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# Doctrinal References for Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare

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U.S. Marine Corps

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FOREWORD

As Marines serving on joint or staff billets, we are frequently called upon to provide the Marine Corps perspective on current issues, to discuss the roles and missions of the Corps, or to explain how Marines prepare and equip to fight. Much of this information is published in joint and Service doctrine. Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 5-1A, *Doctrinal References for Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, is a compendium of current joint and Service doctrinal publications. The intent of this publication is to provide Marine officers and staff noncommissioned officers with a quick reference guide to the essential elements of published information that they need to effectively serve on component, joint, or multinational staffs. MCRP 5-1A is not inclusive, and staff officers should refer to higher level doctrine as needed.

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

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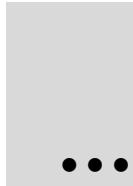
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# Operational Environment

The environment where Marines will operate in the next decade reflects the changing character of modern conflict. The growth of cities along the world’s littorals means Marines must be prepared to conduct a range of operations in heavily populated urban areas and that civilians and other noncombatants will be an ever-increasing concern to the commander. (Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication [MCDP] 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*)

## Levels of War

The highest level is the strategic. Strategy involves establishing goals, assigning forces, providing assets, and imposing conditions on the use of force. Strategy derives from political and policy objectives and is the sole authoritative basis for military operations. The strategic level of war involves the art of winning wars and maintaining the peace.

The next level—operational—links the strategic and tactical levels. It includes deciding when, where, and under what conditions to engage the enemy in battle. The operational level of war is the art and science of winning campaigns.

The final level of war is the tactical. Tactics are the concepts and methods used to accomplish a particular mission in either combat or military operations other than war (MOOTW). In war, tactics focus on applying combat power to defeat an enemy



force. The tactical level of war involves the art and science of winning engagements and battles to achieve the objectives of the campaign.

The distinctions between the levels of war are rarely clear and often overlap in practice. Commanders may operate at multiple levels simultaneously. In MOOTW, small unit leaders may conduct tactical actions that have operational and even strategic consequences.

### **Range of Military Operations**

Conflict can take a variety of forms ranging from general war, such as a global conflict between major powers, all the way down to MOOTW where violence is limited and combat forces may not be needed. This range may be characterized by two major categories: a major theater war (MTW) or a smaller-scale contingency.

An MTW is the employment of large joint and multinational forces in combat operations to defeat an enemy nation, coalition, or alliance. Operation Desert Storm is an example of an MTW.

A smaller-scale contingency normally encompasses a wide range of naval, joint, or multinational operations in small wars and MOOTW. Peace enforcement operations in the Balkans and foreign humanitarian assistance operations are examples of smaller-scale contingencies.