

MILITARY RISK MANAGEMENT

The procedures and methods described in this article's main text are derived from Marine Corps squadrons involved in high-risk missions. Of course, "high-risk" (hopefully!) doesn't describe your everyday flying. But when applied in the right amount and way, I am sure they can be of use to the post-solo student all the way up to the experienced Part 135 operator.

The military was driven to create these procedures and methods because at some point, someone didn't do these things and ended up in what's called a "smoking hole." No one wants to see that happen. Consider the following questions you might want to ask yourself as a way of applying some risk-management tools to your flying:



Top, an MV-22 Osprey simulator is pictured. Bottom, a C-130 lands on a dirt airstrip at Ft. Bragg, N.C.

PERSONAL SCHEDULE?

Modern life means our schedules often are pulled in different directions. When we're using an airplane to help meet the challenges, we can be tempted to cut corners: skip a detailed preflight inspection, postpone a visit to the avionics shop, "forget" about recurrent training. Most of the time, slackening up on your routine won't have consequences. But when it does, it might be too late to do anything about it.

AEROMEDICAL?

Civilian pilots generally "self-certify" themselves as being fit for flight. But between visits to the AME, stuff happens. Even if we're not bedridden with some contagion, there are any number of stressors in our everyday lives—job, family, finances—to take our minds off the task at hand. None of us would fly with an illness, but we'd certainly consider doing so when we're just distracted by...life. We always should be at our best when in command of an aircraft, and we aren't when external factors take our mind off the tasks at hand.

TRAINING AND CURRENCY?

You're instrument-rated and about to launch into 500/2 with the tops in the flight levels and fly that weather all the way to your destination 250 miles away, which has only an LPV approach. You've shot a lot of ILSes lately, but when was the last time you shot a non-precision approach to minimums? Are you even instrument current? Night current, too?

FLIGHT PLANNING?

Are you a "kick the tires, light fires, we'll make it up as we go" kind of pilot? Really loathe calling Flight Service and wasting time on hold? Feel you can handle any weather the airlines can? If you had taken a moment to get even an abbreviated briefing, you'd know about that building line of thunderstorms along your route, and that your destination's only runway is Notamed closed after a gear-up event. And you obviously haven't called Flight Service in the last year or so: Wait times are almost non-existent.