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The Marine Corps' Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV)

Background

The Marine Corps describes the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) as

The Corps' next-generation vehicle designed to move Marines from ship to shore (**Figure 1**). Designed to replace the Corps' aging Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV), which has been in service since 1972, the ACV will be the primary means of tactical mobility for the Marine infantry battalion at sea and ashore (**Figure 2**). The ACV will have the capability to provide organic, direct fire support to dismounted infantry in the attack.

There are currently four ACV variants planned: (1) a Personnel Variant (ACV-P), which can carry three crewmembers with 13 Marines and two days of combat equipment and supplies; (2) a Command-and-Control Variant (ACV-C); (3) a Recovery Variant (ACV-R); and (4) a 30-mm Gun Variant (ACV-30). The Marines intend for the ACV to provide effective land and tactical water mobility (ship-to-shore and shore-to-shore), precise supporting fires, and high levels of force protection intended to protect against blasts, fragmentation, and kinetic energy threats.

The ACV program delivered initial ACV-P variants in November 2020 and delivered initial ACV-C variants in FY2022. Plans call for delivery of Improved Lethality 30-mm Gun Variant ACVs in FY2025 and Recovery Variants in FY2026.

Figure 1. ACV in Ship-to-Shore Mode



Source: https://www.defensenews.com/training-sim/2024/05/20/amphibious-combat-vehicles-first-deployment-may-yield-repair-lessons/?utm_source=sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mil-ebb, accessed May 21, 2024.

Figure 2. ACV Ashore



Source: <https://www.baesystems.com/en-us/multimedia/amphibious-combat-vehicle-l-l-acv-l-l->, accessed February 3, 2021.

Program Status

In June 2018, the ACV entered Low-Rate Initial Production (LRIP) with BAE Systems selected for the first 30 vehicles to be delivered in fall 2019. In November 2020, the ACV achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC). In December 2020, a Full-Rate Production (FRP) decision was reportedly made by the Marine Corps after having been delayed from September 2020 due to issues related to Coronavirus Disease 2019. The current planned acquisition objective of 632 ACVs is to replace AAVs in Assault Amphibian Battalions. The previous acquisition objective of 1,122 ACVs was reduced in accordance with Marine Corps Force Design modernization efforts (see CRS Insight IN11281, *New U.S. Marine Corps Force Design Initiative: Force Design 2030*, by Andrew Feickert).

Full-Rate Production Contract

On March 6, 2023, BAE reported it had received its third full-rate production ACV contract for \$256.8 million. Under this contract, BAE is to produce both ACV-P and ACV-C variants. BAE reports ACV production and support is to take place at BAE locations in Stafford, VA; San Jose, CA; Sterling Heights, MI; Aiken, SC; and York, PA.

ACV-30 Variant Delivered

Reportedly, BAE delivered its ACV-30 variant to the Marines in February 2024 for government testing. The ACV-30 is to be equipped with a stabilized, medium-caliber, remote-controlled turret system produced by the Norwegian company Kongsberg.

ACV Amphibious Operational Mishaps

Reportedly, on July 19, 2022, two ACVs were involved in accidents while training off the coast of California during high surf conditions. According to the Marines, "One ACV tipped onto its side in the surf zone and another became disabled during the training. Marines in both ACVs conducted their immediate action drills and safely returned to shore." After the incidents, the Marines suspended ACV amphibious operations while an internal review was conducted.

ACV Resumes Amphibious Operations

On September 23, 2022, the Marines resumed ACV operations in the open ocean. In addition, the Marines implemented new rules for surf conditions, noting, “The interim maximum surf conditions identified include a significant breaker height of four feet, which allows the ACV to operate safely while maintaining a high-state of readiness for the ACV community.”

ACV's First Overseas Deployment

Reportedly, the ACV made its first overseas operational deployment during the May 2024 Exercise Balikatan 24 in the Philippines. ACVs carrying Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) from Camp Pendleton, CA, launched from ships, transited the surf zone, and conducted live fire exercises ashore. Reportedly, the Marines planned to use the ACV's first deployment to determine if extended operations from a ship provide new lessons on maintaining and operating the ACV.

