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Marine Corps Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) and Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC): Background and Issues for Congress

Andrew Feickert
Specialist in Military Ground Forces

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Summary

On January 6, 2011, after spending approximately $3 billion in developmental funding, the Marine Corps cancelled the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) program due to poor reliability demonstrated during operational testing and excessive cost growth. Because the EFV was intended to replace the 40-year-old Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV), the Pentagon pledged to move quickly to develop a "more affordable and sustainable" vehicle to replace the EFV. The Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) is intended to replace the AAV, incorporating some EFV capabilities but in a more practical and cost-efficient manner. In concert with the ACV, the Marines were developing the Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC) to serve as a survivable and mobile platform to transport Marines when ashore. The MPC was not intended to be amphibious like an AAV, EFV, or the ACV but instead would be required to have a swim capability for inland waterways such as rivers, lakes, and other water obstacles such as shore-to-shore operations in the littorals. Both vehicles are intended to play a central role in future Marine amphibious operation.

On June 14, 2013, Marine leadership put the MPC program "on ice" due to budgetary pressures but suggested the program might be resurrected some 10 years down the road when budgetary resources might be more favorable.

In what was described as a "drastic shift," the Marines have decided to "resurrect" the MPC in March 2014. The Marines designated the MPC as ACV Increment 1.1 and planned to acquire about 200 vehicles. The Marines also plan to develop ACV Increment 1.2, a tracked, fully amphibious version, and to acquire about 470 vehicles and fund an ongoing high water speed study. Although ACV Increment 1.1 will have a swim capability, a connector will be required to get the vehicles from ship to shore.

In April 2014, the Marines issued a Request for Information (RFI) to industry for ACV Increment 1.1. This requirement calls for industry to deliver 16 prototype vehicles nine months after contract award in April 2016 at a rate of four vehicles per month. The Marines estimate ACV Increment 1.1 will cost about $5 million to $6 million per vehicle, about $10 million less than what the previous ACV version was expected to cost.

The Administration's FY2015 budget request for the ACV is $105.7 million in Research, Development, Testing and Evaluation (RDT&E) funding. H.R. 4435, National Defense Authorization Act for FY2015, recommends an increase in the FY2015 budget request by $85.1 million to support an anticipated contract award in FY2015. S. 2410, National Defense Authorization Act for FY2015, recommends a decrease of $52 million to the FY2015 budget request but redirects those funds to ongoing connector research and service life extension efforts. H.R. 4870, Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2015, recommends fully funding the FY2015 budget request but also calls for a $78.8 recession of FY2014 funding noting a "contract award is unlikely to occur in FY2015."

A potential issue for Congress is the Marines' new MPC/ACV acquisition strategy and its associated challenges and risks. This report will be updated.

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Background

U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 5063, United States Marine Corps: Composition and Functions, dated October 1, 1986, states:

> The Marine Corps will be organized, trained and equipped to provide an amphibious and land operations capability to seize advanced naval bases and to conduct naval land campaigns.

In this regard, the Marines are required by law to have the necessary equipment to conduct amphibious operations and land operations. The ACV and MPC are considered integral systems by the Department of Defense (DOD) and Marine Corps to meet this legal requirement.

On January 6, 2011, after spending approximately $3 billion in developmental funding, the Marine Corps—with "encouragement" from DOD—cancelled the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) program. The EFV was intended to replace the 40-year-old Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV), which currently transports Marines from ships to shore under hostile conditions. The EFV was cancelled due to excessive cost growth and poor performance in operational testing. Recognizing the need to replace the AAV, the Pentagon pledged to move quickly to develop a "more affordable and sustainable" vehicle to take the place of the EFV. The Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) is intended to replace the AAV, incorporating some EFV capabilities but in a more practical and cost-efficient manner.

In concert with the ACV, the Marines were developing the Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC) to serve as a survivable and mobile platform to transport Marines when ashore. At present, the Marines do not have a wheeled armored fighting vehicle that can operate as a dedicated infantry carrier with Marine maneuver forces inland. The MPC was not intended to be amphibious like an AAV, EFV, or the ACV but instead would be required to have a swim capability for inland waterways such as rivers, lakes, and other water obstacles such as shore-to-shore operations in the littorals. Because of a perceived amphibious "redundancy," some have questioned the need for both the ACV and MPC. In June 2013, citing budgetary pressures, the Marines reportedly put the MPC program "on ice" and suggested that it might not be resurrected for about 10 years.[1]

With the Marines involved in decades-long land conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and proliferating anti-access technologies such as guided missiles, some analysts questioned if the Marines would ever again be called on to conduct a large-scale amphibious assault operation. In response to these questions and the perceived need to examine the post-Iraq and Afghanistan Marine Corps, the Department of the Navy and DOD studied the requirement to conduct large-scale amphibious operations and in early 2012 released a strategic vision for how amphibious operations will be conducted in the future. The primary assertion of this study is that the Marine Corps' and Navy's amphibious capabilities serve a central role in the defense of the global interests of a maritime nation. The need to maintain an amphibious assault capability is viewed by Marine Corps leadership as establishing the requirement for the ACV and MPC.

