

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-16C, S/N 86-0348

187TH FIGHTER WING, MONTGOMERY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE,
ALABAMA

11 SEPTEMBER 2002

On 11 September 2002, at 1440 Central Daylight Time, after completing a practice high altitude dive bomb (HADB) run at the Shelby Range in Mississippi, the Mishap Aircraft (MA) F-16C, S/N 86-0348, experienced an engine failure. The Mishap Pilot (MP) initiated an unsuccessful engine out approach to Bobby L. Chain Municipal Airport, Hattiesburg, Mississippi (Bobby Chain). The MP ejected from the MA when he realized he would not be able to safely land the MA. The MP, assigned to the 160th Fighter Squadron, 187th Fighter Wing, ejected safely. The MA impacted the ground on municipal airport property short of the runway threshold and was destroyed.

While completing the recovery phase of the practice HADB run, the MP heard two loud metallic bangs followed by a rapid decrease in the revolutions per minute of his engine. The MP pulled the nose of the MA into a climb while attempting to restart the engine and jettison his two external fuel tanks. The MP turned his aircraft toward Bobby Chain and established an engine out approach. He notified his wingman and requested a visual scan for fire or smoke; the wingman informed the MP that his external fuel tanks had failed to jettison. The MP attempted to jettison the external fuel tanks four times and to restart the engine twice. The MP then emergency extended the landing gear and continued the engine out approach, aware that he might have to eject. As the MP continued the approach, his instruments indicated he would land short of the runway. (The MA's weight and the higher drag caused by gear extension and the external tanks greatly reduced the possibility of a successful engine out landing.) The MP then pointed the MA toward the runway, safely ejecting at 400 feet and landing in his parachute in the trees near the runway, suffering only with minor injuries.

Based on post accident technical analysis, the Board determined by clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the mishap was catastrophic engine failure caused by failure of the high pressure turbine (HPT) post, allowing the HPT blades to break free and cause catastrophic damage to the engine.

Under 10 U.S.C. 2254 (d), any opinion of the accident investigators as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report may not be considered as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding arising from an aircraft accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability by the United States or by any person referred to in these conclusions or statements