

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION F-16C, S/N 87-0337 120th FIGHTER SQUADRON, BUCKLEY AFB, COLORADO 28 JUNE 2005

On 28 June 2005, at 1339 hours Mountain Daylight Time, an F-16C fighter aircraft, serial number 87-0337, was destroyed at Lamar Municipal Airport, Colorado. The Mishap Aircraft (MA) and Mishap Pilot (MP), assigned to the 120th Fighter Squadron, Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado, were participating in a two-ship, Basic Fighter Maneuvers (BFM) training mission when the MA experienced an engine fire approximately 30 minutes after takeoff. The MP flew a successful Simulated Flameout approach into Lamar Airport, but was forced to eject when the MA departed the prepared runway surface. There were no civilian injuries and only minor damage to private property.

As the Mishap Flight (MF) finished their third BFM engagement, the MP received cockpit warning indications of an engine fire and flight control malfunctions. The mishap wingman confirmed the presence of a fire on the aft section of the MA, which rendered the engine nozzle, rudder, speedbrakes and one of the four flight control branches inoperative. Additionally, the damage to the flight controls rendered the left brake inoperative with the brake channel switch in the Channel 2 position, which the MP had inadvertently selected. The MP did not further troubleshoot the damage to the aircraft because of the continuing fire indications.

The MA diverted into Lamar Airport, the closest suitable emergency airfield. The MP flew a Simulated Flameout approach due to the possibility of imminent engine failure, which increased his approach and landing speeds. On landing the MA veered to the right due to the inoperative left brake. When the MP determined that he no longer could prevent the MA from departing the prepared runway surface, he ejected. The MP received only minor injuries during ejection. The high-speed departure from the prepared runway surface destroyed the aircraft.

The primary cause of the mishap, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was an improperly installed engine augments fan manifold that resulted in a fuel leak and subsequent aircraft fire. Failure to follow Technical Order guidance was the most likely cause of the improper installation. Despite the severity of the engine fire, the MP made a conscious decision to stay with the aircraft and was able to maneuver the aircraft to a safe landing. There was substantial evidence that the MP's failure to troubleshoot the damaged systems and the inadvertent movement of the brake channel switch contributed to the MP's inability to stop the aircraft on the runway.

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 those conclusions or statements.