

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-15E, S/N 96-0203

RAF LAKENHEATH, UNITED KINGDOM

12 September 2000

On 12 September 2000 at 1839 local time (1739 Z), an F-15E, S/N 96-0203, crashed at RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom. The F-15E, assigned to the 492d Fighter Squadron, 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath, was part of a redeployment from Exercise Green Flag at Nellis AFB, Nevada, with an intermediate stop at Langley AFB, Virginia. The pilot, from the 492d Fighter Squadron, sustained minor injuries. The Weapons Systems Operator, from the 494th Fighter Squadron, sustained severe injuries to his left arm as a result of the accident. The aircraft came to rest off the left side of the runway after landing and sustained extensive damage.

The mishap aircraft experienced an unsafe gear indication on gear retraction during takeoff from Langley AFB on the mishap sortie. The landing gear was cycled in accordance with flight manual procedures, which resulted in a safe gear-up indication. The remainder of the flight was uneventful until landing at RAF Lakenheath. Approximately 1,180 feet after touchdown, the mishap aircraft left main tire blew out, followed by failure of the left main gear strut. The mishap aircraft began a yaw to the left when the left wing external fuel tank contacted the approach end arresting cable, and eventually departed the left side of the runway 3,400 feet from the approach end. After departing the runway, the right main gear collapsed causing the right wing tip to dig into the ground, and the aircraft to pirouette nose low onto the radome. The forward section of the fuselage, including both cockpits, separated from the aircraft and came to rest on its right side while the mishap aircraft came to rest upright. Additional government property damage included the runway, runway lights, approach end barrier, and grounds adjacent to the runway.

The cause of the mishap was failure of the left main landing gear connecting link, which caused the left main wheel to be oriented approximately 90 degrees to the aircraft flight path (outside rim facing forward) on gear extension. Once the left main gear tire and strut failed, the mishap pilot lost directional control and the mishap aircraft departed the left side of 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.