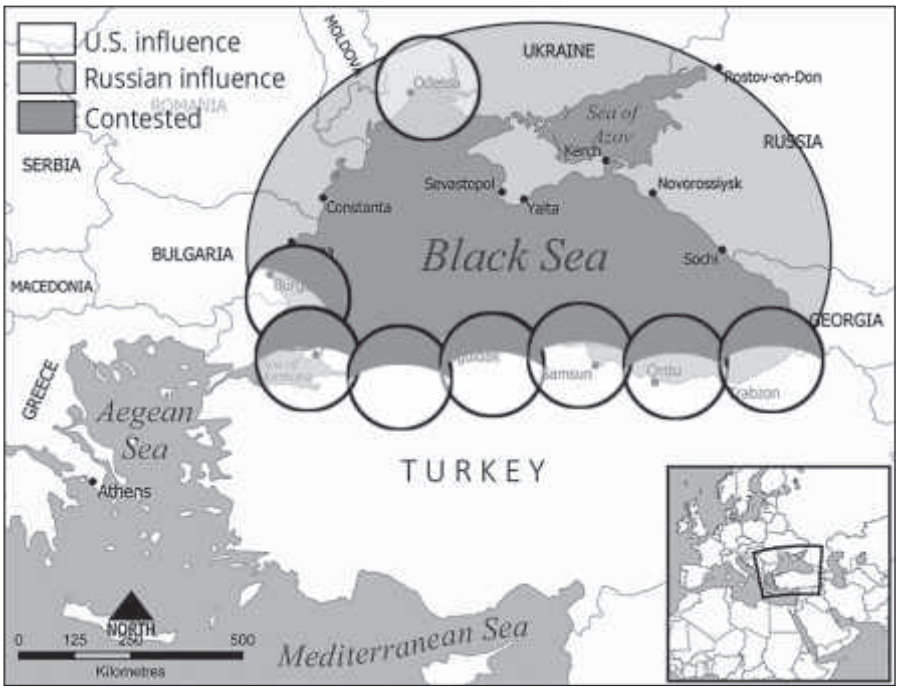
landing pads across the region (map 3). Marine integration in the contact layer complicates Russia's operational decision-making processes, assures allies, and maintains regional access without significantly increasing major assets in the region or provoking hostilities.

## The Blunt Layer

In the blunt layer, defined as actions that stymie adversary aggression, Marine integration provides the JFMCC a persistent force that will contribute to denying Russia sea control and freedom of movement. Marine integration with the JFMCC in the blunt layer provides distributed and persistent operational fires and scouting capabilities for the force as a whole while remaining operationally relevant despite Russian targeting. The blunt layer potentially envisions a clash between JFMCC sea-denial efforts and Russian sea-control efforts around maritime key terrain to forcibly achieve Russian goals before the full might of the U.S. military and NATO can mobilize and respond. Operational fires, scouting, and C2 will be decisive in this struggle for sea control.

The JFMCC must fight with resources already in place at preselected locations. These locations are key maritime terrain Russia must control or pass by to project power, thereby localizing the struggle for sea control (map 4).

**Map 4.** Blunt layer actions




*Source: Courtesy of the author, adapted by MCUP.*

The Black Sea region has an exceptional amount of maritime key terrain to include the Kerch Strait, Bosporus Strait, Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles Strait. Additional opportunities exist to use the 200 islands scattered throughout the Aegean Sea for land-based Marine units designed to counter Russian sea-control efforts. The Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC) describes these Marine units as an inside force; they are a force that provides a "persistent forward presence to achieve an advantage . . . that will blunt adversary interference and set the conditions to introduce additional combat power."[21] Marine integration in the Black Sea provides the JFMCC with a myriad of options to operationally employ land-based Marine Corps units to impede Russian aggression.

