

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
A-10A/80-0233 & A-10A/79-085
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARD
DAVIS-MONTHAN AFB, AZ
17 January 2002

Approximately 22 nautical miles (NM) northeast of Douglas, Arizona, while performing the tactical portion of a close air support mission, aircraft A-10A/80-0233 and A-10A/79-085 collided at an altitude of approximately 16,200 feet mean sea level. Mishap pilot 1 (MP 1) initiated ejection but was fatally injured. Mishap Pilot 2 (MP 2) executed a successful ejection and parachuted to safety. Both aircraft were totally destroyed upon impact, resulting in a loss of \$24,900,970, including associated components. Both mishap aircraft impacted property owned by the State of Arizona but leased to a local rancher through the Arizona Bureau of Land Management. There was minimal damage to private property.

There was insufficient evidence to determine a clear and convincing cause of the midair collision. However, the Accident Investigation Board did find by substantial evidence that loss of situation awareness (SA) on the part of MP 1 and MP 2 contributed to their colliding in mid-air. Specifically, channelized attention on the part of MP 1 led to his failure to monitor his altitude and resulted in his gradual climb into airspace reserved for MP 2. MP 1 was unaware of MP 2's position at this time. At the same time, MP 2 was unaware of MP 1's position. MP 2 expected MP 1 to be to his right, when in fact MP 1 was to his left. MP 2 based his maneuvering on this expectancy and did not perceive the possibility of collision.

The AIB found by clear and convincing evidence that MP 1's death was caused by ejecting with his parachute torso harness leg straps disconnected. During the ejection sequence, without the leg straps connected, MP 1 was forcibly extracted from his parachute harness by the parachute opening shock and received injuries that resulted in his immediate death. The harness leg straps were connected before the first sortie of a three-sortie day. Since hot-pit refueling occurred between sorties, MP 1 remained in the aircraft from the first sortie until ejection. The AIB concluded by substantial evidence that MP 1 disconnected the leg straps, most likely between the second and third sorties of the day, and was either distracted before reconnecting them or simply forgot to do so.

Under 10 U.S.C. 2954(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.