

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

**F-16CM, T/N 91-0364 & F-16CM, T/N 91-0365
26NM EAST OF CHARLESTON AFB, SC
15 OCTOBER 2009**

On 15 October 2009 at 2024:09 local time, two F-16CM aircraft, tail numbers 91-0364 and 91-0365, assigned to the 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Wing, Shaw Air Force Base (AFB) South Carolina collided over the Atlantic Ocean in Warning Area 161 approximately 126 nautical miles southeast of Shaw AFB. The mishap pilot (MP2) in aircraft 91-0365 died upon collision and did not attempt to eject. Aircraft 91-0365 impacted the water and was destroyed. There was no damage to private property. The other mishap pilot (MP1), in aircraft 91-0364, was uninjured. Aircraft 91-0364 had moderate damage to flight control surfaces and external stores. MP1 landed safely at Charleston AFB, South Carolina.

The purpose of the mishap mission was night Close Air Support training to prepare MP2 for possible Air Expeditionary Force deployment and to complete his familiarization with the Advanced Targeting Pod. The flight was conducted in accordance with applicable service and unit guidelines. Both mishap pilots were current and qualified to perform the mission. MP1 was an experienced instructor pilot. MP2 had 126.1 hours in the F-16. Because he had less than 500 hours, he was considered inexperienced in the F-16.

At the time of the mishap, the flight was returning to Shaw AFB and MP2 was rejoining on MP1, the flight lead.

The Accident Investigation Board (AIB) President found, by clear and convincing evidence, this mishap was caused by MP2's improper night rejoin. Specifically, MP2 failed to reduce airspeed and establish the appropriate flight path vector, as recommended by Air Force guidance.

The AIB President also found that channelized attention substantially contributed to the mishap. Channelized attention occurs when an individual focuses all attention on a limited number of cues to the exclusion of others of a higher priority. MP2 experienced a radar failure during the rejoin, which diverted his attention from recognizing and correcting the airspeed and flight path errors.

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 the accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability of the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements.