



*A CV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor, the newest aircraft of the 1st Special Operations Wing, forms up with one of the last MH-53 Pave Low helicopters, which the Air Force flew for nearly 40 years. The MH-53s now are retired. The two aircraft are shown over Santa Rosa Island, Fla., during a training exercise.*



# The Osprey Is On the Scene

**AFSOC's CV-22 promises unmatched speed and range.**

Photography by Rick Linares and DOD Photographers

**T**he MH-53 Pave Low earned its battle stars in some of the most significant operations of recent decades, and was one of the iconic platforms of Air Force special operations forces. Its replacement, the CV-22, offers the ability to take off and land like a helicopter but fly long distances with the speed of a turboprop. **[1]** Ospreys and a Pave Low over the Gulf of Mexico.



USAF photo by 1st Lt. Lauren Johnson

**[2]** SSgt. Jason Cirioni performs a maintenance check on a CV-22 in Mali during the 2008 Exercise Flintlock in Africa. **[3]** Two CV-22s of the 8th Special Operations Squadron prepare to take on fuel from an MC-130P Combat Shadow during Flintlock, which was the first operational deployment for the USAF Osprey. A CV-22 was used to infiltrate and extract a ground SOF team to a location 575 miles from its operating base in Mali. **[4]** 1st Special Operations Wing technicians keep the unique Ospreys flying. Note the wide window in the rear door.



USAF photo by TSgt. Armando Carrion





1



USAF photo by SrA. Emily Moore

2



3

DOD photo



4



5

**[1]** Routine maintenance on a CV-22 being performed by SrA. Elijah Loughridge (on stand), SrA. Donald Munn, and Bell Boeing technician John Samples. **[2]** An MC-130P makes ready to top off a CV-22 during a mission. **[3]** Army Golden Knights parachute demonstration team members jump in tandem from a CV-22 over MacDill AFB, Fla. **[4]** An Osprey on the Hurlburt Field, Fla.,

flight line. Engine nacelles are usually tilted upward on the ground for rotor clearance. The 1st SOW will eventually field 23 Ospreys. **[5]** An MH-53 and two CV-22s over Santa Rosa Island. The last missions for the MH-53 were flown out of Hurlburt Field. The Air Force will eventually operate 50 CV-22s, which are equipped with myriad night/adverse weather gear and signature reduction and naviga-

tional enhancements over the Marine Corps version from which they are derived.

**[1]** Troops from Mali and Senegal rehearsed infiltration and extraction maneuvers alongside US and European special operations forces during Flintlock. Here, they board a CV-22 with rotors turning. **[2]** A CV-22's rotors transition forward after takeoff from Hurlburt Field. In the foreground is an MC-130. **[3]** Two Navy SEALs are hoisted aboard a CV-22 during a training mission. Like the Pave Low, the Osprey is garnished with a host of sensors, antennae, and defensive systems. It carries a regular crew of six. **[4]** Lt. Gen. Michael Wooley, then AFSOC commander, pilots the CV-22 on a "beauty pass" at an Air Force 60th anniversary celebration at Hurlburt in 2006. **[5]** Special Forces perform a fast-rope demonstration from CV-22s at Hurlburt in October 2008. Visiting members of Congress got to see the CV-22 perform a variety of missions.



**1**

Photo by Sgt. Kieran Cuddihy



**2**



**3**

USAF photo by SrA. Andy M. Kin



**4**

USAF photo



**5**

DOD photo by SrA. Sheila DeVera



USAF photo by TSgt. Rick Storza



Photo by Sgt. Nicholas Hernandez



USAF photo by SSgt. Desiree N. Palacios



USAF photo by SrA. Emily Moore



Photo by Sgt. Kieran Cuddihy

**[1]** An Osprey hovers over a C-130 on the ramp at the US Forest Service's Albuquerque Air Tanker Base, N.M. Both aircraft were at the base to take part in Modular Airborne Firefighting System training. **[2]** A CV-22 is refueled by an MC-130P Combat Shadow of the 67th Special Operations Squadron during Flintlock. The CV-22 can self-deploy over continental distances—something the Pave Low couldn't do. Note the size of the Osprey compared to the tanker. **[3]**

A CV-22 "dusts off" after deploying a quick reaction force (note prone special operators appearing to be rocks) during Emerald Warrior, an exercise at Hurlburt Field in February. In addition to its crew, the CV-22 can carry 24 fully equipped combat troops. **[4]** An Osprey maneuvers into refueling position behind an MC-130P Combat Shadow from the 9th SOS during a firepower demonstration at Eglin AFB, Fla. **[5]** About 100 airmen of the 1st Special Operations Wing deployed to

Mali for Flintlock. One walks the wing of a CV-22 during a maintenance check.

The CV-22 has had a long development, first rolling out in 1985 and twice canceled by the Defense Department. Congress consistently restored the program, however, in no small part because of the aircraft's unique capabilities for special operations. Indications are that AFSOC will find the long wait well worth it. ■