

# Learning the ropes

For U.S. Marines, the V-22 has become an everyday workhorse  
by Jeff Barnett and photos by Bob Ferguson





**M**ost people aren't prone to dangling from a rope below a moving aircraft 100 or more feet (30 meters) above the ground. But for U.S. Marines, this can be as routine as tying their boots.

Boeing photographers recently observed Marines Corps training at North Carolina's Camp Lejeune as Bell Boeing MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft hovered, landed and lifted off again and again. The exercises included fast-roping, or sliding down ropes slung out the back of a hovering aircraft, as well as rapid offloading and special operations insertion and extraction.

The U.S. Marines are the chief operators of the MV-22 Osprey and are integrating its capabilities into routine

training and development. The Marines rely on the Osprey to perform the critical missions of moving troops and material from amphibious shipping inland, or supporting troops on the ground from austere land bases. The Osprey's unique ability to hover and land like a helicopter or fly fast like a fixed-wing aircraft makes it well suited for these roles.

The Marines are tasked with skill sets such as amphibious operations and air assault, said Lt. Col. Michael C. Starling, the operations officer for the Special Operations Training Group. "The MV-22 is making a huge impact on the way we train. It's helping our Marines learn how to operate around helicopters and other aircraft and develop the skills we

rely on to complete our mission, skills such as insertion and extraction techniques, fast-roping, and more."

"I think the public's perception is that the MV-22 is still experimental," said Master Sgt. Mark Bradley. "To us, it's an everyday workhorse." Twenty minutes after making that comment, Bradley was swinging from an Osprey 100 feet up! ■

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