

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
T-38, S/N 68-8141
Eglin Air Force Base, Florida
8 March 2003

On 8 March 2003, at 1:39 p.m. local time, a T-38, Serial Number (S/N) 68-8141, was destroyed during an approach to land on runway 19 at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida. The mishap aircraft was number two in a two-ship formation of T-38s. The mishap pilot (MP 2) ejected from his aircraft, receiving only a minor foot injury. The mishap aircraft's (MA) loss is valued at \$3,800,000. Two private residences were substantially damaged in the mishap, however, no civilian injuries resulted from the mishap.

MP 2, assigned to the 7th Combat Training Squadron, 49th Fighter Wing, Holloman AFB, NM, was the wingman in a two-ship navigation/instrument proficiency cross-country training mission consisting of MP 2 and his flight lead, MP 1. The mishap sortie occurred on the second day of the four-day mission and was the second of six planned sorties for each aircraft.

There is clear and convincing evidence that the cause of this mishap was MP 2's failure to adequately monitor his airspeed after being directed to accomplish a drag maneuver and permitting his airspeed to decrease to the point that his aircraft stalled. As MP 2 attempted to recover from the stall, the aircraft impacted several large trees. The impact simultaneously made MP 2 decide to eject from the MA and caused both of the MA's engines to fail due to ingested tree debris. Post mishap analysis revealed all of the MA's systems were operating normally prior to impacting the trees.

Additionally, there is substantial evidence that complacency contributed to the mishap by degrading both mishap pilots' ability to successfully execute the final approach to Eglin AFB. Before entering their aircraft to depart on the mishap sortie, both pilots knew that MP 2 did not have the required instrument approach plates for the next three planned sorties, but neither made an effort to obtain them. Nearing Eglin AFB, with the local cloud ceiling significantly lower than expected, complacency impacted MP 1's ability to accurately assess the weather as unsuitable for a drag maneuver and led to his failure to select another option to safely land both aircraft. MP 1 directed the drag maneuver approximately two nautical miles from the runway threshold at an altitude of approximately 500 feet above runway elevation. At this short distance, it was impossible for MP 2 to achieve the required spacing prior to crossing the runway threshold.

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 of the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements