

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin:

On November 29, 2023, Staff Sgt. Jacob M. “Jake” Galliher, a native of Pittsfield, Massachusetts stationed at Kadena Air Base, Japan, died in a United States Air Force CV-22B Osprey crash off the shore of Yakushima Island.¹ Staff Sgt. Galliher’s death is the latest in a string of fatalities and injuries suffered by U.S. armed services members in V-22 mishaps over the last three decades. We welcome the Department of Defense’s decision to ground all V-22 Osprey flight operations,² and urge you to continue to do so until it conclusively deems the aircraft safe and to answer questions about the aircraft’s continued use despite these many tragic incidents.

Staff Sgt. Galliher was a Direct Support Operator and Mandarin Chinese linguist assigned to the 43rd Intelligence Squadron supporting the 353rd Special Operations Wing.³ He is one of eight crew members killed or missing in the crash; as of December 5, 2023, the search for two missing crew members continues.⁴ Staff Sgt. Galliher is remembered as a beloved Pittsfield community member, and star football player at and proud 2017 graduate of Taconic High School.⁵ He enlisted in the Air Force in 2017 shortly after graduation.⁶ According to his family, Staff Sgt. Galliher was “an amazing father, son, and brother dedicated to his family and friends.”⁷ He is survived by his wife Ivy Galliher; two sons, ages two and nine weeks; his mother Kim Krautter; father Jon Galliher; stepfather Tor Krautter; and stepsister Jayden.

The V-22 Osprey is operated by the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy, and in the last three decades of its operation, dozens of U.S. servicemembers have died and been injured in accidents and mishaps involving the aircraft.⁸ Since the V-22 Osprey’s initial development and entry into service in 2007, it has been involved in 14

¹ *AFSOC Aircraft Mishap Releases*, Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs (Dec. 3, 2023), <https://www.afsoc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/3600634/afsoc-aircraft-mishap-releases/>.

² CNN, “US military grounds Osprey fleet after crash off coast of Japan kills 8 US airmen,” Haley Britzky (December 6, 2023), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/06/politics/us-military-osprey-fleet-grounded-crash-japan/index.html>

³ *AFSOC Aircraft Mishap Releases*, Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs (Dec. 3, 2023), <https://www.afsoc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/3600634/afsoc-aircraft-mishap-releases/>.

⁴ *Searches continue for 2 crew after U.S. Osprey crashes off Japan*, Kyodo News (Dec. 5, 2023), <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2023/12/c684b537da4e-searches-continue-for-2-crew-after-us-osprey-crashes-off-japan.html>;

AFSOC Aircraft Mishap Releases, Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs (Dec. 3, 2023), <https://www.afsoc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/3600634/afsoc-aircraft-mishap-releases/>.

⁵ Heather Bellow, *Jake Galliher is remembered by family and community as ‘amazing father, son and brother’*, Berkshire Eagle (Dec. 2, 2023), https://www.berkshireeagle.com/breaking/us-air-force-staff-sgt-jacob-jake-galliher-remembered-pittsfield-mass-japan-aircraft-crash/article_3b98321a-908c-11ee-bc4e-e7f254eba721.html.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Jonathan Lehrfeld & Rachel S. Cohen, *What is the Osprey, the aircraft at the center of multiple tragedies?*, Air Force Times (Nov. 30, 2023), <https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2023/11/30/what-is-the-osprey-the-aircraft-at-the-center-of-multiple-tragedies/>; Konstantin Toropin & Thomas Novelly, *Military Quietly Stops Buying Ospreys as Aircraft Faces an Uncertain Future*, military.com (Mar. 24, 2023), <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/03/24/military-quietly-stops-buying-ospreys-aircraft-faces-uncertain-future.html>.

crashes that caused 54 deaths.⁹ In just the last two years, in several V-22 Osprey accidents, 13 servicemembers have died, including another constituent of ours.¹⁰ On March 18, 2023, Marine Corps Capt. Ross A. Reynolds, a MV-22B Osprey pilot and native of Leominster, Massachusetts, died in a crash near Bodø, Norway, while participating in Exercise Cold Response 2022.¹¹ The repeated incidents involving the V-22 Osprey raise glaringly troubling questions about its safe operation.