The first way an integrated Marine and Navy JFMCC meets Russian aggression in the blunt layer is by enhancing the firepower function of the JFMCC through operational fires. Recent Service, combatant, and Joint staff-level wargaming efforts prioritized gaining insights on the employment of fires inside Russian threat rings. The 2019 Globally Integrated Wargame revealed a decisive advantage to the force that can strike effectively first and remain "operationally relevant" inside Russia's long-range weapons ranges.[22] The Marine Corps is one option to be this force for the JFMCC. Supporting this are Marine efforts to develop a land-based naval strike missile system specifically designed

to strike enemy naval vessels from hard to find littoral locations.[23] Also, a recent order from the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed the tripling of precision-guided, long-range rocket artillery units while eliminating all main battle tank units.[24] This demonstrates the Marines are serious about integration with the JFMCC by investing in platforms that contribute to sea control and divesting from those that do not. Marine integration of maritime fires gives the JFMCC a decisive advantage with a persistent, resilient, and operationally relevant force.

The second way Marine integration can prevent Russian aggression is through C2 and sensor support to the JFMCC. Given the robustness of Russia's sea-denial assets in the Black Sea, Navy ships are generally not able to use their shipboard sensors to achieve their own targeting data prior to a strike. Marine units, acting as the JFMCC's inside force, cover this gap by increasing the JFMCC's scouting ability and improving operational, tactical, and technical C2 at the point of contact or conflict. Like land-based fires, small Marine units with drones, radars, and electronic-warfare capabilities distributed near maritime key terrain enhance the overall scouting capabilities of the JFMCC in denied areas. A key finding in a series of Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, Naval Services, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and Joint Staff war games in 2019 recognized the importance of sensing and targeting Russian assets while remaining undetected. It claimed that

> the hider-versus finder competition is real. Losing this competition has enormous and potentially catastrophic consequences. This makes success in the reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance mission an imperative for success.[25]

Small, distributed Marine units will pass targeting data to Navy ships and aircraft to appropriately address those targets. Those Marine units assist with the close-in coordination of those strikes through networked C2 functions. The high-value naval ship or expensive aircraft remains relatively safe outside of Russian threat rings. Marine integration helps the JFMCC win the hider-finder competition.

Distributed Marine units remain operationally relevant because they are more survivable, cost-effective, and are more risk worthy than the other options available to the JFMCC commander. These land-based Marine units will number approximately a dozen troops and a few vehicles, taking up less area than two basketball courts. Table 1 illustrates that small-size units reduce the probability of detection and their chances of being successfully targeted by enemy weapon systems by a factor of 5 to 12 times when compared to Navy capital ships.

Dozens of these small units, simultaneously employed across hundreds of

**Table 1.** Hit probability

| Missle salvo size needed to generate a 95 percent probability of hit (PH) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CVN 78 | LHA 6 | LPD 17 | Marine NSM Firing Unit |
| 5 | 8 | 12 | 60 |

Calculations used a circular error probability (CEP) of 50 percent common to standard, modern long-range ballistic missiles found in Russian inventories. Calculated CEP to the radius of the potential targets in the table based on half the lengths of the assets. Estimated a Marine, land-based unit firing a naval strike missile would occupy an area 56m by 30m based on current High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) doctrine. Half lengths: CVN at 169m, LHA at 128m, and LPD at 104m. *Maj Leo Spaeder, "Get Small or Get Shot,"* Marine Corps Gazette *103, no. 12 (December 2019), adapted by MCUP.*

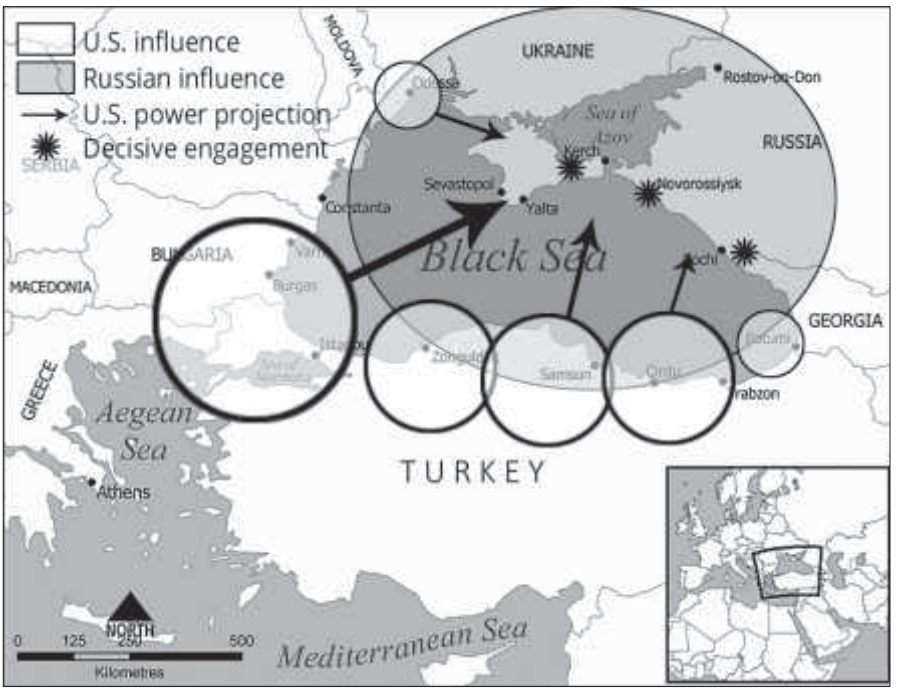
potential locations in the region, survive in more places, for longer, and may retain more capability than Navy ships and aircraft after an initial outbreak of hostilities. Since they are also cheaper to replace and less impactful if lost than warships or aircraft, the JFMCC commander may accept higher risk in their employment. These options do not exist in the JFMCC without Marine integration.

