

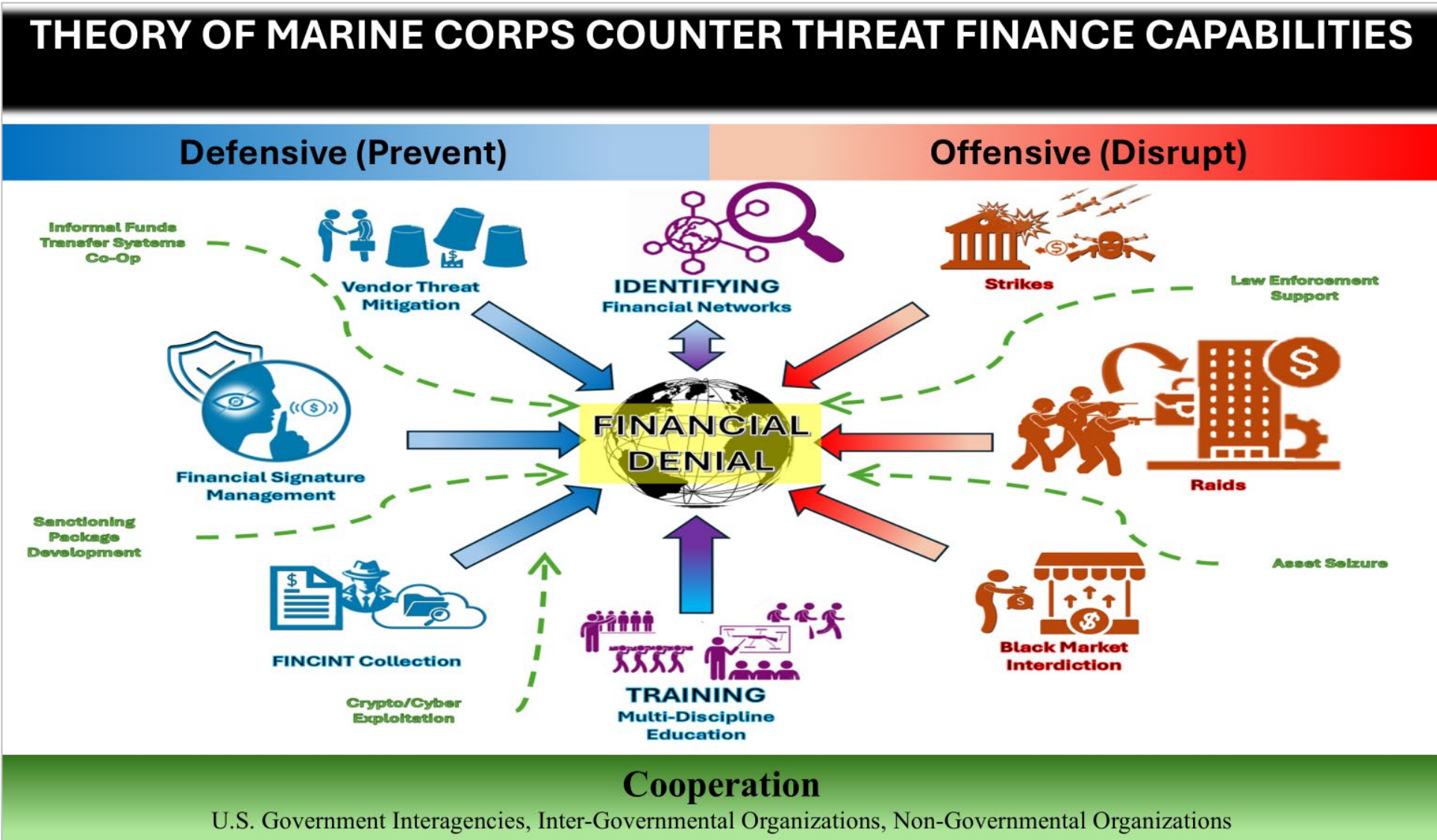
“WEAPONIZED FINANCE”: COUNTER THREAT FINANCE AS A MARINE CORPS OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY



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Abstract

This thesis aims to demonstrate the critical importance of Counter Threat Finance (CTF) as an essential operational capability for the United States Marine Corps. Despite the evolving nature of modern warfare, where financial networks increasingly serve as the lifeblood of adversarial operations, the Marine Corps has yet to fully embrace CTF as a core warfighting competency. This oversight is particularly glaring when juxtaposed against the significant investments and advancements made in domains such as Space, Information Operations, and Cyber. The Marine Corps’ failure to leverage the economic domain with finance for operational effects represents a substantial gap in its strategic arsenal. Without a robust CTF framework, the Corps risks allowing adversaries to sustain and expand their operations unchecked, inadvertently prolonging conflicts. Its absences could raise material and human costs, missing opportunities to disrupt enemy supply chains and weapons procurement and leave exploitable vulnerabilities in financial safeguarding measures. This thesis explores the benefits of integrating CTF capabilities, examines successful implementations in other military and government sectors, and proposes a roadmap for the Marine Corps to develop and deploy this critical 21st-century warfighting tool. By adopting CTF as a core competency, the Marine Corps can enhance its operational effectiveness and contribute more robustly to joint and combined operations.



