

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION**  
**RQ-1B "PREDATOR," S/N 98-3052**  
**ALI AL SALEM AIR BASE, KUWAIT**  
**IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH**  
**25 MAY 2002**

On 25 May 2002, at 1414 local, an RQ-1B, Predator, S/N 98-3052, experienced catastrophic engine failure while conducting a mission in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH and impacted the terrain six nautical miles north of Ali Al Salem Air Base (AB).

Mission planning and required briefings with all crew members were conducted on 25 May 2002. Aircraft preparations, preflight and engine start were uneventful. The mission was planned to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance on target sets located within southern Iraq. While accomplishing this mission, the mishap crew recognized an engine malfunction approximately two hours after takeoff from Ali Al Salem AB and immediately initiated a recovery to the south, intending to return to base. As the aircraft approached the field, the engine malfunction became catastrophic, causing an engine failure and seizure that negated all possibility of reaching Ali Al Salem AB. The crew selected a suitable landing zone well away from population areas and structures to execute an aircraft landing at a non-prepared landing surface. The mishap crew lost line-of-sight link with the Predator at approximately 100 feet above the ground and the aircraft continued in the last established attitude until it impacted the terrain.

There were no injuries or fatalities from the accident. Upon impact, the aircraft suffered extreme damage, primarily to the payload and landing gear. The loss is valued at \$1,480,500. There are no claims for damage to government or private property. There was no apparent media interest regarding this accident.

The primary cause of this mishap was catastrophic failure of the #3 cylinder rocker arm, resulting in complete engine failure.

*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.*