

Marines Bid Farewell to the Assault Amphibious Vehicle



CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. (June 29, 2021) U.S. Marines with 3d Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division, emerge from the water in an AAV-P7/A1 amphibious assault vehicle (AAV) during water operations training at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, June 29, 2021.(U.S. Marine Corps photo

by Sgt. Jamin M. Powell)

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MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – The Assault Amphibious Vehicle was officially decommissioned during an AAV Sundown Ceremony at the Assault Amphibian School at Camp Pendleton, California, Sept. 26.

The ceremony honored both the vehicle's 53 years of service to the Marine Corps and the Marines and Sailors who served with it, while marking the transition to the Corps' next amphibious platform, the Amphibious Combat Vehicle. Col. Lynn W. Berendsen, commanding officer of the Assault Amphibian School, delivered remarks paying tribute to those who operated and maintained the AAV throughout its service.

The AAV replaced the Landing Vehicle, Tracked, which entered combat in August 1942 during the Solomon Islands Campaign. The LVT was the first vehicle capable of moving Marines from ship to shore and continue inland under fire. It proved decisive in battles like Tarawa, Inchon and later in during the Vietnam War where the following generations of amphibious vehicles carried Marines across beaches, rivers and flooded terrain.

The AAV was introduced in 1972, originally designated as the Landing Vehicle, Tracked, Personnel-7, featuring a water-jet propulsion system and a stern ramp that sped up ship-to-shore movement. Service life extension programs during the 1980s upgraded the vehicles with new engines, transmissions and weapon stations, after which it was redesignated the AAV-7A1. Over the decades, AAVs received additional upgrades to meet operational demands.

"The AAV-P7 has been many things, a ship to shore connector, an armored fighting vehicle, a troop carrier, a logistics platform and even sometimes a live boat," said Berendsen. "Most importantly it was in a place where Marines made their mark in combat in service and in sacrifice."

From Grenada and Somalia to the Persian Gulf and Iraq, the AAV carried Marines throughout combat, supported humanitarian missions, and amphibious landings. During its service, it transported personnel, delivered supplies, and provided protected mobility in both littoral and inland environments. Its legacy is not only in its capabilities but also in the

countless Marines who operated it and relied on it to accomplish their missions.

“The AAV gave Marines both mobility and armored protection allowing them to close with the enemy and seize objectives at speed,” said Berendsen. “In the desert, just as in the Pacific beaches decades earlier, showed it was more than a connector, it was a fighting vehicle at the heart of the Marine Air Ground Task Force.”

The ACV, successor to the AAV, is an eight-wheeled armored personnel carrier built for expeditionary operations. With multiple variants for personnel transport, command and control, recovery, and fire support, the ACV integrates seamlessly with naval shipping and amphibious connectors. The introduction of the ACV supports the Marine Corps' modernization efforts aligning with Force Design, advancing a lighter, faster, and more resilient force capable of operating in contested environments and contributing to joint and naval operations.

The final pass of three AAVs drove across the parade deck marked the close of a historic chapter and the Marine Corps' continued evolution toward modern, expeditionary amphibious operations.