For all these reasons, we request that the Defense Department answer the following questions in writing by January 31, 2024:

1. What is the status of Defense Department investigations into recent V-22 Osprey crashes? When will those investigations be complete and their findings made public?
2. Were there any warnings that the flight that killed Staff Sgt. Galliher should not have happened?
3. What are the safety differences between the Osprey's MV-22B (Marine Corps), CMV-22B (Navy), and CV-22B (Air Force) variants?¹² Are the Air Force, Marine Corps, and the Navy sharing safety best practices for the aircraft?
4. Our Japanese Self-Defense Force allies also operate the V-22 Osprey; have they had similar safety issues with the aircraft?
5. The CV-22B Osprey is a key platform in the implementation of the Pacific Air Force's Agile Combat Employment concept across the Indo-Pacific's vast distances.¹³ What other aircraft platforms can be used in lieu of the V-22 Osprey?
6. Have the manufacturers of the V-22 Osprey — Bell Helicopter and Boeing Defense, Space & Security — informed the Department of Defense about specific safety concerns of the aircraft? If so, please provide a list of all such concerns relayed by these companies, and the dates on which they were provided.

⁹ Peter Layton, *V-22 Osprey won't be grounded, even after dozens of crashes, 54 fatalities*, UPI (Aug. 28, 2023), <https://www.upi.com/Voices/2023/08/28/australia-V-22-Osprey-crashes-us-Marines/1181693224386/>.

¹⁰ 1st Lt. Greg Kosiras, *2nd MAW Releases Command Investigation into the MV-22B Osprey Crash in Norway on March 18, 2022*, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Aug. 15, 2022), <https://www.2ndmaw.marines.mil/News/Article-View/Article/3127405/2nd-maw-releases-command-investigation-into-the-mv-22b-osprey-crash-in-norway-o/>; *AFSOC Aircraft Mishap Releases*, Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs (Dec. 3, 2023), <https://www.afsoc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/3600634/afsoc-aircraft-mishap-releases/>.

¹¹ 1st Lt. Greg Kosiras, *2nd MAW Releases Command Investigation into the MV-22B Osprey Crash in Norway on March 18, 2022*, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Aug. 15, 2022), <https://www.2ndmaw.marines.mil/News/Article-View/Article/3127405/2nd-maw-releases-command-investigation-into-the-mv-22b-osprey-crash-in-norway-o/>.

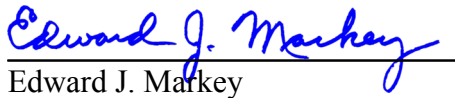
¹² *CMV-22B Osprey*, Naval Air Systems Command (last accessed Dec. 5, 2023), <https://www.navair.navy.mil/product/CMV-22B-Osprey>; *MV-22B Osprey*, Naval Air Systems Command (accessed Dec. 5, 2023), <https://www.navair.navy.mil/product/MV-22B-Osprey>; *CV-22B Osprey*, 352nd Special Operations Wing (last accessed Dec. 5, 2023), <https://www.352sow.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/1045675/cv-22b-osprey/>.

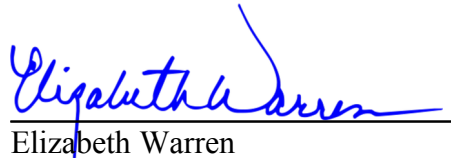
¹³ Joseph Trevithick, *Special Ops C-130s Using Beaches As Runways Eyed For Pacific Fight*, War Zone (Sept. 19, 2023), <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/special-ops-c-130s-using-beaches-as-runways-eyed-for-pacific-fight>.

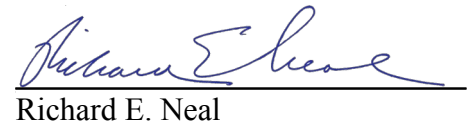
7. The V-22 Osprey is known for its “hard clutch engagement” (HCE) problems.¹⁴ Has the Defense Department determined how to solve the aircraft’s HCE problems?
8. Will the Defense Department keep the fleet of the V-22 Osprey (and all its variations) grounded until flights can be deemed safe? If not, why not?

No other U.S. servicemember should be injured or perish in a V-22 Osprey accident or mishap. We urge the Defense Department, and the Departments of the Air Force and the Navy to ensure that the V-22 Osprey is safe to fly before allowing servicemembers from across the Commonwealth and the United States back on board.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-1000

¹⁴ Michael Marrow, *Cause of V-22 ‘hard clutch’ issue still unknown, even as fleet repairs moving ahead of schedule*, Breaking Defense (May 24, 2023), <https://breakingdefense.com/2023/05/cause-of-v-22-hard-clutch-issue-still-unknown-even-as-fleet-repairs-moving-ahead-of-schedule/>.