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The Marine Corps' Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV)

Background

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

next-generation, eight-wheeled vehicle designed to move Marines from ship to shore. The vehicle will be the primary means of tactical mobility for the Marine infantry battalion at sea and ashore, replacing the Corps' aging Assault Amphibious Vehicle. The ACV provides organic, direct fire support to dismounted infantry. The vehicle's ability to leverage waterways to carry Marines and equipment make it well-suited for various operating environments, including Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations.

Four ACV variants currently are planned: (1) a Personnel Variant (ACV-P) that can carry 3 crewmembers with 13 Marines and 2 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 (see **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**).

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: Megan Eckstein, "Amphibious Combat Vehicle's First Deployment May Yield Repair Lessons," *Defense News*, May 20, 2024, 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.

Figure 2. ACV Ashore



Source: See Multimedia image, "Amphibious Combat Vehicle desert sun," at BAE Systems, accessed February 3, 2021, <https://www.baesystems.com/en/article/bae-systems-team-wins-u-s-marine-corps-amphibious-combat-vehicle-competition>.

Program Status

In June 2018, the ACV entered low-rate initial production (LRIP) with BAE Systems (BAE), which was selected to produce 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 reportedly was made by the Marine Corps. The FRP decision had been delayed from September 2020 because of COVID-19-related issues. The current planned acquisition objective of 632 ACVs is to replace Assault Amphibious Vehicles 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 its locations in Stafford, VA; San Jose, CA; Sterling Heights, MI; Aiken, SC; and York, PA.

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 reportedly resumed ACV operations in the open ocean. In addition, the Marines

reportedly 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 will 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 annual conference reportedly noted that

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 reduced “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 that

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.”

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 FRP 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.

FY2027 ACV Budget Request

According to FY2027 Department of Defense (currently using a secondary Department of War designation under Executive Order 14347, dated September 5, 2025) budget documents, the Navy is requesting \$237 million for discretionary procurement funding for platform upgrades for the ACV family of vehicles. Reportedly, this amount “reflects a pre-planned end to Amphibious Combat Vehicle procurement after the program received over \$1 billion in FY2026 for final production contracts.” Reportedly, the Marines plan “to award a production contract for the fourth and final ACV variant, the ACV-R recovery vehicle, by the end of FY2026.”

Potential Consideration for Congress

A potential ACV oversight consideration for Congress could include the following:

Lessons Learned from the Ukraine Conflict

There are a number of military observations resulting from the Ukraine conflict. One observation is that armored vehicles allegedly have 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 to support combat operations? Are the Marines considering additional ACV survivability modifications based on lessons learned in Ukraine?

Andrew Feickert, Specialist in Military Ground Forces

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