



Maj. Gen. James (Jay) Bartholomees speaks with the air traffic controllers about airspace management for the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC) rotation 26-01 at Ford Island, Oahu, Hawaii on Nov. 6, 2025. JPMRC 26-01 will integrate U.S. forces, along with military members from France, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, alongside New Zealand Staff Observers to refine joint capabilities and rehearse tactics, techniques, and procedures required to dominate jungle and archipelagic terrain during large-scale combat operations. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Olivia Cowart)

Multi-Domain Task Force:

Complementing Joint Fires

MAJ Pete Beamer

The technical maturity and density of adversary anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) architecture in the Indo-Pacific, compounded by its asynchronous geography and extended lines of communications, make it the most challenging theater for U.S. operations. In a high-end conflict—particularly across the First and Second Island Chains (FIC/SIC)—persistent, survivable, and flexible fires are essential to preserve escalation dominance and freedom of maneuver for the Joint Force. Forward-postured Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTFs) offer a land-based complement to naval and air operations. They provide a persistent, risk-absorbing, strategically located alternative that fills temporal and geographic gaps and provides options during peak operational risk.

Land-Based Fires Offer Persistent Deterrence and Rapid Transition to Crisis

During competition, MDTFs provide a visible presence and operational relevance by maintaining readiness and posture on key terrain across the Western Pacific and in some cases,

augmenting existing allied-like systems. From these positions of relative advantage, MDTFs shape the environment and deter adversary aggression. Their posture in competition allows them to rapidly provide response options as the Joint Force transitions into crisis and mass forces to collectively respond. The MDTFs conduct persistent reconnaissance, refine targeting data, and rehearse rapid fires integration with the Joint Force—ensuring commanders have options without a lag as escalation unfolds.

MDTF Fires Capabilities During Armed Conflict

Once conflict begins, MDTFs deliver decisive long-range precision fires from dispersed positions across key maritime terrain in the FIC/SIC. When appropriately sustained, they remain operational despite enemy pressure through mobility, concealment, and layered air defenses. Their ground-based systems—such as SM-6 and Tomahawk—integrate with naval and air-delivered fires, enabling the seamless handoff of target sets in the operational and strategic deep areas as the maritime and air domains flex in response to adversary pressure.

Critically, MDTFs mass kinetic and non-kinetic effects in multiple domains across integrated systems and kill chains—command networks, missile units, ISR architectures, and critical logistics—degrade the adversary’s A2/AD more holistically than platform-by-platform strikes. MDTFs also integrate into Combined Joint All-Domain Command & Control (CJADC2) constructs, giving them the ability to initiate and sustain joint fires even under contested Command & Control (C2).

MDTFs as a Standing Threat to Adversary Sea Lines of Communication

Strategic Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) underpin maritime freedom of action as vessels move through chokepoints along the FIC/SIC. Land-based MDTF systems, when appropriately positioned, can continuously influence SLOCs and assume a sea-denial role, freeing naval forces for other missions. From both fixed and relocatable positions, MDTFs hold at-risk surface combatants and key auxiliaries moving along priority SLOCs, forcing the adversary to divert reconnaissance assets to address a persistent land-based threat and diluting fires that would otherwise be aimed at the Joint Force.

Continuity and Resilience in the Joint Fight

Fires continuity is essential in largescale joint operations. When ships rotate to refuel/rearm or aircraft stand down for maintenance, weather, or risk, MDTFs provide a standing landbased fires option that prevents operational “seams.”

What MDTFs Add to Naval Power

3) Shore Based Sea Denial and Deep Magazines.

Dispersed, mobile launchers on key terrain create additional dilemmas across straits and sea lanes. They complicate adversary naval calculus, force the adversary to defend in depth, and add depth to the joint magazine without requiring vessels to rearm during critical windows.

4) All Domain Sensing and Electromagnetic Maneuver.

MDTF sensors and EW detachments extend maritime domain awareness, enable positive identification, and open windows for strikes. Low-cost sensors, non-traditional kinetic options, and disciplined emissions degrade adversary targeting while cueing joint fires against exposed nodes.

5) Resilience and Dispersion in a Contested Theater.

Operating from key, consenting sovereign landmasses gives MDTFs persistence under fire; frequent displacement, austere reload sites, operational dispersion, and distributed small-cache ammunition reduces vulnerability. This creates steady joint effects even as vessels maneuver out of weapon engagement zones.

Command Relationships That Work

1) Supported–Supporting Framework. For maritime objectives, designate the JFMCC as supported. Theater Army ensures MDTFs are supporting, with time-bounded TACON of designated MDTF elements to maritime fires cells only as required by the Joint Force Commander. This relationship preserves unity of effort for sea control/denial while retaining land force sustainment and protection responsibilities at the right echelon.

Designate MDTFs as mutual support as the baseline to the ground battlespace owner, with time-bound, task specific direct support (or “supported commander” status) only when effects are required *inside* that battlespace owner’s Area of Operations that demand tight integration (sometimes rising to close support conditions).

2) Establishing Directive. Publish early. It should specify priorities, authorities for dynamic targeting, fire support coordination measures (FSCMs), and sustainment responsibilities.

As naval and air forces reposition outside weapon engagement zones, MDTFs can assume primacy for designated target sets, enabling tactical patience and force generation for the Joint Force. Conversely, when the adversary creates friction—platform losses, cyber/EW disruption, C2 degradation—MDTFs’ dispersed design and contested C2 tactics, techniques, and procedures allow them to serve as alternate shooters that inherit high-payoff target lists and continue execution with minimal disruption to the joint scheme of maneuver.

Moreover, MDTFs—equipped with organic sensor-to-shooter architecture that enhances the joint common operating picture and integrated into CJADC2—can rapidly receive and execute time-sensitive targets, preserving tempo even in the most challenging scenarios.

Conclusion

MDTFs are not replacements for air and naval striking power; they are essential partners that complement the fleet by deepening magazines, compressing killchains, and covering temporal/spatial risk gaps across the FIC/SIC. Positioned forward on land, MDTFs impose sea denial, protect joint logistics, provide persistent deep sensing, and challenge adversary air/sea dominance from angles its maritime focused defenses cannot fully cover. By ensuring the Joint Force always retains a credible, on call land-based fires option—whether ships and aircraft are massed, maneuvering, or regenerating—MDTFs strengthen deterrence in competition and provide continuity and resilience in conflict.

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