

Section  
3

## MV-22 Osprey Deployment in Okinawa

## 1 MV-22 Osprey Deployment in Okinawa

The MV-22 is an aircraft that combines vertical takeoff/landing and hovering functions of rotary-wing aircraft on one hand and the speed and range of fixed-wing aircraft on the other. After overcoming challenges in its development process, Osprey received approval from the U.S. government for mass production as aircraft fulfilling all the reliability and safety standards. MV-22 aircraft have been used globally in a variety of missions including Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and disaster relief activities in Haiti. As the main force of air components of the U.S. Marine Corps, MV-22 aircraft plays an important role in engaging in a broad range of activities, including transportation of personnel and goods.

The U.S. Marine Corps is in the process of replacing rotary-wing airplanes (CH-46) with MV-22s, which have superior basic performance. In June 2011, the Department of Defense announced the replacement of CH-46s deployed at Futenma Air Station with MV-22s. On June 29, 2012, the U.S. Government made a Host Nation Notification that 12 CH-46s of one squadron in Futenma would be replaced by 12 MV-22s and that CH-46s of the second squadrons would be replaced by MV-22s in the summer of 2013. Then-Minister of Defense Morimoto and other officials explained that measures to ensure safety would be taken in order to gain understanding and cooperation of local residents of Okinawa and Iwakuni. Later, after unloading and conducting functional check flight at the MCAS Iwakuni, one squadron completed transfer to Futenma Air Station in October

2012. On April 30, 2013, U.S. Forces Japan HQ and the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo explained that 12 MV-22 aircraft of the second MV-22 squadron would be unloaded at MCAS Iwakuni.

In the U.S. strategy to place greater emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, the presence of the USFJ, and that of the Marine Corps in Okinawa in particular have great significance, and the MV-22 plays a central role in the ability of the Marine Corps units. The MV-22 is a highly capable aircraft; compared with the CH-46, it can fly twice as fast, can carry three times the payload, and has four times the radius. Its deployment to Okinawa will strengthen the deterrence of the USFJ as a whole and greatly contribute to the peace and stability of the region.



The MV-22 Osprey

## 2 Safety of the MV-22 Osprey

After the crash of the MV-22 in Morocco in April 2012 and the crash of the CV-22<sup>1</sup> in Florida in June 2012, concerns about its safety have grown among Japanese people. In response, the Governments of Japan and the U.S. agreed to refrain from any flight operation in Japan until the results of the accidents' investigation are provided and the safety of flight operation is reconfirmed. Additionally, in order to confirm its safety, a Japanese analysis and assessment team was set up to validate the contents of the accident investigations of the U.S. Government, based on Japan's own viewpoints and knowledge. The team ex-

amined the investigation results and confirmed that the accident in which the MV-22 crashed in Morocco and the CV-22 crashed in Florida were caused largely by human factors and that there were no safety problem with the aircraft itself.

Furthermore, to maximize the safety of MV-22 flight operations, the two Governments discussed matters concerning operations and measures to prevent accident recurrence at the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee and other occasions. At the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee, both sides confirmed that measures have been taken to address these human factors in light of

<sup>1</sup> The MV-22 is designed for the U.S. Marine Corps for assault landing transportation missions, while the CV-22 is designed for the U.S. Air Force aimed at special operations, etc.

the lessons learned from the accidents and agreed to implement specific measures to ensure the safety of MV-22 operations in Japan.

Based on the above, considering that the safety of MV-22 operations in Japan is fully confirmed, the Government of Japan released "On MV-22 Osprey Deployment to Okinawa" on September 19, 2012, and then flight operation of the MV-22 Osprey was started in Japan. Since then, the Government of Japan recognizes that the U.S. has been in full compliance with the

Joint Committee agreement concerning the MV-22 and is operating the MV-22s with maximum consideration to the safety. Furthermore, in order to ensure that full consideration is given to local residents and the Joint Committee agreement is properly implemented, the Government of Japan has been continuously engaging with the U.S. side through various opportunities, including the Japan-U.S. Defense Ministerial Meetings. (See Fig. II-3-3-1)

Fig. II-3-3-1 Chronology of MV-22 Osprey Deployment to Okinawa

June 6, 2011	Provided information to relevant local governments and other organizations on the announcement made by the U.S. Department of Defense to replace the CH-46 deployed at MCAS Futenma with the MV-22 in the latter half of 2012.
June 13-26	Provided safety/noise information that GOJ had been obtained so far to relevant local governments and other organizations.
June 24	Received a letter of 29 questions from Okinawa Governor and others.
September 1	The first written response was handed to Okinawa Governor and others by Administrative Vice-Minister.
September 2-13	Provided an explanation on the first written response to relevant local governments and other organizations.
December 20	The second written response was handed to Okinawa Governor by chief of the Okinawa Defense Bureau.
December 20 - January 17, 2012	Provided an explanation on the second written response above to relevant local governments and other organizations.
April 12	A notice on the accident involving an MV-22 in Morocco was provided to relevant local governments and other organizations.
June 13-	Provided an explanation on the results of the Environment Review, MV-22 pamphlet, and the content of the third response to the questions to Okinawa Prefecture, relevant local governments and other organizations.
June 14	A notice on the accident involving a CV-22 in Florida was provided to relevant local governments and other organizations.
June 26-	Provided an explanation on the information provided from U.S. side regarding the accidents in Morocco and Florida to relevant local governments and other organizations.
June 29-	Provided an explanation on the content of the Host Nation Notification and the press release to relevant local governments and other organizations.
July 20	Provided information from the U.S. side stating that the MV-22 would be offloaded on MCAS Iwakuni on July 23 to relevant local governments and other organizations.
August 1 - September 18	Received four questionnaires regarding the Environment Review and others from the Okinawa Governor and others.
August 28-	Provided an explanation on the "Analysis and Evaluation Report on the MV-22 Accident in Morocco" to relevant local governments and other organizations.
September 11-	Provided an explanation on the "Analysis and Evaluation Report on the CV-22 Accident in Florida" to relevant local governments and other organizations.
September 14	Q&A session on Osprey deployment with members of the Iwakuni City Council full member committee.
September 19-	Provided an explanation on the report "MV-22 Osprey deployment in Okinawa" to relevant local governments and other organizations.
September 21	Provided Yamaguchi Prefecture and Iwakuni City with the information that function check flights, etc. were commenced at MCAS Iwakuni.
September 27-28	Provided information on the contents of the responses to the questionnaires from Okinawa Prefecture and others received from August 1 to September 18 to Okinawa Prefecture and other relevant local governments and other organizations.
November 2	In the nationwide prefectural governors meeting hosted by the Government, Defense Minister explained about the initial training plan with the MV-22 Osprey, and Prime Minister and Defense Minister asked for the governors' cooperation in relocating the training to outside Okinawa.
December 10	The MOD received another letter of questions from Governor of Okinawa in response to the answers to his initial questions which the MOD submitted to him in September.
December 12-14	The MOD provided explanations to Okinawa Prefecture and relevant local governments in Okinawa regarding the content of the second set of answers the MOD prepared, since some of these answers did not satisfactorily address the letter of questions from Governor of Okinawa Prefecture on environmental review.
December 25	The MOD received a request from Governor of Okinawa to investigate the details of the flight operations of MV-22.
January 28, 2013	The Committee for the Okinawa Prefectural Citizens' Rally and the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly submitted a petition to the Prime Minister.
April 30	The MOD provided explanation to the relevant local governments and other organizations regarding U.S. explanation on the deployment of the second squadron (unloaded at MCAS Iwakuni in summer 2013).