Marine integration also increases the capacity and enhances the capabilities of the JFMCC for sea denial. One battalion-size MAGTF, task-organized for sea denial, can deny sea control around six separate locations on key maritime terrain out to a radius of hundreds of nautical miles. It also doubles existing JFMCC sea-denial zones by using its sensor and C2 assets for a total of nearly 80,000 and 40,000 square miles in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, respectively.[26] This type of integration in the blunt layer provides an opportunity for the JFMCC to rebalance the factor of force and time against Russia. Buying time and conducting a credible economy of force mission "prevents Russia from achieving a fait accompli" and gives the JFMCC commander more options while preventing Russia from achieving its operational goals before the United States can respond. [27]

## The Surge Layer

Should blunt layer actions fail to deter or defeat Russian escalation, Marine integration in the surge layer allows the JFMCC to project power into a robust A2/AD network and decisively defeat Russian aggression in the Black Sea. Marine integration in this layer sets the conditions for naval power projection into the theater, secures sea lines of communication (SLOC) for operational logistics, and supports naval campaigns by projecting force ashore (map 5). In the surge layer, defined as actions that end a conflict on favorable terms, the JFMCC shifts from sea denial to sea control efforts as forces arrive from outside

**Map 5.** Decisive action in the surge layer




*Source: Courtesy of the author, adapted by MCUP.*

the theater. These surge forces "project power deep inland to disrupt the enemy, destroy enemy forces, and seize terrain in support of a joint campaign."[28] Marine units, already in place in the contact and blunt layers, and operating inside Russian threat rings, are in an ideal position to support the introduction of JFMCC surge forces. Marine integration sets the conditions for the war-winning forces that must come from outside the Black Sea region to defeat Russia.

The first and most significant way Marine integration enables the JFMCC in this layer is to set the conditions for naval power projection by naval expeditionary surge forces. Given Russian sea-denial threats and geographic limitations in the Black Sea, the decisive "war-winning" forces needed will primarily be naval aircraft, guided-missile capable naval vessels, and amphibious ground forces.[29] Marine integration leverages infrastructure developed in the contact layer to support this massive inflow of additional naval forces. In a decisive fight, Russian firepower, maritime choke points, and water depth will force U.S. carriers to remain well south of the Black Sea. Additionally, as surge forces become necessary, naval-air assets will arrive and fight without being embarked on a carrier. Simply put, it is likely that the JFMCC will have more aircraft than the carriers available to support them, and the carriers they do have will have to maintain significant standoff from the conflict areas.

The dozens of potential airfields, pads, and resupply points that were either built or surveyed in the previous layers should now be used to support naval airpower. Recent Joint training events with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in the Pacific validated a Navy and Marine concept that "envisions employing [Lockheed Martin Lightning II] F-35Bs [across] a shifting network of expeditionary airfields, tactical landing zones, and forward arming and refueling points."[30] In addition to this concept of logistical support, Marine units already in place before surge layer activities will continue to provide land-based firepower, sensor, and C2 support to JFMCC forces outside threat rings. These distributed Marine units act as a breach into denied areas for naval surge forces.[31] Integrating multiple domains through a combined Marine and Navy JFMCC potentially triples the number of F-35B Lightning II sorties available, increases their survivability, and reduces their rearming and refueling times. These distributed units are difficult to detect and target, especially when used only as needed and for short durations. Integrating Marine support for naval airpower will significantly increase the combat power and potential available to the JFMCC commander.

