

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-16C, S/N 85-1456

FORT WORTH NAVAL AIR STATION, JOINT RESERVE BASE, TEXAS

28 AUGUST 2000

On 28 August 2000, at 1807 CDT, an F-16C, S/N 85-1456, crashed four miles north of Tulia, TX while performing an unauthorized aerobatic maneuver. The F-16C, assigned to the 457th Fighter Squadron, 301st Fighter Wing, Fort Worth Naval Air Station (NAS), TX, was on a depot return flight. The Mishap Pilot (MP), a member of the 457th Fighter Squadron, was killed in the mishap, which occurred on the property of his parents-in-law as they watched. There were no civilian injuries or casualties. A hog pen and plowed field sustained damage.

Shortly after take off, the MP cancelled his Instrument Flight Rules clearance with Air Traffic Control. Having previously phoned to say he was coming by, he proceeded under Visual Flight Rules to the farm of his parents-in-law. The MP, violating governing regulations accomplished his first pass over the property at 300 feet above the ground, straight and level, from West to East. He followed with a maneuvering left-hand turn to reposition for a loop.

Again, violating governing regulations, the MP began his second pass at 140 feet above the ground, completing the first half of the loop normally. At the top of the loop the MP's attention became channelized on a point on the ground where he intended to finish the maneuver. At the top of the loop, 4,759 feet above the ground, the MP pulled the throttle to idle. While maintaining focus on his ground reference, he pushed the control stick forward for 6-7 seconds in an attempt to float the inverted aircraft to maintain altitude and adjust his ground track. The MP failed to use sufficient forward stick to prevent altitude loss. While still focused on the ground references, the MP began a moderate 8-second pull--insufficient to successfully complete the maneuver--bringing the aircraft's nose down through the horizon to a near vertical nose down attitude. At approximately 3.5 seconds prior to impact, the MP initiated a maximum effort pull, and then advanced the throttle to afterburner in an attempt to recover; however, the aircraft impacted the ground.

There is clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the mishap was pilot error. The MP breached flight discipline in attempting to execute unauthorized aerobatic maneuvers. Thereafter, channelized attention led him to focus on ground references to the exclusion of all other parameters, putting himself into a position from which he could not recover the aircraft.

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.