

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
RQ-1L "PREDATOR," S/N 98-3039
UNDISCLOSED FORWARD OPERATING LOCATION
IN SUPPORT OF COALITION OPERATIONS
17 MAY 2002

On 17 May 2002 at 2124 Zulu (0324 local), an RQ-1L, Predator, S/N 98-3039, departed controlled flight and impacted the ground near the recovery base at a classified forward operating location.

Mission planning and required briefings with all crewmembers were conducted on 17 May 2002. Aircraft preparations, preflight and engine start were uneventful. The mission was planned to include a hand-off of control of the airborne Predator aircraft between two separate Ground Control Stations (GCS) using a lost link recovery orbit point. Several minutes after completing the lost link recovery, the mishap aircraft departed controlled flight. The mishap pilot made several attempts to regain control of the mishap aircraft but was not successful. He cut the line-of-sight link with his GCS to let the on-board flight computers fly the aircraft. The aircraft did not recover, and maintained an inverted flat spin until video was lost several moments prior to impact. The mishap aircraft was found at the crash site, inverted, and relatively intact. There were no signs of fire. All evidence indicates that the mishap aircraft was still in an inverted flat spin at the time of impact.

There were no injuries or fatalities from the accident. The aircraft was totally destroyed upon impact with the loss valued at \$3,342,700. There are no claims for damage to government or private property. There were no press inquiries.

The sole cause of this mishap was incorrect assembly of the right tail plane control servo by the manufacturer.

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.