

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-16C, S/N 83-1138

ATLANTIC CITY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, NEW JERSEY

31 AUGUST 2000

On 31 August 2000, at 1537 Local (L) (1937 Zulu {Z}), an F-16C aircraft, S/N 83-1138, impacted the Atlantic Ocean 11 miles East Southeast of Atlantic City International Airport. The aircraft assigned to the 119th Fighter Squadron, 177th Fighter Wing, Atlantic City Air National Guard Base, New Jersey, was on a routine Air Combat Tactics (ACT) training mission. The pilot ejected safely from the aircraft and sustained only minor injuries.

Shortly before impact, the pilot was performing normal pre-engagement operational checks in an over water Warning Area. In level flight, at approximately 16,000 feet above mean sea level, the pilot experienced a series of vibrations and immediate deceleration. The engine compressor stalled and oil pressure went to zero. The pilot initiated emergency procedures and turned back towards the coast and the nearest landing airfield. Weather at the nearest airfield was below required flameout landing minimums and the pilot was unable to maintain usable engine thrust to divert to a suitable alternate airfield. The pilot elected to maneuver the aircraft away from land and ejected over water at approximately 1,700 feet above mean sea level.

There is clear and convincing evidence that the primary cause of the mishap was failure and subsequent liberation of a turbine blade from the third stage turbine section of the engine, resulting in damage to the oil system. Loss of engine lubrication and collateral engine damage to the low pressure turbine resulted in insufficient thrust to make a normal approach. Unable to sustain sufficient thrust to reach the alternate airfield, the pilot elected to eject over water. Evidence shows the blade failure was not detectable by the required engine borescope inspection. The inspection is designed to detect and prevent this failure mode and was properly accomplished the evening before the mishap.

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 these conclusions or statements.