[1] Lee Hudson, "Marines Put Marine Personnel Carrier on Shelf Due to Budget Constraints," *InsideDefense.com,* June 14, 2013.

Significance for Congress

Congress is responsible for authorizing and appropriating funds for all weapon systems programs, including the ACV and the MPC. In its oversight role, Congress is concerned about how the ACV and MPC would enable the Marines to conduct not only amphibious operations but also operations ashore. Given past problems associated with EFV development, as well as current and future budgetary constraints, Congress is actively looking at the necessity, viability, and affordability of both programs.

The Marines' Justification for the ACV and MPC

ACV

At present, the Marines use the AAV-7A1 series amphibious assault vehicle to move Marines from ship to shore. The Marines have used the AAV since 1971 and will continue to use it until replaced by the ACV or a similar vehicle. Over the years, the Marines claim the AAV has become increasingly difficult to operate, maintain, and sustain. As weapons technology and threat capabilities have evolved over the preceding four decades, the AAV—despite upgrades—is viewed as having capabilities shortfalls in the areas of water and land mobility performance, lethality, protection, and network capability. The AAV's two-mile ship-to-shore range is viewed by many as a significant survivability issue not only for the vehicle itself but also for naval amphibious forces.

MPC

While the AAV has some armor protection and can operate inland to a limited extent, it is not intended for use as an infantry combat vehicle. The Marines do have the LAV-25, Light Armored Vehicle-25, an eight-wheeled armored vehicle that carries a crew of three and six additional Marines. The LAV-25 is armed with a 25 mm chain gun and a 7.62 mm machine gun and is not fully amphibious as it cannot cross a surf zone and would get to the beach via some type of connector such as the Landing Craft, Air Cushioned (LCAC). The LAV-25 has been in service since 1983. According to the Marine Program Executive Office (PEO) Land Systems, the LAV is not employed as an armored personnel carrier and usually carries a four-person Marine scout/reconnaissance team in addition to its crew.[2] In this regard, the MPC was viewed as necessary by Marine leadership for the transport and enhanced armor protection of Marine infantry forces.

[2] Program Executive Office (PEO) Land Systems Marine Personnel Carrier Fact Sheet, 2010.

Desired Operational Capabilities

ACV[3]

The Marines' 2011 Request for Information (RFI)[4] to industry provides an overview of the operational requirements for the ACV. These requirements include the following:

- The proposed vehicle must be able to self-deploy from amphibious shipping and deliver a reinforced Marine infantry squad (17 Marines) from a launch distance at or beyond 12 miles with a speed of not less than 8 knots in seas with 1-foot significant wave height and must be able to operate in seas up to 3-foot significant wave height.
- The vehicle must be able to maneuver with the mechanized task force for sustained operations ashore in all types of terrain. The vehicle's road and cross-country speed as well as its range should be greater than or equal to the M-1A1 Tank.
- The vehicle's protection characteristics should be able to protect against direct and indirect fire and mines and improvised explosive device (IED) threats.
- The vehicle should be able to accommodate command and control (C2) systems that permit it to operate both at sea and on land. The vehicle, at a minimum, should have a stabilized machine gun in order to engage enemy infantry and light vehicles.

MPC[5]

The Marine Corps' 2011 Request for Information (RFI)[6] to industry provided an overview of the operational requirements for the MPC. These requirements included the following:

- The vehicle must accommodate nine Marines and two crew members and have a "robust tactical swim capability (shore-to-shore [not designed to embark from an amphibious ship]) and be capable of operating at 6 knots in a fully developed sea."[7]

[3] Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is taken from the Amphibious Vehicle Request for Information (RFI) issued by the Marine Corps Systems Command on February 11, 2011.

[4] The Federal Acquisition Regulation defines an RFI as "a document used to obtain price, delivery, other market information, or capabilities for planning purposes when the Government does not **presently** intend to issue a solicitation. [FAR 15.202(e)]."

