EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

MQ-1L PREDATOR S/N 99-3054

INDIAN SPRINGS AIR FORCE AUXILIARY FIELD, NEVADA

14 JUNE 2004

On 14 June 2004 at 1440 local time, an MQ-1L PREDATOR, S/N 99-3054, callsign DEADLY 01, 11th Reconnaissance Squadron, Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada crashed while operating in the Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field, Nevada traffic pattern on a student training mission. The aircraft was severely damaged upon impact with the loss valued at $4,200,400. No one was injured in the accident and there was no damage to government or private property. Media interest was minimal.

Despite an almost constant idle power setting from the final approach fix to the flare on a non-precision approach, the aircraft remained above glide path, up to 15 knots fast, and with momentary descent rates greater 1200 feet per minute (fpm). At approximately 130 feet above the ground, the descent rate increased to 809 fpm. During the last 13 seconds prior to executing a go around, the aircraft slowed from 10 knots above approach speed to 10 knots below approach speed. The student pilot initiated a go-around. The aircraft pitch rotated from near level to 8 degrees nose up as airspeed decreased to 14 knots below approach speed. The aircraft impacted the runway tail planes first, porpoised and bounced into the air twice before coming to a stop.

There is clear and convincing evidence that this mishap was caused by a late executed go around from a poorly flown approach. The crew allowed the aircraft to get slow on short final under gusty and variable wind conditions which led to a high sink rate. The student initiated the go around concurrently with the instructor pilot and supervisor of flying directing "go around", but not in time to prevent the tail of the aircraft contacting the runway and cable barrier at a high sink rate due to a steeper than nominal approach path and a lower than normal power setting (idle) coming into the landing flare. There is clear and convincing evidence that the aircraft hit tail first due to the student pilot setting too high of a nose pitch for the go around. There is clear and convincing evidence that the aircraft tail planes sustained major damage aggravated by cable barrier contact upon runway impact. There is substantial evidence that wind conditions, operational risk management processes, human factors issues, and barrier placement vice aimpoint significantly contributed to the mishap.

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.