Another critical capability Marine integration provides the JFMCC in the surge layer is protecting SLOCs used by vulnerable Military Sealift Command (MSC) shipping to move supplies needed by war-winning forces into the region. In the surge layer, the JFMCC will rely heavily on MSC shipping for its operational-level logistics. Despite its unorthodoxy, the JFMCC should task MAGTFs, designed to support sea control, to secure portions of designated SLOCs, especially those approaching the Black Sea through the Mediterranean. Using distributed Bell Boeing MV-22 Ospreys, F-35Bs, and long-range precision fires, a MAGTF task-organized for sea control can secure up to 800 km of SLOCs in critical areas.[32] The Navy does not have enough ships to escort MSC shipping at the level of surge-layer conflict. Integrating Marines to secure SLOCs is a better option than telling the MSC that "you're on your own. Go fast, stay quiet."[33] Marine integration provides the JFMCC an opportunity to rebalance the factors of time, space, and force along these SLOCs.

In addition to maintaining distributed units across the Black Sea, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to project force ashore in amphibious operations as part of naval campaigns. This capability is especially relevant in the Black Sea should NATO require action against Russia's southern flank for a decisive action.[34] Aggregating distributed Marine units to provide a credible amphibious assault capability in the JFMCC will be a critical enabling operation for this potential NATO offensive. The JFMCC must enable "the decisive force that can arrive later, exploiting the operational and political leverage created by the blunt layer . . . to end the conflict on terms we prefer."[35] Marine integration with the JFMCC is key to defeating Russian aggression in the Black Sea.

## Alternatives to Marine Integration in the Black Sea

Marine integration with the JFMCC in the Black Sea could be seen as shortsighted. This concept potentially creates redundant capabilities based on current Army initiatives. Additionally, this concept may also focus only on one component of JFMCC at the expense of the Joint force. Finally, Marine integration in this manner may falsely assume the combatant and Joint force commander will always direct the proper command authorities and relationships necessary for this concept to work.

This proposed operational construct of Marine integration may create redundancies to the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces, designed to address the Joint concept of multidomain operations (MDO). The MDO concept is undeniably similar to the general idea behind Marine integration with the JFMCC and the EABO concept. It calls for "Army forces to penetrate and dis-integrate [*sic*] enemy anti-access and area denial systems and exploit the resultant freedom of maneuver to achieve strategic objectives."[36] With three Army MDO task forces created for the Pacific and another on its way to Europe to fight across all of the domains, detractors claim the Marine Corps may be selling a product no one needs.

Those arguing for a holistic approach to integration may claim Marine integration in this manner reduces the capacity of the Joint force by only focusing on the JFMCC at the expense of the other components and Services. It is possible that integrating the Marine Corps with the JFMCC limits the Marine Corps' ability to support the Air Force and Army across the GOM in the Black Sea. All the Services have a role in the contact, blunt, and surge layer against Russia. Former secretary of defense Mark T. Esper stressed his prioritization for cooperation during testimony to Congress, saying he will "ensure a mature joint concept of operations and the related capabilities [against Russian A2/AD capabilities] will be one of my top priorities."[37] Detractors believe that if a concept is not built from the ground up to support cooperation with every Service, then its value is questionable.

The greatest assumption associated with implementing this concept is that combatant and Joint force commanders will always direct the proper command authorities and relationships necessary for this concept to work. For Marine integration at this level to be feasible, the combatant commander must agree to place both Navy and Marine Corps forces under operational control of the JFMCC. It is unrealistic to assume that this relationship will always be established. Despite the apparent Marine and Navy Service-level alignment on integration, the Service chiefs have no direct control over command relationships.[38] Detractors believe assuming the Marine Corps will be integrated and always task-organized under the JFMCC in the Black Sea is a significant flaw in the argument.