[5] Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is taken from Annex A: Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC) Family of Vehicles (FOV) Requirements Set to the Marine Personnel Carrier Request for Information (RFI), February 17, 2011.

[6] The Federal Acquisition Regulation defines an RFI as "a document used to obtain price, delivery, other market information, or capabilities for planning purposes when the Government does not **presently** intend to issue a solicitation. [FAR 15.202(e)]."

[7] Annex A: Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC) Family of Vehicles (FOV) Requirements Set to the Marine Personnel Carrier Request for Information (RFI), February 17, 2011.

- The vehicle must be able to operate on land with M-1A1 Tanks in mechanized task forces across the Marine Corps' mission profile.
- The vehicle shall provide protection for the occupants from the blasts, fragments, and incapacitating effects of attack from kinetic threats, indirect fire, and improvised explosive devices and mines.
- The vehicle shall be capable of firing existing Marine anti-structure and anti-armor missiles and should be able to accommodate existing command and control (C2) systems.

Is There a Need for a Marine Corps Amphibious Assault Capability?

As previously noted, Title 10 requires the Marines to have an amphibious and land operations capability. Marine involvement in protracted land campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan and the growing acquisition of anti-access technologies, such as guided missiles, by both state and non-state actors, led some influential military thinkers to question if the Marines would ever again be called upon to conduct large-scale amphibious assault operations.[8] In a May 2010 speech, then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted rogue nations and non-state movements such as Hezbollah possessed sophisticated anti-ship guided missiles, such as the Chinese-designed C-802, which could destroy naval ships and force them to stay far off shore, thereby making an amphibious assault by Marines highly dangerous.[9] These and similar pronouncements by some defense analysts led to questioning the need for dedicated amphibious assault capabilities in light of growing "anti-access" technologies and weapon systems available to both hostile nations and non-state actors. This debate resulted in a series of DOD and academic studies examining the need for an amphibious assault capability.

In early 2012, DOD published the results of studies and supporting concepts that it asserted affirmed the need for the Marine Corps to maintain an amphibious assault capability. In March 2012, the Army and Marine Corps issued *Gaining and Maintaining Access: An Army-Marine Corps Concept*, which expressed the views of the two services on how they would project and sustain military power world-wide in the face of growing challenges to access and entry.[10] The two services note:

> Marine Corps forces embarked on amphibious shipping are specifically designed to provide multi-domain capabilities that are employed from the sea. U.S. Army forces may also operate from the sea in some scenarios. Sea-based forces utilize littoral maneuver (via surface and/or vertical means) to exploit gaps and seams in enemy defenses, deceive adversaries, and maneuver directly to key objectives ashore.[11]

[8] Tony Perry and Julian E. Barnes, "U.S. Rethinks a Marine Corps Specialty: Storming Beaches," *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 2010.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Information in this section was taken from "Gaining and Maintaining Access: An Army-Marine Corps Concept," authored by the United States Army's Army Capabilities Integration Center and the United States Marine Corps Marine Corps Combat Development Command, March 2012.

[11] Ibid., pp 9-10.

In April 2012, the Marine Corps published the results of an Amphibious Capabilities Working Group study on naval amphibious capability. The study, *Naval Amphibious Capability in the 21st Century: Strategic Opportunity and a Vision for Change*, contends the United States is a maritime nation with critical maritime interests, noting 90% of global commerce that travels by sea is most vulnerable where sea meets land in the littorals.[12] The study further finds "for a maritime nation with global interests, a minimal two brigade amphibious force represents a sound investment in ensuring access for the rest of the joint force."[13] While the study did not explicitly call for the development of the ACV or MPC—the study recommendations are characterized as *resource-informed, program-neutral*—the ACV and MPC are used in the study for evaluating the ability to project power ashore. While large-scale, World War II-type amphibious operations might no longer be the norm, the study suggests there are other roles for the ACV and MPC. Noting that emerging battlefield capabilities could mean that small teams might now have the ability to generate effects once associated with larger forces, the Marines propose that company landing teams (CLTs) might now be a more appropriately sized force for most amphibious operations.[14] CLTs are viewed as being small enough to be inserted in a single wave but large enough to provide a capable force immediately. Another alternative to large scale amphibious operations are small-scale amphibious raids described as "an historical forte of the Marine Corps."[15] These raid forces go ashore only for the duration of the operation and then return to the sea. These raids could be useful in denying terrorist sanctuary, securing potential weapons of mass destruction (WMD) sites, destroying pirate safe havens, or destroying threat capabilities in port.[16] In this sense, *Naval Amphibious Capability in the 21st Century: Strategic Opportunity and a Vision for Change* might be viewed as redefining thinking about the role of amphibious operations and making an argument for the need for the ACV and MPC.