ACV Safety and Readiness Improvements

Marine Corps leadership commenting on ACV safety at a January 2025 reportedly noted,

There's no vehicle that is inherently safe or unsafe. You have to operate within its parameters. So, when you operate it in 12-foot plunging surf, as done in the case in California, then it's not going to perform.

Addressing readiness improvements, Marine leadership remarked that

- With ACVs now operating overseas, the vehicles are clear to operate in the surf zone to transit from ship-to-shore and vice versa after crews have completed safety training and certifications.
- The Marine Corps is working with BAE Systems to improve readiness rates and to prevent corrosion of the vehicles' struts and shocks.
- The Marines are engaged in contract negotiations with BAE to lower the price of the ACV 30 mm cannon variant due to cost growth and spending constraints.

Reduction in Planned FY2025 and FY2026 ACV Procurement Quantities

Reportedly, the Marines are reducing “procurement plans for FY2025 and FY2026, reducing acquisition quantities by 48 vehicles across the two years due to spending caps under the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA), inflation, and a higher-than-expected vendor proposal.”

The Navy's FY2025 budget request notes,

FY2025 reductions in quantities from 104 to 80 are due to a fiscally constrained environment because of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, increased inflationary pressures, and a higher than anticipated vendor proposal for Full Rate Production Lots 5-6. These factors result in a loss of buying power to procure the number of vehicles in previous budget submission for FY2025 and FY2026. The program was fully funded to procure the Approved Acquisition Objective (AAO). However, due to 1) the loss of \$102 million from the FRA across

FY2025 and FY2026, 2) the effects of inflationary increases, and 3) a much higher than anticipated vendor proposal, the programs vehicle procurement has been reduced by a total of 48 vehicles across FY2025 - FY2026.

On April 27, 2025 the House and Senate released a bill titled “Enhancement of Department of Defense Resources for Improving the Quality of Life for Military Personnel.” The bill authorizes \$241 million for “the development, procurement, and integration of Marine Corps amphibious vehicles.” It is unclear, if enacted, how this additional funding could affect previously planned FY2025 and FY2026 ACV procurement reductions.

Recent ACV Program Activities

Reportedly, after price negotiations to lower ACV-30 costs, the Marines awarded BAE a \$188 million contract in late April 2025 for the first lot of full-rate production ACV-30s. According to reports, “Under the new ACV procurement plan, the BAE-produced ACV and the Kongsberg-manufactured Protector Remote Turret 20 (RT-20) weapon system are to be purchased and delivered separately and integrated at the Naval Information Warfare Integration Center Atlantic, Charleston, SC.” In a separate action, the Marines reportedly plan to initiate market research to examine the feasibility of incorporating a counter uncrewed aerial system (C-UAS) onto ACV variants.

Considerations for Congress

Oversight questions Congress could consider include the following:

Potential Program and Readiness Impact of Reduced FY2025 and FY2026 ACV Procurement

The potential reduction in the production of 48 ACVs over FY2025 and FY2026 raises a number of issues. From a program perspective, will the acquisition of these 48 vehicles be made up post-FY2026, or does this represent a decrease in overall ACV acquisition numbers? Will the reduction have cost implications for future ACV acquisition, and how could this affect current program costs and production plans? In terms of readiness, will having 48 fewer ACVs in FY2025 and FY2026 have an appreciable readiness impact on Fleet Marine Forces and, if so, how do the Marines plan to compensate for this lack of capability?

Lessons Learned from the Ukraine Conflict

There are a number of military observations resulting from the Ukraine conflict. One observation is armored vehicles have allegedly proven highly vulnerable to anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs), armed uncrewed aerial systems (UASs), and loitering munitions. As ACVs are intended to “provide organic, direct fire support to dismounted infantry in the attack,” how vulnerable to these systems are ACVs during amphibious operations and when operating ashore supporting combat operations? Are the Marines considering additional ACV survivability modifications based on lessons learned in Ukraine?

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