

SWIFT 11 MV-22B TESTIMONY

This testimony is provided by the surviving loved ones of Swift 11, an MV-22B mishap that occurred on June 8, 2022, resulting in the loss of life of five Marines: Capt. Nicholas Losapio, Capt. John Sax, Cpl. Seth Rasmuson, Cpl. Nathan Carlson, and LCpl. Evan Strickland. These Marines belonged to VMM-364, the “World Famous Purple Foxes.”

As the surviving loved ones of Swift 11, we extend our profound gratitude for convening this hearing. Our testimony will be structured in three parts:

1. **INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE:** Introductory statement submitted on behalf of some of the surviving loved ones of Swift 11. Our purpose is to advocate for transparency and accountability regarding the Swift 11 incident, to ensure that the lessons learned prevent future tragedies. We aim to highlight the significance of hearing our voices, as they carry the personal and emotional weight of those most affected. Your attention to our perspectives honors the memory of our lost loved ones and acknowledges the ongoing impact of their absence on our lives.
2. **LETTERS FROM SURVIVING LOVED ONES:** Personal statements provided from surviving loved ones of Swift 11. These letters offer a deeper understanding of the men we lost, sharing their stories, personalities, and the profound void their absence has created. We hope these narratives convey their humanity beyond the headlines and photographs, allowing you to appreciate the individuals they were and the irreplaceable roles they played in our lives. These heartfelt accounts underscore the importance of thorough and compassionate consideration of the issues surrounding the Swift 11 incident.
3. **ENDURING QUESTIONS FOR V22 HEARING:** This section outlines the critical unanswered questions that persist regarding the Swift 11 incident. These questions focus on the circumstances leading up to the event, the decisions made during the incident, and the aftermath. Addressing these inquiries is crucial for providing clarity and accountability to both surviving loved ones and the V22 community. Our aim is to ensure a thorough investigation and to foster improvements in safety and procedures to prevent such tragedies in the future.



Capt. Nicholas Losapio



Capt. John J. Sax



Cpl. Seth Rasmuson



Cpl. Nathan Carlson



LCpl. Evan Strickland

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

What happened to John, Nick, Nathan, Seth, and Evan on June 8th, 2022, should have never happened. Our military members deserve equipment and aircraft free of failures, especially failures that can cause the loss of their lives. What began as an ordinary Wednesday should have never concluded with a devastating knock on each of our doors, bringing with it news that would forever change each of our families' lives.

There is a level of responsibility expected when you're manufacturing, designing, and engineering aircraft that carry human lives. Ospreys can carry over 20 service members, and each "near-miss" or mishap should be recognized for the fact that it had the potential for over 20 families to be standing on the tarmac at Dover watching a flag-draped casket containing their loved one. That point needs to sink in—20 families. One life lost is too many; 20 is unfathomable.

The occupants can't eject, and the aircraft doesn't glide or auto rotate as other fixed-wing or rotor aircraft. The "redundancies" aren't redundancies when the primary system is causing them to fail, and statistics are no longer comforting when the improbable becomes personal.

We've given ample time to request additional answers as to "how" something like this could happen, and for reassurance that the root cause has been found. Loved ones from Swift 11 have been doing our part to keep a light on this. We've met with our congressional representatives and staff members from the House Committee on Accountability and Oversight. We've written countless pleas, all the while living in fear from the statements, "concur that the root cause of HCE [Hard Clutch Engagement] remains unknown" and "while the likelihood has been significantly reduced, it has not been eliminated." A prevention rate can't be guaranteed when the root cause hasn't been found. This serves as an additional plea that we hope will not be ignored: the uncertainty and lack of definitive answers leave us in constant fear, and the safety of our military members remains at unacceptable risk.

We seek accountability, answers, and change. Our goal isn't to see this platform removed; it's to know that someday we will be able to say, "their lives enabled others to live," knowing what happened to them won't ever be repeated. Finding the root cause of these mechanical failures and pressing for full transparency for our DoD, service members, and their families is only part of our advocacy.

We want assurance that these components have been successfully redesigned, tested, and rendered safe. The importance of addressing this cannot be overstated—it is not just about fixing a machine, but about ensuring that no other family has to endure this loss again.

LETTERS FROM SURVIVING LOVED ONES

Capt. Nicholas Losapio

Provided by Capt. Kelsie Hancock, surviving fiancé of Capt. Nicholas "Sloppy" Losapio:

I would like to express a few words on behalf of my late fiancé, Captain Nicholas Losapio who was the aircraft commander aboard SWIFT-11. Nick was a devoted and loving partner to me, a son, and a brother. He was a friend to many and well-loved and respected by his fellow Marines. Nick was

passionate about flying the MV-22 Osprey and immensely proud to be a part of that community. His work ethic and performance were a cut above, always performing at a rate higher than that of his peers with proven skills and devotion to safety that often drove Marines to seek flight time with him. His ability to be cool, calm, and collected in the aircraft made him an incredible instructor, and his Weapons and Tactics Instructor certification was a true testament to his skills in the aircraft and his dedication to duty. Having flown on three combat deployments flying special operations missions in and out of Djibouti and in other high-risk locations, Nick served without a single mishandling of the aircraft and was deemed a once in a generation pilot. Not only was Nick an incredible pilot, he was also a fantastic Marine Officer. Making sure to take care of his Marines was his top priority. That included ensuring they were set up for success in their professional trajectories, awarding outstanding performance, and maintaining communication with his Marines after departing from the squadron. Nick was an exemplary man, and the love of my life. We were together for four incredible years, and engaged to be married, looking forward to a long, happy life together. We were excited about our upcoming permanent change of station (PCS) to Quantico, VA as Nick had put in a package to be selected for HMX-1, the Presidential Helicopter Squadron, for which we later found he was selected.

My only goal going forward, is to use my influence in the Marine Corps as a Marine Officer, to be Nick's voice and advocate for advanced and optimized safety measures and standards in the Marine Corps and to demand accountability from the manufacturers of this airframe. These same manufacturers also hold contracts for other airframes DoD-wide, and the standard must be the same across the board. This effort not only impacts the Marine Corps, but it impacts multiple service components and our Allies and Partners. This includes the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Navy, and the Japanese Defense Forces. As leaders, it is our responsibility to do the right thing and uphold the standard at all times. When we do not, it costs lives and incurs a risk to mission accomplishment and operational readiness. This is unsatisfactory. We owe it to our service members to be above reproach and to give them the best quality and assurance that the equipment they are being provided is trustworthy and sound.

My thoughts are that of my own, and I do not speak for or represent the Department of Defense on this matter.

Provided by Susan Losapio, surviving mother of Capt. Nicholas "Sloppy" Losapio:

Captain Nicholas "Sloppy" Losapio was the senior pilot on the Osprey on June 8, 2022. He was deemed a once in a generation pilot, and was a confident, skilled aviator who would do anything to protect the lives of his crew. Since his passing, we've received so many messages from people all over the world. Some who we don't even know – they just want me to know how Nick touched their lives. His footprint on this world has been vast.

Nick literally lit up the room with his smile, ear to ear and eyes twinkling. He took his own path and always made us very proud. He graduated from Norwich University in 2013 and then earned his wings and became a Purple Fox, where he stayed for the remainder of his career. Nick took 36 long hours to come into this world and 31 short years to leave it. While we truly don't understand the reason for his passage, we do know that there is a huge hole in the world and our hearts.

Capt. John J. Sax

Provided by Amber Sax, surviving spouse of Capt. John "Ball" Sax:

Capt. John J. Sax was an extraordinary Marine, pilot, husband, and father. His lifelong dream was to become a military aviator, a goal he dedicated his life to accomplishing. Before commissioning as a Marine, he worked as a civilian pilot, a path that would have promised a beautiful life while fulfilling his childhood passion for flight. However, John's heart was called to serve his country, and watching him become a Marine and persevere to earn his "Wings of Gold" as a Marine Corps Aviator will forever remain

among the most cherished memories for those who love him. Known for his constant and infectious smile, John had a presence that brightened any room. To summarize easily, “to know John is to love John.” He loved his family deeply and often expressed that he was living his “dream life,” a life he worked tirelessly to build and had always aspired to have.

Just a few short months before losing John, we celebrated our fifth wedding anniversary by getting an ultrasound to see our youngest daughter, who went on to arrive three months after his passing. My heart will always grieve that she wasn’t able to know her father’s embrace or hear the sound of his voice or laughter firsthand. John was beyond overjoyed to have another daughter on the way and would have never wanted our two girls, Eleanor and Emma, to grow up without his presence. Becoming a father was one of his greatest joys; he embraced it with the same passion as flying, cherishing every moment, and continually striving to give his all.

On what began as an ordinary day, John kissed us goodbye and said, “I love you,” for what would become the final time. He left his home and drove to his squadron, believing that the aircraft he would be piloting would return him to us safely later that day. He never anticipated missing Emma’s birth or the countless milestones in both his daughters’ lives - from reading their bedtime stories to celebrating their graduations or weddings. Our family will always have an empty seat at our table, with John’s absence replacing the presence in their lives that our children deserved.