Expeditionary Force 21 and "Finding the Seams"

Navy and Marine Corps thinking on amphibious assault continues to evolve, most recently articulated in March 2014's *Expeditionary Force 21 - Forward and Ready: Now and in the Future*.[17] Regarding amphibious assault operations, *Expeditionary Force 21* notes:

> After World War II, the Marine Corps pursued the development of the helicopter as a tactical means to avoid fixed defenses, but the "Hogaboom Board" soon recognized that vertical maneuver capabilities alone would not fully replace surface maneuver, owing to weight and volume constraints. Since then, the Naval services have sought to develop complementary means of conducting vertical and surface littoral maneuver from increased distances, and via multiple penetration points, using the sea as maneuver space to offset the range and precision of modern weapons. In recent years, we have been very successful regarding vertical maneuver capabilities, but less so in the realm of surface maneuver. The Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) has been effective but is nearing the end of its service life. Our recent attempts to field an affordable, high-speed, long-range amphibious vehicle capable of

[12] Information in this section was taken from "Naval Amphibious Capability in the 21st Century: Strategic Opportunity and a Vision for Change," a report of the Amphibious Capabilities Working Group, April 27, 2012.

[13] Ibid., p. 12.

[14] Ibid., p. 48.

[15] Ibid., p. 49.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, "Expeditionary Force 21 - Forward and Ready: Now and in the Future," March 4, 2014.

> maneuver at sea and on land have not met the requirement. Fielding high-speed, long-range high-capacity system of connectors, amphibious vehicles, and boats are a critical necessity for amphibious operations.
>
> We will continue to conduct future amphibious operations at the time and place of our choosing. We will maneuver through the littorals to positions of advantage, employ disaggregated, distributed and dispersed forces to secure entry points that allow us to rapidly build our combat power ashore and allow for the quick introduction of follow-on joint/coalition forces to maintain momentum and expand the area of operation. Mindful of limitations on resources, we need to develop a viable combination of connectors, landing craft, amphibious vehicles, and boats, as well as the ships—to include the well decks or davits—that project them exploring a mix of surface maneuver options that:
>
> - Are deployable, employable and sustainable given the power projection means available.
>
> - Operate with reduced signature to multiple penetration points.
>
> - In coordination with the Navy, employ low-signature landing craft and boats with increased range and speed, as well as the ability to penetrate an unimproved coastline.
>
> - Provide the means to conduct surface maneuver from amphibious ships beyond 65 nm offshore.
>
> - Provide the capability to maneuver through the complex terrain of the littorals.
>
> - Provide a mechanism to identify, bypass, and if required breach shore-laid obstacle belts (explosive and non-explosive) to secure entry points.
>
> - Provide maneuver options to extend operations within constraints of fuel resupply resources.
>
> - Increase ability to work with space assets and develop capabilities within the cyber realm.[18]

Marine leadership has emphasized the need for high-speed connectors—surface and air vehicles that can transport Marines, vehicles, and equipment from ships to shore—to accomplish these goals. Instead of confronting an enemy "head on," Marine leadership envisions using high-speed connectors and associated vehicles such as the MPC to "side step the full force of an enemy, instead penetrating its seam."[19] This concept of "finding" the seams is viewed as necessary to avoid confronting a growing array of "anti-access" technologies and weapon systems available to both hostile nations and non-state actors that could pose a significant threat to connectors associated with Marine amphibious operations.

[18] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[19] Lara Seligman, "Glueck: Marines Will Penetrate Enemy's "Seam" with Connector Strategy," *InsideDefense.com,* June 27, 2014.

Program Information

2013 Decision to "Shelve" the MPC

As previously noted, in June 2013, citing budgetary pressures, the Marines reportedly put the MPC program "on ice" and suggested it might not be resurrected for about 10 years.[20] At the time of the decision, the Marines acquisition priorities were refocused to the ACV as well as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV).[21] While the Marines refocused budgetary resources to the ACV, difficulties in developing an affordable high water speed capability for the ACV continued to confront Marine leadership.[22]

Major Change to Marine Corps Modernization Strategy[23]

In what was described as a "drastic shift," the Marines decided in March 2014 to "resurrect" the MPC and designate it as ACV Increment 1.1 and initially acquire about 200 vehicles. The Marines also plan to develop ACV Increment 1.2, a tracked version, and to acquire about 470 vehicles and fund an ongoing high water speed study. Although ACV Increment 1.1 will have a swim capability, a connector will be required to get the vehicles from ship to shore.

Plans call for ACV Increment 1.1 to enter the acquisition cycle at Milestone B (Engineering and Manufacturing Development) in FY2016, award prototype contracts leading to a down select to one vendor in FY2018, and enter low-rate initial production. Marine budget documents do not address ACV Increment 1.2 program timelines, thereby effectively delaying the development of a fully amphibious assault vehicle.

Marines Release Request for Information (RFI) for ACV Increment 1.1[24]

On April 23, 2014 the Marines released an RFI for ACV Increment 1.1. Some of the required capabilities include:

> ... operate in a significant wave height of two feet and sufficient reserve buoyancy to enable safe operations; a high level of survivability and force protection; operate in four to six feet

[20] Lee Hudson, "Marines Put Marine Personnel Carrier on Shelf Due to Budget Constraints," *InsideDefense.com*, June 14, 2013.

[21] For information on the JLTV see CRS Report RS22942, *Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV): Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

[22] Christopher J. Castelli, "General: Marine Corps Could Shelve Development of High-Speed ACV," *InsideDefense.com,* October 25, 2013 and Jason Sherman, "Marine Corps Dials back ACV, Capability, Defers High Water Speed Plans," *InsideDefense.com,* March 25, 2014.

[23] Information in this section is taken from Department of Defense Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Budget Estimates, Navy, Justification Book, Volume 2, Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Navy, Budget Activity 4, March 2014, pp. 417-421, and Lee Hudson, "Marine Corps Drastically Shifts Ground Vehicle Modernization Strategy," *InsideDefense.com,* March 14, 2014.

[24] Lee Hudson, "Marines Release Amphib Vehicle RFI, Seek Accelerated Schedule," *InsideDefense.com,* April 25, 2014.

> plunging surf with ship-to-shore operations and launch from amphibious ships as an objective; land mobility, operate on 30 percent improved surfaces and 70 percent unimproved surfaces; ability to integrate a .50 caliber remote weapon station (RWS) with growth potential to a dual mount 40 mm/.50 caliber RWS or a 30 mm cannon RWS; carrying capacity to include three crew and 10 embarked troops as the threshold, 13 embarked troops as the objective, carry mission essential equipment and vehicle ammunition; and the ability to integrate a command, control and communications suite provided as government furnished equipment... [25]

The RFI includes a requirement for industry to deliver 16 prototype vehicles nine months after contract award in April 2016 at a rate of four vehicles per month.[26] The Marines estimate ACV Increment 1.1 will cost about $5 million to $6 million per vehicle, about $10 million less than what the previous ACV version was expected to cost.[27]

Budget Activity

FY2015 Budget Request[28]

The FY2015 budget request for the ACV is $105.7 million in RDT&E funding. Program activities planned for FY2015 include manufacturing prototype vehicles, testing, and studies/technology development to advance high water speed capability.

H.R. 4435, National Defense Authorization Act for FY2015[29]

Amphibious Combat Vehicle Increment 1.1 Program

> The budget request contained $105.7 million in PE 63611M for the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) program. The committee understands that the Marine Corps has significantly changed its acquisition strategy for the ACV program and will now use an incremental approach to developing, procuring, and fielding a next generation family of amphibious combat vehicles. The committee notes that in the near term, the Marine Corps is planning to use the first vehicle increment, ACV increment 1.1, as an armored personnel carrier that would deliver Marines from ship-to-shore by means of a connector craft, and be used for inland missions. The committee recognizes this would address an immediate near-term, urgent capability gap for improved tactical mobility and survivability for deployed Marine infantry units.
>
> The committee notes that while the proposed schedule for ACV increment 1.1 is aggressive, the committee expects the Marine Corps to benefit from lessons learned from previous next

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Lee Hudson, "Next-Generation Amphibious Vehicle Estimated to Cost $5-$6M Per Copy," *InsideDefense.com,* June 27, 2014.

[28] Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, United States Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request, Program Acquisition Cost by Weapon System, March 2014, pp. 3-7.

