

PRESS RELEASE

United States Marine Corps



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A STATEMENT FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE MV-22 OSPREY TO JAPAN

For nearly 65 years, Japan and the United States have worked together building a strategic alliance that has been the cornerstone of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. The long and steady presence of Marines on Okinawa, at Iwakuni, and at other locations within Japan reflects our nation's commitment to the defense of this important ally, and serves as a bridge between our cultures - one that has forged bonds of true friendship and understanding between the American and Japanese people. Generations of Marines have lived and worked in Japan, maintain a deep affinity for Japanese culture, and treasure the many close personal friendships they have developed over the years.

As we look to the future, we are committed to forward deploying our strongest capabilities in the defense of our Japanese allies. As such, the Marine Corps is in the process of replacing its aging CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters – across the Marine Corps as well as in Japan – with new MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft. As the senior pilot on active duty today in the United States military, I personally attest that there is no more definitive way to strengthen the aviation capability of our allied forces than to forward deploy these remarkably capable aircraft to the Asia-Pacific region as soon as possible. The deployment of the MV-22 to Japan, and its eventual location on Okinawa, is critical to the United States' fulfillment of its responsibilities under our mutual security treaty. The first twelve MV-22s arrived at Iwakuni, Japan on July 23, 2012.

On August 14, 2012, I returned from the Asia-Pacific region, where I spent time with our nation's friends and allies, including our Japanese partners, discussing mutual regional security interests. During my time in Tokyo, I specifically heard Japan's concerns about the Osprey first hand. I am mindful that there are some who are concerned about tilt rotor technology because of past accidents involving the aircraft, in particular our most recent mishap earlier this year in Morocco. As the Commandant, I pledge to our partners, and to the Japanese people, that we will work with them to allay those concerns.

As a Marine officer and a pilot, I have been stationed both on Okinawa and at Iwakuni over my 41 year career, and thus have flown in the skies over most of Japan. In fact, last week I flew one of our aging CH-46 helicopters out along the coastline of Okinawa, across the uninhabited Northern Training Area, landing back at the Futenma Air Base. Because of these experiences and my Service Chief responsibilities, I want the people of Japan, and in particular those living on Okinawa, to know that I care equally as much about the safety of our friends and neighbors in the communities around which we live and operate, as I do about my Marines who fly and operate our Osprey aircraft. Ospreys operate today in Afghanistan and off our Navy's amphibious ships throughout the world, and when required, they fly into some of our nation's most densely populated areas, such as New York City, San Diego, California, and Washington, DC. That said, it is my intent that Marine Osprey pilots will make every effort to minimize flying over heavily populated areas in Japan. Historical data gathered from the past 10 years of flying proves that the Osprey is one of the safest aircraft flying in the U.S. inventory. Having surpassed 100,000 flight hours last year and over 13 highly successful combat deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan, the airplane has proven its mettle in some of the most demanding environmental conditions imaginable – including having been shot at and hit on several occasions during combat.

Many are unaware that this notable safety record is not the product of mere chance; it reflects a rigorous and lengthy design/development process as well as a continuous effort to deliver material improvements, software updates, and enhanced pilot training. These extensive efforts are consistent with the US military's longstanding interest in the safe operation of equipment around the world. This information, along with the facts from our Morocco mishap, is being shared this week with the Japanese assessment team that is currently examining the technical capabilities of the aircraft.

Introduction of the Osprey into the Asia-Pacific region will allow the US to deliver to its allies, the unprecedented capabilities the Marine Corps brings with its MV-22s in terms of range, lift, and speed. Whether swiftly moving forces in response to a security threat, or transporting disaster victims and delivering relief supplies in a natural disaster such as during Operation Tomodachi, the Osprey will fly markedly faster, farther, while carrying more than the vintage 40-year-old CH-46 helicopter that it will replace. As our two governments work through the details of basing the MV-22, I remain confident in the aircraft's safety and capabilities and the significant advantages its deployment will bring to the Japanese and American people.

