Osprey Population Grows at Navy Test Facility Third V-22 Tiltrotor Delivered to Testers

The third of four Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft built to production standards was delivered Oct. 30 to the V-22 Integrated Test Team at the Patuxent River Naval Air Warfare Test Center in Maryland, following a flight from the Bell Helicopter Textron plant in Fort Worth, Texas.

Air Force Major Tom Currie and Marine Capt. Bill Witzig, pilots with the Military Operational Training Team, left Bell on the morning of Oct. 29 and arrived in Patuxent River at 3 p.m. EST the following day. The 1,217 nautical mile trip included an overnight refueling stop in Nashville, Tenn.

V-22 number 9 will be used to validate the aircraft's forward looking infrared (FLIR), navigational and other mission systems. Following that, the aircraft will be used for operational evaluations by a team of service pilots, maintainers and logistics personnel. Finally, in 1999, the aircraft will be brought back to the assembly facility for remanufacture into a CV-22 configuration. The CV-22 is the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) variant of the Osprey. It then will be used for SOCOM operational evaluations in the 2001 time frame.

While aircraft number 9 was being prepared for its cross-country flight, technicians were also busy conducting the first of a planned series of 72 tests of Osprey number 10's blade-fold/wing-stow system.

"These initial tests were accomplished without a hitch," said Yale Cason, director of V-22 manufacturing at Bell. "We fully expect the remaining tests to be completed the same way...perfectly."

The Osprey is able to fold itself into a smaller package that can be delivered by elevator to the maintenance hangars below the decks of amphibious assault ships. It does this by indexing the rotor blades, tilting the nacelles to the airplane mode position and rotating the wing 90 degrees so that it fits directly over the fuselage, making the width of the aircraft no wider that its horizontal stabilizer.

The V-22 is being developed for U.S. Marine Corps combat assault, Special Operations Command long-range exfiltration and U.S. Navy combat search and rescue, fleet logistics support and special warfare missions.

The Bell Boeing Tiltrotor Team comprises Bell Helicopter Textron of Fort Worth, Texas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Textron, Inc., and Boeing in Philadelphia, which produces rotorcraft and other advanced aerospace products.

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