

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

F-16CJ, 97-0109 and 91-0398

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARD

SHAW AIR FORCE BASE, SOUTH CAROLINA

9 MARCH 2004

On 9 March 2004, at approximately 14:42 local time, two F-16s, Serial Numbers 97-0109 and 91-0398, assigned to the 79th Fighter Squadron, Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, experienced a midair collision while flying above the Atlantic Ocean approximately 35 miles southeast of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

The two mishap aircraft were flying as part of a 4-ship scheduled training mission. The relevant mission profile called for a one-versus-one basic fighter maneuver (BFM) scenario within an altitude range of between approximately 21,000 and 29,000 feet. After a winner is declared from that engagement, the loser departs the area and one of the other two aircraft enters the fight from above 30,000 feet in order to attack the declared winner. This profile is sometimes referred to as a one-versus-one plus one. While performing a nearly pure vertical conversion entry, Mishap Aircraft 2 (91-0398) was descending toward Mishap Aircraft 1 (97-0109) from an altitude of 32,000 feet. The pilot of Mishap Aircraft 2 was preparing for a simulated gunfire attack against Mishap Aircraft 1. The pilot of Mishap Aircraft 1 employed defensive maneuvers, slowing the speed of his aircraft. Mishap Aircraft 2 quickly closed with Mishap Aircraft 1. The pilot of Mishap Aircraft 2 attempted to avoid contact with Mishap Aircraft 1; nonetheless, the forward fuselage, canopy and tail of his aircraft impacted the aft tail section of Mishap Aircraft 1 at an altitude of approximately 22,000 feet. Both aircraft returned to Shaw AFB after the mishap and landed without incident. The total estimated cost of the mishap is \$208,396.27. There were no injuries and no damage to civilian property.

The primary cause of this accident, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was Mishap Pilot 2's failure to recognize and control closure between his aircraft and Mishap Aircraft 1. Improper task prioritization and channelized attention led to a failure to control closure between the two aircraft as MP2 was attempting to achieve a simulated guns track solution. Significant contributing factors, supported by substantial evidence, were the 1v1+1 "fini-flight" mission profile, flight lead's decision to fly the profile at medium-to-high altitude, and the clean configuration of Mishap Aircraft 2.

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