Tiltrotor Technology Demo Day - MV-22 Makes Public Debut at Pentagon

The U.S. Department of Defense hosted a Tiltrotor Technology Presentation on the Pentagon's River Entrance parade ground to demonstrate the capabilities and versatility of tiltrotor Sept. 8. Secretary of Defense William Cohen spoke at the event, which began with the arrival of the test prototype XV-15 tiltrotor technology demonstrator, followed by the first production-model MV-22 Osprey.

"Every few decades of this century the world has witnessed the arrival of weapons platforms that have truly revolutionized national security," said Cohen. "The powerful and innovative aircraft that you see here today, the tiltrotors, will have just that effect in the coming century. They are going to revolutionize not only our force projection, they are going to transform the entire way that America conceives and sustains its policy of engagement in the decades ahead."

News reporters walked through the Osprey after it landed. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Henry Shelton, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, John Hamre, flew in the MV-22 for about 30 minutes. Several congressmen also received orientation flights. About 1,000 Pentagon employees walked through the V-22 while on display with the XV-15, a NASA-inspired, Bell Helicopter-produced experimental tiltrotor -- the precursor to the MV-22.

The Osprey will provide a multi-mission, multi-service versatility and capability applicable to a wide range of contingencies. It is capable of carrying 24 combat-equipped personnel or a 15,000-pound external load. It also has a strategic self-deployment capability with a 2,100 nautical mile range using a single aerial refueling. Its vertical/short takeoff and landing capability allows it to operate as a helicopter for takeoff, hover and landing. Once airborne, the engine nacelles rotate forward 90 degrees, converting the V-22 into a high-speed, high-altitude (25,000 feet), fuel-efficient turbo-prop aircraft.

"Every major study and major review of the future capabilities have pointed to the need for exactly this type of capability," explained Cohen. "The V-22 represents a design that combines efficiency with flexibility; it provides greater survivability so that our pilots and airmen can return home safely. The V-22 is going to cut our response times from weeks down to days and days down to hours. These aircraft can fly twice as fast, twice as high, and two to five times farther than the traditional helicopters -- everything from assault operations to disaster relief and humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping."

According to the Defense Secretary, this technology is the revolution in military affairs. "These aircraft, through development and now into production, have stayed on time and within budget," he said. "And as the members of Congress will tell you today, that is no small accomplishment."

Completion of V-22 sea trials was an exit criterion to obtain approval for low rate initial production, Lot 3. Based on the successful completion of the trials on the USS Saipan in August, the Navy has released full funding for Lot 3 and the long-lead funding for Lot 4. Seven MV-22s are scheduled to be built in Lot 3. Lot 4 has 10 MV-22s.

Three additional production aircraft will be delivered to the U.S. Navy this year. These four will eventually be used for operational evaluations that begin in October and complete in May 2000. Successful completion of those evaluations will lead to a full-rate production decision in the fall of 2000.

Current plans call for the U.S. Marine Corps to field 360 MV-22s by 2013; the U.S. Air Force to purchase 50 CV-22s (Air Force special operations variant); and the U.S. Navy to acquire 48 HV-22Bs for combat search and rescue, special warfare and logistics support.

The Bell Boeing Tiltrotor Team comprises Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc., of Fort Worth, Texas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Textron, Inc., and The Boeing Company in Philadelphia.

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For further information:
Doug Kinneard
The Boeing Company
(636) 925-5790
Bob Leder
Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc.
(817) 280-6440