



## MY TURN

### **CV-22 Osprey not experimental craft**

by **DAVID DELANEY**

In 1979, when Iran overran our embassy and took the staff hostage, we did not have a robust special operations capability. President Carter's negotiation attempts failed and he ordered a rescue attempt.

A team had to be put together from scratch. The carrierbased RH-53 helicopters were not designed for the mission and the pilots had no special training or experience. Three of eight helicopters had mechanical failures and the rescue attempt had to be abandoned.

During ground refueling, an additional RH-53 crashed into a C-130 killing eight Americans.

Now we have the CV-22 Osprey which has been designed for and is ideally suited for these special operations.

Harold Timber states in his ad that this is an experimental aircraft. That is not true. Versions of the Osprey have been fully operational since 2007. This Air Force Special Ops version came on-line in 2009.

While the Osprey had a number of serious accidents in development, there has been only one fatal crash since 2000 and that was in April 2010 in Afghanistan when a CV-22 crashed during combat operations. Fortunately, 16 of the 20 occupants survived.

A typical mission requires low-level, night-time incursion behind enemy lines. This requires highly trained pilots and lots of practice.

The proposed Low Altitude Tactical Navigation (LATN) area will provide a realistic training environment — much more realistic than the Texas prairies.

The LATN area ranges from below I-40 up to I-70, so the flights can be spread out with local impacts minimized.

The Air Force is in the preliminary planning stages and is conducting an environmental assessment. I hope that through this process reasonable compromises can be made and our pilots can receive the training they need.

President Obama, like President Carter, is sending our sons and daughters into harm's way. I think all Americans have a responsibility to make sure they have the best equipment and training we can provide.

*Dave Delaney is a retired US Air Force officer who has lived in the Taos area since 1987.*