

CSAF Displays Confidence in, Commitment for V-22

WASHINGTON (AFP) – Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan flew aboard a MV-22 Osprey June 23 at the Naval Air Systems Command, Patuxent River, Md.

The flight was a demonstration of Ryan's confidence in the safety of the aircraft following an April 8 crash in Arizona that resulted in the deaths of 19 Marines. Accompanying Ryan on the flight was Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James L. Jones.

Following the flight, Ryan reiterated the Air Force's commitment to purchasing 50 of the multi-mission, tilt-rotor aircraft.

The V-22 Osprey combines the vertical flight capabilities of a helicopter with the forward flight speed and range capabilities of a fixed-wing turboprop aircraft.

According to Ryan, the V-22's versatility is a key factor for the Air Force, which plans to buy the aircraft to support special operations forces.

The Air Force variant, the CV-22, will replace the MH-53J helicopter and augment the MC-130 fleet in special op-

erations missions, he said. The aircraft has the ability to fly at speeds in excess of 250 knots, and has the capability to convert from rotary-wing to fixed-wing flight rapidly. This unique capability increases survivability and gives the V-22 greater range and speed than conventional helicopters.

"It gives a whole new dimension to how we will operate in special operations forces because of the depth it can go," he said. "It can get in where it needs to be and has the hover capability to drop off or pick up assets and get them back out."

The Air Force expects to achieve initial operational capability in 2004.

The Marine Corps, the lead service in the V-22 program, plans to buy more than 350 MV-22s to replace its CH-46 and CH-53D helicopters. The Navy plans to get a third version of the V-22, the HV-22, for fleet logistics support, special warfare, and combat search and rescue.

Editor's Note: This information is in the public domain at www.af.mil/news.

The MV-22 Osprey is a multi-mission, tilt-rotor aircraft that combines the vertical flight capabilities of a helicopter with the forward flight speed and range capabilities of a fixed-wing turboprop aircraft. The Air Force variant, the CV-22, will replace the MH-53J helicopter and augment the MC-130 fleet in special operations missions.

Photo by Staff Sgt. A.J. Bosker

