

> Tactical Aircraft (TacAir) Integration

The Navy and Marine Corps team have embarked on a Tactical Aircraft Integration plan that will enhance their core combat capabilities and provide a more potent, cohesive, and affordable fighting force. This integration is a culmination of a long-term effort to generate a greater combat capability from naval TacAir, and represents a shared commitment to employ the Department of the Navy's resources as judiciously as possible.



As noted, integration has been ongoing for several years, with four of the Marine Corps' fourteen F/A-18C Hornet squadrons operating as part of embarked carrier air wings. The FY 2002 Defense Planning Guidance highlighted the importance of continuing TacAir Integration when it directed the Department of the Navy to "...conduct a comprehensive review to access the feasibility of integrating all Naval Aviation force structure." TacAir Integration will guarantee that naval TacAir will be one as never before, will support the greater good of the joint warfighter, and will ensure the future of Marine TacAir.

Specifically, the integration plan:

- >> Preserves Marine Aviation's culture and reinforces our expeditionary ethos

- >> Provides a smaller, more capable, more affordable force
- >> Integrates Marine TacAir on all Navy aircraft carriers
- >> Integrates Navy TacAir into the Marine Unit Deployment Program
- >> Includes the global sourcing of all DoN TacAir assets and ensures TacAir support to the MAGTF
- >> Provides increased combat capability forward
- >> Is in concert with enhanced sea basing concept.

A cornerstone of this plan is Department of the Navy funding and maintenance of legacy aircraft at the highest levels of readiness until they are replaced by the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) and F/A-18E/F. This requires an unwavering commitment to strike fighter readiness across the DoN. These integration-driven readiness levels will allow the department to surge more aircraft than is possible today.

Moving forward, the Navy and Marine Corps will leverage their respective service's strengths and integrate when and where appropriate. In addition, current service doctrine and training – which have traditionally focused on the employment of air at the tactical level (close air support) or the strategic level (long-range strike or interdiction) – will be expanded to leverage Naval Aviation's distinctive characteristics at the operational level as well. TacAir integration, coupled with new technology, service reorganization, and innovative operating concepts doctrine, will fundamentally change Naval Aviation and achieve exponential increases in military capabilities.