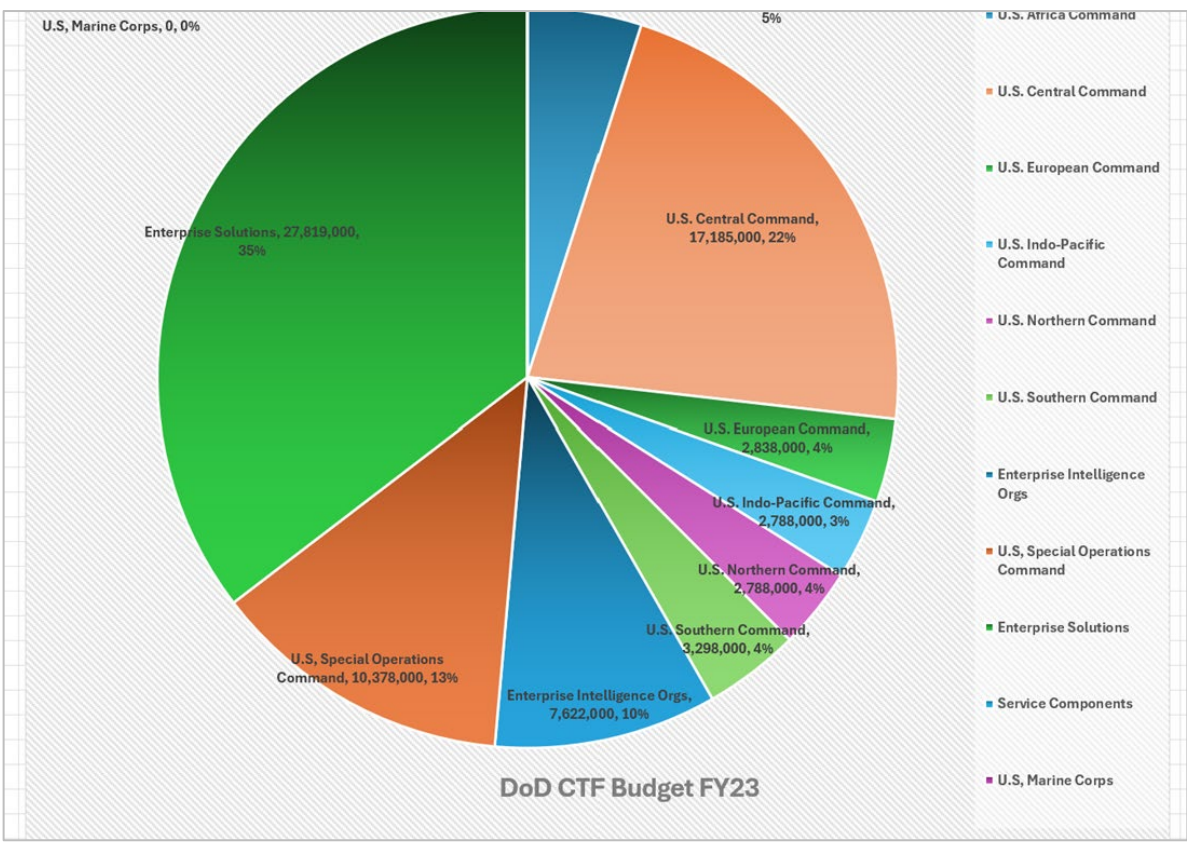
Basic Theory of Marine Corps CTF

Methods

- This research draws lessons from historical case studies (e.g., Israeli Operation Harpoon, Shiedog, U.S. Navy seizures, Europol’s Oakleaf) and analyzes government policies, doctrines, and reports on CTF implementation in the DoD, with a focus on the Marine Corps. Key sources include 20 years of GAO and DoD IG reports, budget documents, and academic studies highlighting CTF’s value and applicability to Marine Corps operations.
- Data is organized into themes: innovation, collaboration, standardization, training, policy, resource allocation, and the Marine Corps’ supporting role in CTF. Analysis integrates qualitative and quantitative findings, using charts and graphs for clarity.
- Findings address central questions: How can CTF enhance the Marine Corps as a warfighting institution? What steps are needed to standardize Blue and Red CTF capabilities? The study also highlights gaps in literature and areas for further exploration to bolster national security.
- Visual aids (charts and tables) are based on public data, symposiums, podcasts, and speaker notes. This chapter focuses on gaps in money, time, and personnel, as well as cultural factors impacting CTF adoption.

Results & Their Impact

- Gap 1: Marine Corps Investment Money, Time, People
- Gap 2: Culture Shift Bridging the Gap—USMC Innovation Pivot CTF
 - Modernization Under Force Design 2030
 - Barriers to CTF Adoption
 - Need for Non-Kinetic Capabilities
- Capability Red
 - Raid
 - Strikes
- Capability Blue
 - Financial Signature Management
 - Vendor Threat Mitigation



FY23 DoD CTF-Specific Budget According to the DoD’s Annual Department of Defense Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities, Defense FY 24 Budget Estimate Report

Recommendations

- Budget allocation/ Monetary investment
- Broad Foundational Training cross MOS
- Creation of a pilot CTF cell
- USMC leadership to advocate for CTF
- Establish more comprehensive formal partnerships with key organizations,
 - USASOC, USSOCOM, Joint Special Operations University, Defense Intelligence Agency

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