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Marine Corps Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV)

What Is the Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV)?

According to the Marine Corps,

The Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV) is a planned effort by the Marine Corps to provide a purpose-built family of vehicles, with new capabilities to support Mobile Reconnaissance, and replace the Light Armored Vehicle (LAV). It is designed to be highly mobile, networked, transportable, protected, and lethal, providing sensors, communication systems, and lethality options to counter threats traditionally addressed with more heavily armored systems. ARVs will be smaller and lighter than the [Amphibious Combat Vehicle] ACV-30, enabling rapid deployment and stealthy operations in various terrains.

The ARV-30 will provide greater capability than the current Light Armored Vehicle 25mm variant (LAV-25) and meet the Marine Corps' requirements for Force Design. It will be equipped with advanced features such as an automatic 30mm medium-caliber cannon, anti-armor capability, modern command-and-control systems, and a full range of advanced sensors. ARV-C4/UAS [command, control, communications, and computers/unmanned aerial systems] will be equipped with a C4 suite of capabilities that will allow it to operate as a battlefield “quarterback” by utilizing integrated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems.

Program Status

The Marines plan for three ARV variants. The first variant is the Command, Control, Communications and Computers/Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C4/UAS) version. The second variant is the 30 mm auto-cannon version (ARV-30), and the final variant is the ARV Logistics (ARV-LOG) version. Reportedly, on July 16, 2021, the Marines selected Textron Systems (**Figure 1**) and General Dynamics Land Systems (GDLS) (**Figure 2**) to build ARV prototypes with delivery expected in the first quarter of FY2023 and evaluation concluding in the third quarter FY2023. Textron reportedly delivered its ARV prototypes to the Marine Corps' Nevada Automotive Test Center on December 1, 2022. General Dynamics reportedly delivered its ARV prototypes to the Marines on December 23, 2022. The delivery of these two prototypes marked the beginning of the formal government evaluation process.

ARV Prototype Evaluation

In February 2023, the Marine Corps reportedly began evaluation of three ARV prototypes. In addition to Textron and GDLS prototypes, BAE systems—the Amphibious Combat Vehicle's (ACV) manufacturer—provided a third

prototype (based on a modified ACV) for evaluation. The prototype evaluation reportedly was to focus on the ARV's ability to navigate “mission-representative terrain” in addition to its C4 and UAS capabilities.

ARV Prototype Contracts Awarded

On March 6, 2024, the Marines selected GDLS and Textron to design, develop, and manufacture an ARV-30 prototype vehicle. Reportedly, the prototypes were to be delivered in FY2025, with procurement planned to begin in FY2028.

Figure 1. Textron ARV Prototype



Source: Defense Daily, “GD Submits Prototype Proposal for Marine Corps ARV, SAIC Is Out,” May 6, 2021.

Figure 2. GDLS ARV Prototype



Source: Seapower, “General Dynamics Land Systems Delivers Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle Prototype to U.S. Marine Corps,” January 5, 2023.

ARV Request for Information

In July 2024, the Marines reportedly issued a request for information to industry to conduct market research for the ARV “ahead of an upcoming engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) competition.” The Marines reportedly planned to “release a request for

proposals in the second quarter of FY2025 and award an EMD contract in the second quarter of FY2026.”

Plans for ARV Advancement to the Engineering and Manufacturing Development Phase

According to FY2026 Navy budget documents, the Marine Corps is requesting \$240 million in Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) funding to transition into the ARV EMD phase, complete ARV-30 competitive prototyping efforts, and award EMD contracts. The FY2026 budget documents further note the ARV program is planned to advance to the EMD phase with GDLS and Textron designing and manufacturing six ARV-C4/UAS variants, six ARV-30 variants, and four ARV-LOG variants, for a total of 16 production representative test vehicles (PRTVs) per vendor. Reportedly, a down select is planned “to occur after each vendor builds 16 prototypes and the government completes evaluation of the solutions, resulting in a production award to one vendor.”

Marines Award a Second ARV Rapid Prototype Contract

In April 2026, as part of the prototyping effort,

the Marine Corps awarded General Dynamics Land Systems and Textron Systems Corporation a second Rapid Prototyping phase for the Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle. Both vendors will be building and delivering their respective solutions to meet the USMC requirement for an ARV Command, Control, Communications, and Computers Unmanned Aerial System (ARV-C4UAS), 30mm Autocannon (ARV-30), Logistics (ARV-LOG) Pre-Production vehicles.

The ARV and the Marine Corps Force Design Initiative

In March 2020, the Marines undertook a major force design initiative planned to occur over the next 10 years. The Marine Corps intended to redesign the force for naval expeditionary warfare and to better align itself with the National Defense Strategy. The March 2020 force design initiative plan raises questions that some have about the role or even the desirability of the ARV in future force design. According to then-Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David Berger,

While I have repeatedly stated that all-domain reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance will be a critical element of any future contingency, I remain unconvinced that additional wheeled, manned armored ground reconnaissance units are the best and only answer – especially in the Indo-Pacific region. We need to see more evidence during Phase III to support this conclusion before engaging in an expansion of our existing capacity, or committing billions of dollars in procurement funds towards the acquisition of an Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV) (see page 10).

In the Marines’ February 2021 Force Design Update, the Commandant further noted,

The 12 Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Companies identified in the initial Force Design

Report must be re-evaluated in light of the emerging concept of multi-domain mobile reconnaissance. This may affect the overall requirement for armored land mobility in the form of the Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV) (see pages 5-6).

In the Marines’ May 2022 Force Design Update, the Commandant directed the Marines to

[r]eview and validate all assumptions regarding programmed or potential future capabilities, such as the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) -30 and Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV) (see page 9).

According to the Marines’ 2024 *Force Design: A Snapshot*, the ARV is planned to be part of Mobile Reconnaissance Battalions. In April 2026, the Marines noted,

In the future fight, the Marine Air-Ground Task Force [MAGTF C2] must out cycle the fight for information to shape the battlespace and deliver precision fires. This highly contested environment is drastically more complex, and Mobile Reconnaissance Battalions must have a purpose-built capability such as the ARV that can sense, communicate, and fight by incorporating manned and unmanned systems and sustaining effective sensor webs tied to kill chains.

Potential Oversight Considerations for Congress

Oversight questions Congress could consider include the following:

- By variant, how many ARVs are planned to be procured for each Mobile Reconnaissance Battalion? Will ARVs also be acquired for other Marine Corps units and, if so, how many are to be acquired?
- What are the ARV’s amphibious capabilities? Original operational capabilities requirements cite “shore-to-shore water mobility.” What are the ARV’s operational shore-to-shore water mobility characteristics?
- In order to integrate with regional joint forces, is the ARV Command, Control, Communications and Computers/Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C4UAS) variant interoperable with other service’s C4 systems?
- Will ARV variants have an organic capability to defend against threat UAS, loitering munitions, and one-way attack drones?
- Are other countries interested in the ARV as a potential Foreign Military Sales (FMS) candidate?

For additional information on the Marine Corps Force Design Initiative, see CRS Report R47614, *U.S. Marine Corps Force Design 2030 Initiative: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

For additional information on the Marine’s Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV), see CRS In Focus IF11755, *The Marine Corps’ Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV)*, by Andrew Feickert.

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