

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-16C, S/N 86-0313

TYNDALL AFB, FL

13 DECEMBER 2000

On 13 December 2000, at 1445 local time, an F-16C, S/N 86-0313, crashed into the Gulf of Mexico approximately 40 miles southeast of Tyndall AFB, Florida. The F-16C, assigned to the 523rd Fighter Squadron, 27th Fighter Wing, Cannon AFB, New Mexico, and on temporary duty to the 83rd Fighter Weapons Squadron, Tyndall AFB, Florida, was part of a routine four-ship Dissimilar Air Combat Training (DACT) sortie (2v2). The pilot ejected safely and sustained only minor injuries. The aircraft impacted the Gulf of Mexico and has not been located, despite extensive salvage efforts.

Shortly before impact, the mishap pilot (MP) experienced a loud bang and violent shudder in his aircraft. The MP tried to call flight lead and began critical action procedures for engine failure. The flight lead immediately notified the MP that he was on fire and trailing a 50-foot flame. After visually verifying that he was on fire, the MP initiated ejection and successfully ejected from the aircraft. The MP safely parachuted into the Gulf of Mexico while the flight lead set up a low combat air patrol (CAP) over his position.

There is insufficient evidence to determine the cause of the accident or any substantially contributing factor. Testimony clearly supports that the aircraft experienced catastrophic engine failure with an associated engine fire. The pilot correctly performed the critical action procedures for engine failure and ejected when recovery appeared unattainable.

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.