Our military children shouldn’t be left to grow up without their mothers or fathers due to systemic or mechanical failures. My children will never know a world shielded from the reality that our freedom is worth defending, and that there are individuals who answer the call to do so. My request to you is that you will also answer a greater call to inspect what happened with the level of dedication and courage that each of these men demonstrated. I cannot stress enough that what happened to these men must not be repeated; they deserved so much more, as do our military members who are still serving and their families.

Cpl. Seth Rasmuson

Provided by Avery Rasmuson, surviving spouse of Cpl. Seth Rasmuson:

Cpl. Seth Rasmuson, a husband, father, brother, son, and friend. A Marine. But he was far more than that. Many will say they have never met anyone like Seth, which, as his wife, I can vouch for as true. There will be no one in this world who will live the way Seth did, who loved as big and lived as big as he did. Seth had the goal of becoming a Marine and dreamed of accomplishing that title since we first met at 12 years old. I grew up alongside him, and watching him become the man he grew to be is a gift I’ll cherish forever. Seth dreamed of having more children and a life outside of the Marine Corps. He counted down the days until that would come true for him. Now he has a young son who will never know his father and is known as “One of five Marines killed on a V-22.” Seth is a person and a life behind that title. And on June 8th, he died leaving his dreams unfinished.

Provided by Curtis and Jennifer Rasmuson, surviving parents of Cpl. Seth Rasmuson:

Our son, CPL Seth Rasmuson, aged 21, died on June 8, 2022, during a routine training mission on the V-22 Osprey—a tragedy that could have been prevented. I’ve pondered what I could possibly say to a politician to move you to do the right thing and take steps to prevent any further unnecessary loss of life, but truly, there aren’t words to describe the nightmare of losing a child. Knowing it was preventable only deepens the devastation of the loss.

From a young age, Seth possessed an admirable confidence. He knew who he was and wasn’t afraid to stand up for his beliefs, even when they were unpopular. I implore you to do the same. Seth was typically reserved unless he had something significant to say. He was a loving son who often called a couple of times a week to catch up on what was happening at home with his parents and four brothers. Family

meant everything to him.

Seth loved being a Marine. When considering which branch to join, he said, "The other branches are about what they can do for you, but the Marines are about what you can do for them." This encapsulates his character and the confidence he had in the Marine Corps.

The morning of the accident, Seth texted his mother, ending with "Love you and talk tonight," neither realizing it would be their final communication. There are no words to describe the loss of a child unless you've experienced it yourself, but I ask you to imagine for a moment that it was your child.

If you're a parent, you know the blood, sweat, and tears it takes to raise such a fine individual. We had so much to look forward to in the coming years, all taken from us—a life snuffed out by something preventable. Young men who join the Marine Corps have a right to know their lives are valued and deserve better treatment concerning the V-22 Osprey.

Please be the person who stands up for what is right, even when it's difficult and unpopular. Examine the statistics of the losses the V-22 has experienced and do not sweep this under the rug. Young lives are in your hands, and we ask you to take that responsibility seriously.

Cpl. Nathan Carlson

Provided by Emily Baxter, surviving spouse of Cpl. Nathan Carlson:

I have always referred to Nathan as my 'sunshine.' He was and will continue to be the brightest, happiest, and most radiant part of my life. Nathan was constantly smiling and laughing. He lifted the spirits of those around him even if he was not feeling his best in that moment. He was a genuinely positive, happy, and good man. Nathan loved flying and being able to experience life from a unique point of view, almost everything was an opportunity versus a chore, and he certainly never took anything for granted. Nathan and the crew of Swift-11 were robbed of their futures and careers due to negligence. We all love and want to continue to see the Osprey flying, but truly safely. Accountability needs to be taken and there need to be adjustments. No crew member should have to wonder or doubt if they are going to come back home every time that they step foot into this aircraft. Our service members deserve much better. While I lost my husband, others lost their son, brother, and good friend. We need to see change and accountability.

Provided by Karrie Carlson, surviving mother of Cpl. Nathan Carlson:

Nathan was a man you couldn't help but like. His infectious smile, energy, and positivity lit up even the darkest of days. He had a unique talent for making everyone's day a little brighter, simply by being himself. Nathan's presence was a gift to all who knew him, and his legacy of joy and optimism will continue to inspire us.

