

➤ Operational Support Airlift

DISCUSSION

Operational Support Airlift (OSA) aircraft provide air logistic support to the warfighter by delivering high-priority passengers and cargo between and within theaters of operation. OSA aircraft carry out short-notice, time-critical, logistical air movements, relieving front-line tactical squadrons from having to perform this necessary but non-tactical mission. By freeing our tactical aircraft assets from routine missions, OSA aircraft are an effective combat multiplier for the MAGTF, joint force, and regional combatant commander.



During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, OSA aircraft provided essential assault support to deployed forces with nightly intelligence runs, command-and-control support missions, and the expeditious movement of personnel and cargo throughout the AOR.

More recently, Marine Corps OSA assets from MCAS Futenma and Iwakuni were deployed to Darwin, Australia, and East Timor in support of the United Nations-mandated mission of International Forces in East Timor (INTERFET). Airlift of personnel

and cargo vital to U.S. Forces INTERFET supported the initial establishment and sustainment of necessary in-theater logistics, communications, and security services.

During Operation Enduring Freedom, the USMC C-20G based at MCAS Kaneohe Bay has been forward deployed to Bahrain in support of Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) and the warfighters in theater.

In the continental United States, OSA has been used to conduct regularly scheduled parts and personnel movements for Combined Arms Exercises (CAX) and other peacetime training exercises. Here again, this eliminates the need for squadrons participating in the exercises of having to conduct their own parts supply flights and allows tactical assets to be used for maximum training benefit.

The Marine Corps presently operates four different aircraft to fill its OSA requirements: the UC-12 King Air, the UC-35 Citation, the C-9B Skytrain, and the C-20G Gulfstream IV.

MARINE CORPS POSITION

Acquisition of relatively low cost, commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) aircraft with minimal militarization provides MAGTF commanders with swift, on-demand support. Current initiatives will ensure the availability to short-notice, time-critical, logistical air support to the warfighter using more capable aircraft fully integrated into Marine Corps operations. Identifying and funding a replacement aircraft for the UC-12 and increasing OSA Heavy lift capability for Marine Forces Pacific are the two highest priorities for the OSA community.