

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

C-17A, S/N 98-0055

CLASSIFIED LOCATION

24 JULY 2002

On 24 July 2002 at 1335Z, a C-17A, S/N 98-0055, attached to the 816th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron and supporting Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in central Asia, impacted the runway at a classified location during an attempted go-around. The C-17A was assigned to the 62d Airlift Wing, McChord AFB, Washington, and the aircrew was assigned to the 437th Airlift Wing, Charleston AFB, South Carolina. There were no injuries to personnel but the aircraft sustained major damage.

The aircraft commander (AC) flew three visual approaches that were too close to the runway on downwind before beginning his turn to final, causing him to overshoot all three final approaches. During the third (mishap) approach he overshot but corrected to centerline. At approximately 50 feet above the ground, the aircraft was on approach speed with a 15 ft/sec descent rate when a right bank occurred with an increase in descent rate to 18 ft/sec. The AC recognized the unstable approach and called for a go-around. As he initiated the go-around, he applied power and raised the nose. The aircraft impacted the runway nose high with close to six degrees of right bank. The impact occurred on the right aft main landing gear at a descent rate of 16.13 ft/sec, beyond the limit of 7 ft/sec for that aircraft configuration (gross weight, pitch, and bank angle). The aircraft sustained major damage upon impact. The go-around was continued after impact and the aircraft landed uneventfully on the fourth attempt. Postflight inspection revealed major damage to the right rear main landing gear pod, the right rear outboard main landing gear door, the cargo ramp door, and the #12 tire. In addition, the outer skin of the aircraft had seven areas that were worn through, while one bulkhead and one rib experienced failure and buckling. The right bank was probably due to either a correction for a sudden right tailwind or crosswind, or a sudden wind shift. The descent rate increased because of either poor power management while attempting to remain on glidepath, raising the nose or a possible tailwind.

The AIB President found clear and convincing evidence that the primary cause of this accident was the AC's failure to control the aircraft's descent rate for the heavy gross weight while on final approach, thereby making it impossible to successfully execute a go-around from a low altitude. This resulted in significant impact with 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.