[29] Report 113-446, Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, May 13, 2014, pp. 58-59.

generation assault amphibious vehicle programs that suffered from requirements creep and immature technology readiness levels that led to significant cost overruns and schedule delays. The committee understands that results from previous developmental testing conducted on vehicles participating in the former Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC) vehicle program, to include limited user demonstrations, have informed the Marine Corps that the technology for these potential vehicles is highly mature and is consistent with a stable set of requirements for this vehicle. Accordingly, the committee understands that the Marine Corps is recommending a streamlined procurement and fielding strategy for the ACV increment 1.1 vehicle. The committee supports the intent to streamline the procurement and fielding of the ACV increment 1.1 vehicle, and believes this program could potentially serve as an example for future major defense acquisition program reform. However, the committee notes that this streamlined approach to ACV increment 1.1 is contingent on mature technology and validated and stabilized requirements. The committee will continue to closely monitor this program under the auspices of the committee's ongoing comprehensive acquisition reform effort.

Therefore, the committee directs the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisition), in coordination with Headquarters Marine Corps, to brief the committee not later than September 1, 2014, on the justification used to streamline the ACV increment 1.1 vehicle program, to include the documented results from the Marine Requirements Oversight Council and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council reviews, as well as the documented results from the Materiel Development Decision. The committee also directs the Assistant Secretary to brief the committee on any potential procedural and/or regulatory barriers that may prevent the Marine Corps from streamlining the ACV increment 1.1 program. Based on information already provided to the committee by the Marine Corps regarding the streamlined procurement strategy for the ACV increment 1.1 program, the committee understands additional funds would also be required in fiscal year 2015 to support a contract award in fiscal year 2015. **The committee recommends $190.8 million, an increase of $85.1 million, in PE 63611M for the ACV Increment 1.1 vehicle program. [Emphasis added by CRS.]**

S. 2410, National Defense Authorization Act for FY2015[30]

Marine Corps Assault Vehicles

The budget request included $105.7 million in PE 63611M for Marine Corps assault vehicles. At the request of the Marine Corps, the committee recommends a decrease of $52.0 million in PE 63611M for the new amphibious vehicle project.

Also, at the request of the Marine Corps, the committee recommends the following increases:

(1) $45.0 million in Shipbuilding and Conversion, Navy for Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC) service life extension; and

(2) $7.0 million in PE 24413N for surface connector research and LCAC stern ramp testing."

[30] Report 113-176, Carl Levin National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, June 2, 2014, p. 41.

H.R. 4870, Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2015[31]

Amphibious Combat Vehicle

> The Committee is supportive of the Marine Corps' Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) program, which is being developed to replace the rapidly aging Amphibious Assault Vehicle. However, the Committee is aware that the strategy for the ACV program is currently being revised due to a re-evaluation of requirements, estimated costs, and schedule, and that a contract award is unlikely to occur in fiscal year 2015. Therefore, the Committee recommends a rescission of $78,800,000 from the total $122,967,000 appropriated in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2014, but recommends fully funding the fiscal year 2015 request of $105,749,000. This will allow the Marine Corps to immediately implement the ACV acquisition strategy once the path forward has been finalized, without unnecessarily reserving resources that could be used for higher priority items. The Committee will continue to support the ACV program as the strategy is refined in future budget submissions and looks forward to continuing discussions with the Marine Corps regarding the ACV program progress.

Potential Issue for Congress

The Marines' New ACV/MPC Acquisition Strategy

Given Marine leadership's decision to alter their vehicle modernization strategy and pursue the MPC-based ACV Increment 1.1 in lieu of the ACV-based ACV Increment 1.2, Congress might decide to examine this issue in greater detail. Potential questions include but are not limited to the following:

- If the MPC is to become ACV Increment 1.1, what design changes will be required to improve the MPC's amphibious capability as the version previously under development had limited amphibious capabilities?
- Because ACV Increment 1.1 is connector-dependent, are sufficient connectors presently available to support amphibious assault operations in the near term?
- Based on the operational concepts put forward in *Expeditionary Force 21* which are heavily dependent on having future, next-generation connectors available, are amphibious operations involving ACV Increment 1.1 at risk until a sufficient number of advanced connectors are procured?
- Is high water speed technologically achievable in the near term, or is such a capability more a function of affordability than technology?
- While DOD's FY2015 budget request did not contain a program timeline for ACV Increment 1.2, are there any planning dates for when the vehicle is expected to enter service?
- What are the total planned procurement targets for ACV Increments 1.1 and 1.2?

[31] Report 113-473, Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2015, June 13, 2014, p 239.

Author Contact Information

Andrew Feickert
Specialist in Military Ground Forces
afeickert@crs.loc.gov, 7-7673