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22 Years Later - Retired MV-22 Pilot Climbs Back into the Osprey

Col. Chris “Mongo” Seymour, USMC (Ret.) had a military career spanning decades which included being one of the early test pilots of the V-22 in the late 1990s, flying the US Marine Corps variant of the V-22 (MV-22) into its first combat deployment in Iraq (2008), before officially retiring from service in 2013.

“It’s like the Swiss Army knife you didn’t know you needed until you had it in a bind,” said Seymour. “The later production lot aircraft are exponentially better than the V-22s that I flew in the 90s and early 2000s.”



Col. Seymour (June 2026)

For the past 13 years, Seymour has served in leadership roles in aerospace and defense manufacturing. When given the opportunity to test fly a new production MV-22 in the summer of 2026, he was not only eager to take his ‘dream shot” and step back into the cockpit, but shared how this aircraft is still safe, reliable, and ready for its intended mission.

“When I got the opportunity, it was like a dream come true. I mean, it’s like winning the lottery,” Seymour exclaimed. “But flying the MV-22 to the Marine Corps was just way too cool to pass up.”

In July 2026, Bell Textron celebrated a production milestone for the MV-22 Program of Record with a ceremony at the Bell Amarillo Assembly Center. The United States Marine Corps operates the largest fleet with 359 MV-22 aircraft produced and delivered into service.

“It’s a game changer. It was ahead of its time 30 years ago, and it’s still ahead of everybody else,” continued Seymour. “The V-22 processing speed is fast; it’s kept pace with technology. Operating the V-22, and tilt-rotor technology in combat has literally saved thousands of lives!”

Col. Chris "Mongo" Seymour (Ret.) speaks about the V-22 Osprey



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With the achievement of the MV-22 POR milestone, Team Osprey - the group of industry partners consisting of more than 500 US-based suppliers and 27,000 employees from

across 44 states - is now focused on fleet wide sustainment and upgrades to meet the USMC's expectation of having the MV-22 Osprey fleet flying until 2055.

Bell and Boeing continue to build new CMV-22 variants for the U.S Navy and support the Nacelle Improvement modernization program for the U.S. Air Force CV-22 fleet.



Col. Seymour (May 2009)

About Bell

About Bell

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We're an aerospace and defense company that engineers and manufactures aircraft for critical solutions in extreme scenarios. We're breaking barriers in lifting people to safety across transportation, medical, rescue and military services, and leading the industry in future solutions that are fast, reliable and efficient.

Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas – as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Textron Inc., – we have strategic locations around the globe. And with generations of employees who have served, many in combat theatre of operation, helping our military achieve their missions is a passion of ours. Above all, our breakthrough innovations deliver exceptional experiences to our customers. Efficiently. Reliably. And always, with safety at the forefront.

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