

➤ Marine Corps Aviation Precision Weapons

DISCUSSION

The Marine Corps requires aviation weapons to perform close air support, deep air support, armed reconnaissance, air interdiction, and suppression of enemy air defenses as part of a combined-arms operation. The Department of the Navy has established a future aviation weapons roadmap for Naval and Marine Aviation that decreases the number of types of weapons in the inventory, retaining only multi-purpose munitions that are effective against a wide range of targets and threats. The roadmap emphasizes precision weapons that produce maximum effect on intended targets while minimizing collateral damage.

Under the roadmap, the precision weapons that will remain in the inventory include the Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) family and their follow-on improvements, the Joint Direct Standoff Weapon (JSOW) family, and the modernized Hellfire. These weapons will be employed on Marine Corps tactical aircraft and attack helicopters,

including the F/A-18A/C/D Hornet, Joint Strike Fighter, AV-8B Harrier, and the AH-1W/Z Super Cobra.

In addition to modernizing its air-delivered ordnance, the Marine Corps is striving to maintain a high level of training for aircrews. Revised training and readiness manuals have set a realistic requirement for the ordnance needed by aircrews to maintain their proficiency. The Corps also has developed a procurement strategy that reduces the aviation weapons inventory types from three to one, while still allowing Marine aviation to more effectively support the Ground Combat Element.

MARINE CORPS POSITION

The Marine Corps is pursuing innovative aviation weapons that will provide the best possible support for Marines on the ground. These weapons will allow the Marine Corps to maintain its aviation combat capabilities well into the 21st century.

