

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
F-16CG, S/N 89-2050
AVIANO AB, ITALY
18 JULY 2001

On 18 July 2001, at 1009L (0709Z), an F-16CG, serial number (S/N) 89-2050, crashed 10.8 nautical miles (NM) east of Batman, Turkey. The F-16CG, assigned to the 510 Fighter Squadron (FS), 31 Fighter Wing (FW), Aviano AB, Italy, was part of a 2-ship formation conducting an Operation Northern Watch (ONW) mission. The mishap pilot (MP), assigned to the 510 FS, ejected safely. Following the ejection the MP was examined at Incirlik AB, Turkey, and released with minor injuries. There was only minor damage to private property and no civilian injuries in this mishap.

Approximately 35 minutes after initial takeoff from Incirlik AB, Turkey, the MP heard a loud bang followed by a loud buzzing noise. Engine instruments indicated decreasing RPM with rising fan turbine inlet temperature (FTIT). The MP immediately turned towards the nearest divert airfield, recognized sub-idle RPM indications and attempted an airstart. The MP pilot attempted nine additional airstarts, emergency jettisoning his stores after the third airstart attempt, before ejecting at approximately 2,000 feet AGL. The mishap aircraft (MA) was destroyed beyond economical repair. Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) assets located at Diyarbakir, Turkey, promptly and safely recovered the MP.

There is clear and convincing evidence indicating the primary cause of the mishap was the catastrophic failure of the No. 4 bearing assembly. This failure, in turn, led to a downward shift of the compressor, causing turbine blade-to-shroud interference. Evidence showed severe compressor blade tip rub on the honeycomb seals on the rear stages of compressor due to axial shift of the core. This caused severe engine RPM degradation to a point insufficient for providing thrust.

Distance to the nearest recovery field was beyond the MA's glide capabilities, thus negating any chance of safely recovering the MA. Post-impact examination of the recovered wreckage indicates the aircraft was structurally intact and all aircraft systems, except the engine and radios, were operating within operational parameters prior to ground impact.

Under 10 U.S.C. 2553(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.