Our goal is not to get the MV-22 decommissioned but to make them safe. We know what happened on June 8, 2022, but we don't know why. We need accountability. We need quality parts for our aircraft. We can do better. Our service members DESERVE a safe aircraft. The only mistake the crew of Swift 11 made that day was going to work. "It was as good a day as any." They were a well-trained crew, ready for anything. The Osprey failed them catastrophically that day. This is unacceptable. I understand the good, important work the MV-22 does and want that to continue. Despite losing Nathan, I still have great pride in the MV-22 platform. Making this change won't alter my story. We live with the loss, grief, and heartbreak every single day. We already carry this burden we will carry for the rest of our lives. The weight of losing Nathan is sometimes almost unbearable. I don't want another mom, dad, sister, brother, spouse, or child to ever have to feel as I do. Make this change for Nathan, Seth, Evan, John, Nick, and every crew member we have lost. Make every crew member safe. Let their legacies live on. Their legacy is all we have left along with folded flags. I Give a Shit, and I'm asking you to as well.

LCpl. Evan Strickland

Provided by Michelle and Brett Strickland, surviving parents of LCpl. Evan Alexander Strickland

First off thank you for addressing the issues with the V-22. We want to share about our youngest son, LCpl Evan Strickland, and why this hearing is so important. Evan was a young man of remarkable character and promise. Our hope is this serves as a call for necessary changes and accountability following the tragic mishap that took his life.

On June 8th, 2022, Evan and his four brothers—Nicholas, John, Seth, and Nathan—awoke, not knowing the profound impact the day would have. At just 19 years old, this day marked Evan's first and final flight upon arriving to the fleet where he was excited to be part of VMM364 the Purple Foxes! This left so many chapters in what was a life full of potential unwritten.

As a child, Evan was quiet and reserved, often described as an old soul. He was filled with kindness and compassion for others, including four-legged creatures. This empathy and understanding extended into adulthood, where he was always willing to offer support to those in need. Evan lived each day to the fullest with a true zest for life, bringing fun, kindness, and a unique ability to connect with others.

The circumstances surrounding the Swift 11 mishap are deeply alarming and upsetting because the root cause of the mechanical failure still remains unresolved!!!

The loss of these five men, including Evan, has left a huge void felt by many, and the impact is still beyond our comprehension. The whys remain unanswered.

Please honor these men by ensuring their legacy includes meaningful change and accountability. Let us take this tragic lesson to heart and implement the necessary measures to prevent such incidents in the future. These five men deserved better, as do all our service members still relying on this platform to serve our country. We owe them ALL this!

We have the responsibility and opportunity to make a difference, ensuring that the sacrifices of Evan and his brothers-in-arms are not in vain. Let their legacy be one of change, safety, and a commitment to protecting those who serve our nation.

Provided by Logan Strickland, surviving brother of LCpl. Evan Strickland

Evan was more than just a brother to me, and a hell of a lot more than a number in a government spreadsheet made by higher ups with no care for what each number represents. Evan was the best friend I ever had, a friend to countless people, the person who would be there for me to listen to my problems, who I looked forward to making lifelong memories with after he had gotten out of the Marines. Memories I will never be able to make, a brother I will never be able to see again, and to the government he solely exists as a number.

Behind every single number is a family member, spouse, or friend that could still be here if more care was put into the engineering and maintenance of this aircraft. I don't have Evan anymore, only a dog tag with his name in my car, and the headstone of a young man buried in a national cemetery surrounded by men four or five times his age.

Provided by Jess Ronquillo, surviving partner of LCpl. Evan Strickland

"Time will not diminish the glory of their deeds."

The memorial near the chaplain's office bears the names of countless Marines who left us, leaving only

the words of others to attempt to console the grief we endure. Each person had a family, someone who they brought joy to. That familial bond takes various forms, whether it be a spouse and children, a partner, immediate family, or even a beloved pet waiting at home. In every scenario, they meant something to somebody. One of those names is Strickland E.A., Lance Corporal Evan, and what a source of comfort he was to many.

Behind the rank, the job, and the environment he was in, Evan was simply a person like everyone else. Before his name, alongside four others, dominated the news for months, he loved to laugh. He relished making others laugh, finding the silver lining in challenging days, and offering unwavering support to his friends, regardless of their circumstances. That was one of his most admirable qualities. I can never forget the way he grinned when he found joy in something.