While these discussions do present valid concerns, Marine integration with the JFMCC is not redundant. It prioritizes the fight for sea control as a specialized, complex task by itself. Planning for sea control must be deliberate. Units gaining or denying sea control must be specially equipped and trained for it. While the Army's MDO task forces do provide operational options for operating in contested environments, they are not designed to meet the same maritime requirements that Marine integration with the JFMCC does. The sum of Marine integration efforts is greater than its parts, allowing the JFMCC opportunities to systematically rebalance time, force, and space on an escalating spectrum. There is a requirement for both the Army's MDO forces and a Marine integrated JFMCC, as there is always a desire for more capabilities, especially in an operating environment as complex as the Black Sea. As the Department of Defense's priorities shift toward the Pacific, Marine integration with the JFMCC in the Black Sea provides more rebalancing opportunities and serves as a global operational economy of force task-organization.[39]

Purposeful Marine integration with the JFMCC also does not imply exclusivity at the expense of the Joint force. Successful execution of the GOM requires coordination and mutual support between all Services and components. The entire Joint force will need to provide show of force exercises, air-to-air refueling, long-range fires, air defense, and assemble large ground combat formations around the Black Sea. Marine integration with the JFMCC does not preclude the Joint force commander's ability to direct supporting and supported relationships between components. Marine integration allows the JFMCC to pivot based on the type and scope of supporting or supported relationships, using the inherently scalable MEUs illustrated as baseline examples. As other components increase their forces in the region, the JFMCC has the option to scale down the size of its Marine integration. As those components' capabilities diminish, Marine integration scales up to brigade and larger sizes, providing the Joint force exactly what it needs. Marine integration allows the JFMCC to be exceptional at sea denial and control while still being able to support the rest of the Joint force.

The best and most effective use of the Marine Corps forces will be to integrate early with the JFMCC by establishing the proper command relationships under a functional component. Combatant commanders recognize they gain more value by purposely building Marine integration into the JFMCC from the ground up. They will establish the necessary command relationships to ensure success in the maritime domain and win the fight for sea control. Aligning on the most likely employment scenario in the Black Sea means the Marine Corps and Navy can now plan, train, and equip more efficiently and effectively with an objective focus. Combatant commanders will support Marine integration with the JFMCC by organizing their forces in a way that allows them the best

chance to strike effectively first, remain operationally relevant, and win in the Black Sea.

## Conclusion

The JFMCC is the force that needs to be prepositioned in places most likely to see littoral competition and conflict. Gone are the days when the U.S. military could move from their point of departure, arrive on the outskirts of a theater of operations, and then begin their fight. Now, the fight will begin long before our country even realizes it is in one. Marine integration enables the JFMCC to compete in the contact layer more effectively. It increases the JFMCC's capacity to roll back Russian aggression in the blunt layer by striking effectively first and winning the hider-finder competition. It allows the JFMCC to project power to decisively defeat Russian aggression against the BSF and capable A2/AD networks in the surge layer.

The push for greater Marine integration with the Navy under a JFMCC construct must continue, not just in the Pacific but across the globe. Both the Navy and Marine Corps should seek opportunities to test emerging concepts with a united effort and an integrated command structure. The Black Sea is an ideal venue to see these concepts in action and meet the directives laid out in the *2018 National Defense Strategy.* A Navy and Marine team, under the JFMCC, is the most efficient and effective way for the United States to support its national interests against the current Russian threat in the Black Sea.

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## Endnotes

1. Grzegorz Kuczyński, *Mare Nostrum Strategy: Russian Military Activity in the Black Sea* (Warsaw, Poland: Warsaw Institute, 2019).
2. The *2018 National Defense Strategy* uses the global operating model (GOM) to describe the employment of the Joint force across the world for all potential missions. The model is designed to allow the United States to compete more effectively below the level of armed conflict; delay, degrade, or deny adversary aggression; surge war-winning forces; and manage conflict escalation.
3. Deborah Sanders, "Maritime Security in the Black Sea: Can Regional Solutions Work?," *European Security* 18, no. 2 (June 2009): 101–24, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662830903433720.
4. Sanders, "Maritime Security in the Black Sea."
5. LtGen Ben Hodges (Ret), Janusz Bugajski, and Peter B. Doran, *Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank: A Strategy for Baltic-Black Sea Coherence* (Washington, DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, 2019).
6. Michael Petersen, "The Naval Power Shift in the Black Sea," *War on the Rocks*, 9 January 2019.
7. Igor Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis: Towards a Greater Russian Maritime Power in the Black Sea," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 3 (September 2014): 367–82.
8. Alex Lockie, "Russia Sent a Massive Naval Armada to Syria—and Looks to be Readying to Fight the U.S.," Business Insider, 28 August 2018.
9. Kuczyński, *Mare Nostrum Strategy*.

10. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2018).
11. Dmitry Gorenburg, "Is a New Russian Black Sea Fleet Coming? Or Is It Here?," *War on the Rocks*, 31 July 2018.
12. Hodges, Bugajski, and Doran, *Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank*.
13. Jim Garamone, "Panetta Describes U.S. Shift in Asia-Pacific," Defense.gov, 1 June 2012.
14. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States.*
15. The Marine Corps is currently investing heavily in new capabilities that directly contribute to sea control or sea denial. Improving current rocket artillery and adding a Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) is giving standard MEUs a remotely operated, land-based, long-range, precision-guided missile capability. Additionally, all MAGTFs will soon be networked into the Naval Tactical Grid to support Joint All-Domain Command and Control. Finally, the development of a new family of amphibious combat vehicles and lightweight tactical vehicles is already enhancing the operational mobility of the MAGTF in the littorals.
16. *Statement of the Honorable James F. Geurts and Lieutenant General Eric M. Smith Statement on Marine Corps Ground Programs*, 116th Cong., 2d Sess. (5 March 2020) (House Armed Services Committee, U.S. Congress).
17. James Holmes, "U.S. Maritime Strategy toward China" (lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, 19 February 2019).
18. Six VBSS actions a day calculated by number of maneuver elements, supported by air and/or ship transport, each with associated assets for contingencies (quick reaction, casualty evacuation, and fires), all organic to a MEU.
19. LtCol Joseph John Shimerdla, USA, and Maj Ryan Kort, USA, "Setting the Theater: A Definition, Framework, and Rationale for Effective Resourcing at the Theater Army Level," *Military Review*, May–June 2018.
20. *EABO* is a future naval operational concept conducted by low-signature naval and Joint forces with operationally relevant sea control and denial capabilities. It is designed to support the JFMCC and fleet commanders in the fight for sea control by exploiting the opportunities afforded by key maritime terrain, particularly in close and confined seas. From *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook: Considerations for Force Development and Employment* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Concepts and Plans Division, 2018).
21. *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012); and *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook*, 5.
22. *Force Design 2030* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2020), 5.
23. Kate Tringham, "Navy League 2019: U.S. Marine Corps Procures Naval Strike Missile," *Jane's Navy International*, 9 May 2019.
24. *Force Design 2030*.
25. *Force Design 2030*.
26. Amount of key terrain in denial zones as estimated by placing one firing launcher at the site equipped with a Naval Strike Missile (NSM). Six launchers in a battery assigned to a battalion; NSM with an estimated range of 100 nautical miles. Increase in JFMCC sea-denial zones estimated by intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and communication asset ranges organic to a MEU.
27. *Hearings before the Committee on the Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*, 116th Cong., 1st Sess. (29 January 2019) (Senate Armed Services Committee, U.S. Congress).
28. *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2015).
29. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States*.
30. *A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2016).
31. Scott Cuomo et al., "Not Yet Openly at War, but Still Mostly at Peace: The Marine

Corps' Roles and Missions in and Around Key Maritime Terrain," *War on the Rocks*, 23 October 2018.

32. Calculated using a task-organized, battalion-size Special Purpose MAGTF operating from islands in the Aegean Sea reinforced with additional aviation, C2, and fires assets. For reference, see map 4 along the Aegean Sea SLOC.
33. David B. Larter, " 'You're on Your Own': U.S. Sealift Can't Count on Navy Escorts in the Next Big War," DefenseNews, 10 October 2018.
34. Hodges, Bugajski, and Doran, *Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank*.
35. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*.
36. *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2018), iii.
37. *Advance Policy Questions for Dr. Mark Esper: Nominee for Appointment to be Secretary of Defense*, 116th Cong., 1st Sess. (July 2019) (Senate, Armed Services Committee, U.S. Congress).
38. *Joint Operations,* Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), III-3.
39. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States*.