

United States Senate

September 8, 2023

Mr. Robert Storch
Inspector General
United States Department of Defense
4800 Mark Center Drive,
Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

Inspector General Storch,

I write to you concerned about the safety of the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft variants. On August 27th a MV-22 Osprey, part of the Marine Tiltrotor Squadron 363 (VMM-363) based at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, crashed near Australia's Northern Territory killing 3 Marines and injuring 20. This crash represents the 13th Osprey crash since a deadly flight test crash in 1992 – with a vast majority of these 13 crashes involving the Marine Corps' MV-22s.

The Osprey serves an important function across the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy, filling a crucial role to quickly transport servicemembers and cargo long distances while remaining nimble enough to take off and land vertically.

However, the safety and well-being of servicemembers should always be held to the highest standard and not be eclipsed by operational requirements. If we cannot guarantee consistent safety of flight of the Osprey, we will not be able to take on missions reliably.

The Osprey's long history of accidents and incidents demands that the DoD conducts a comprehensive review. This review should include factors related to safety of flight, standard operating procedures for maintaining these aircraft, applicable tolerances in various environments and flight conditions, and training provided to crews.

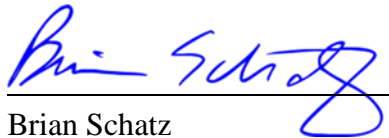
I welcome the results of the investigation to identify the causes of the tragic August 27th accident and support Acting Commandant Smith's directive for all units in the Marine Corps to conduct a service-wide safety review. However, I also believe that the DoD must vigorously look at the operating history of these aircraft, their accompanying accidents, and the individual investigations into those accidents to identify any systemic trends to prevent future tragedies.

I urge you to conduct a comprehensive review of all accidents and incidents involving V-22 Osprey variants. Furthermore, this comprehensive review should work to identify any trends and issues that the DoD or the services could address to improve the safety of flight of these aircraft. I would urge this review to specifically address the following questions in addition to other items deemed appropriate as a part of a comprehensive review:

- 1.) Are there a series of reoccurring issues with the V-22 Osprey that enabled past accidents and incidents? Have those issues been adequately address to safeguard against future incidents?
- 2.) What risk mitigation procedures are the services using to limit the risk of future accidents and incidents and why have those procedures not been enough to stop previous deadly crashes?
- 3.) How are the services accounting for environmental factors in diverse operational theaters, like the Indo-Pacific, when maintaining V-22 Ospreys to perform missions in these theaters?
- 4.) What supplemental training and procedures need to be integrated to maintain safety of flight and prevent future incidents? Were procedures meaningfully changed and disseminated from after-action reports of previous accidents and incidents?

I look forward to your response and urge you to consider how a comprehensive review of these accidents could help safeguard our servicemembers.

Sincerely,



Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator

CC: Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall, Acting Marine Corps Commandant General Eric Smith