When you ask someone who knew him to describe him, I'm sure you would hear keywords: funny, kind, adventurous, polite, and many others. He surrounded himself with people as extraordinary as himself. Being in their company radiated a warmth that cannot be replicated. Beyond all that, beyond the laughter, smiles, and jokes, he was my best friend. He was the reason I smiled on days when finding reasons seemed impossible. He was my home, walking around on two legs, offering solace after long days. He was the optimism I lacked, until I experienced the warmth of his presence. For a while, finding my place again was challenging because I didn't know where I belonged if it wasn't beside him. Sometimes, I still fear the world might crumble around me, but because of him, I fear only the possibility of losing someone I love again. Amidst this immeasurable heartbreak, he left me with wisdom and strength I never knew I had. What more can one ask of a person than an impact so profound it fundamentally changes you? That's what he effortlessly achieved. He was a special person who deserved a full life, unjustly taken from him due to the complacency of companies focused solely on numbers and data. Look beyond that and recognize how many people have sacrificed themselves, abandoning their life's ambitions to a problem that should have been addressed before these events occurred.

I'll never cease to emulate the grace with which he lived. I'll always endeavor to feel close to him in any way possible, living a life I never imagined before—bravely, selflessly, unshackled by doubt. That journey has led me to where I am two years later. Though there were days I doubted I'd make it this far alone, I did so with the help of friends, family, and the resilience he left behind. I hope that one day, people like him can work knowing without a doubt they'll return home to their families at the end of the day.

So, although he may be a name on a headstone or a memorial near the chaplain's office at Camp Pendleton, he was a son, a brother, a partner, a friend, a sanctuary, and a home. He was worthy of fundamental and necessary change, as were they all. They are not mere names; they are people who built lives and aspirations. They shouldn't serve as a catalyst for change or become statistics. I thought writing this would be easy, but the truth is, finding the right words was challenging. It should never have happened, and the fact that I sit here without him is exhausting and lonely. Though I'm sure he's proud of where I've ended up, both of us would have preferred to journey together.

"Time will not diminish the glory of their deeds." So, let us remember the sacrifice those five men made today and choose to be better.

These are my personal thoughts, and I do not speak for or represent the Department of Defense on this matter.

ENDURING QUESTIONS FOR V22 HEARING

1. AFSOC indicated in an interview with Air & Space Warfighters in Action in September 2022, that they were aware of the hour limit for parts suspected to be failing due to Hard Clutch Engagement. This was just 3 months following the Swift 11 mishap. Why was this not addressed more proactively?
2. Why weren't previous near-miss incidents involving HCE with the V-22 taken more seriously? Specifically, why wasn't Pyro-76 viewed as a warning to the potential outcome for a HCE event?
3. Some input quill redesign efforts commenced in 2017; however, these redesigns subsequently failed their qualifications in 2020. Why wasn't there a sense of urgency to resume redesign efforts at that time, instead of delaying them until 2022?
4. In the case of the input quill, the determination of an 800-hour replacement lifespan is a recent development. Given that the failure of certain components in this aircraft could result in a catastrophic, non-recoverable emergency situation, why aren't part lifespan analyses initiated sooner to proactively mitigate these risks?
5. Again, given that the failure of certain components in this aircraft could result in a catastrophic, non-recoverable emergency situation, why aren't more funds allocated to proactively replacing these parts at earlier intervals?
6. What is your method of accountability to ensure record jackets of parts and maintenance on equipment is immediately provided to the service components, and what is your strategy to rectify missing record jackets?
7. Knowing the Osprey can carry 20 or more service members, why aren't more steps taken to prevent the failure of aircraft components that could potentially lead to a catastrophic and unrecoverable emergency situation?
8. How does the military plan to improve the safety and reliability of the Osprey program moving forward to prevent future accidents?
9. With re-assessing previous mishaps with new data uncovered this last year, have additional HCE incidents been identified?
10. Redundancies (including the inter-connected drive shaft, required to power both engines in the event one loses thrust) are one of the reasons why Osprey pilots and crew have trusted this airframe previously, while knowing it cannot auto rotate or glide as other fixed wing or rotor aircraft. With the case of Swift 11, these redundancies failed. Knowing this, is work being done to reengineer the effectiveness of these redundancies and if not how are air crews and their families

able to trust that these redundancies will keep them safe and increase chances of survival?

11. NAVAIR specified that the 99% figure was derived using a Weibull distribution, a continuous probability distribution used for life data analysis, such as time to failure or time between events. This distribution does not generate a mishap prevention rate. Given this, why was this repeatedly presented as a “99% prevention rate” to service members, their families, and the public?

Thank you for your time and attention to these critical issues. We hope that this hearing will lead to meaningful changes that honor the memory of Nick, John, Seth, Nathan, and Evan, and enhance the safety of all service members.

Semper Fidelis & G.A.S,

Surviving Loved ones of Swift 11