

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-16C, S/N 83-1133

**177TH FIGHTER WING, ATLANTIC CITY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE,
NEW JERSEY**

10 JAN 2002

On 10 January 2002, at 1033 Eastern Time, while executing an overshoot from a flight rejoin, the mishap pilot (MP) experienced negative G flight and initiated ejection from the mishap aircraft (MA), F-16C, Serial Number 83-1133. The MP, assigned to the 119th Fighter Squadron, 177th Fighter Wing, ejected safely. The MA impacted the ground on state forest property and was destroyed.

There is clear and convincing evidence that the mishap pilot failed to accurately perform the rejoin procedure or the resulting overshoot IAW AFTTP 3-3V5. The failed rejoin and overshoot procedure as well as his failure to ensure his life support gear was tightly secured led to a negative G condition. Once in this situation, unrecognized and incapacitating spatial disorientation limited his subsequent ability to regain controlled flight. The MP successfully ejected from the aircraft and the mishap aircraft impacted the ground and was destroyed.

The mishap occurred during a rejoin to visual formation after the completion of the Basic Surface Attack portion of the mission. The MA was the number two aircraft in a three-ship formation. During the rejoin attempt, the MP utilized afterburner while rapidly climbing in a nose high position. He then realized he had excessive overtake with the lead aircraft and aggressively applied additional G forces to the aircraft to correct. This maneuver was unsuccessful and the MP then executed an overshoot procedure. He failed to follow normal overshoot procedures as outlined in AFTTP 3-3V5. As he attempted to relax the G forces on his aircraft and perform the overshoot, he inadvertently applied too much forward stick pressure resulting in a negative G flight situation. His failure to recognize this was due to poor situational awareness, and unrecognized spatial disorientation due to the previous maneuvering.

During the next five seconds, the MP attempted to regain positive G flight. While in this negative G situation, his failure to secure himself tightly to his life support gear placed him in an awkward position. The effects of the spatial disorientation did not allow him to regain control of the aircraft. As the aircraft began a negative G, nose down, left-hand roll at approximately 4,500 feet above ground level (AGL), the MP elected to eject. The MP successfully ejected with minor injuries and was subsequently picked up by a Coast Guard helicopter. The MA impacted the ground and was destroyed.

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.