

Army Chooses to Upgrade Old Recovery Vehicles Over Building New Ones

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The United States Army has halted plans to field the M88A3 armored recovery vehicle, opting instead to upgrade its existing fleet, including the long-serving M88A2. This decision marks a shift in priorities, trading high-tech enhancements for faster fielding and tighter control of defense spending.

The M88A3 was developed by BAE Systems as a next-generation solution for recovering heavy armored vehicles, including the M1 Abrams main battle tank (MBT). With a strengthened powertrain, advanced suspension system, and the ability to handle 80-ton recoveries solo, the M88A3 promised to streamline battlefield logistics. Testing at Army proving grounds reportedly demonstrated the M88A3's reliability and performance under operational stress.

However, the Army has now opted to cancel the program. While the M88A3 offered improved recovery capacity, the cost and production timeline appear to have outweighed the benefits. Officials have decided to refurbish existing M88A2 models instead, a move seen by some as more practical given current budget pressures and industrial constraints.

The M88A2, first introduced in the late 1990s, remains capable but has limitations. Recovering the heaviest platforms often requires two vehicles, a logistical disadvantage compared to the solo recovery capability of the cancelled A3 model. Despite this, the A2 variant has proven itself over decades of service in combat zones from Iraq to Eastern Europe.

Older systems, such as the M88A1 and potentially limited legacy equipment, are expected to remain in niche roles. While far from modern, these vehicles still perform basic recovery roles when needed. The Army's renewed focus on upgrading legacy platforms reflects a broader trend: balancing operational readiness with financial caution.

Some defense analysts warn the decision could leave the Army underprepared for future high-intensity conflicts, as modern MBTs and other platforms continue to increase in weight and complexity. Without a

truly next-gen recovery vehicle, there's a risk of capability gaps if U.S. forces face large-scale armor losses or operate in difficult terrain.

Nonetheless, Army leadership appears confident that refurbished M88A2 units will be sufficient for the foreseeable future. For now, speed of delivery and cost-effectiveness are taking priority over introducing an entirely new platform.