

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

T-6A, SERIAL NUMBER 99-3553

THE 479th FLYING TRAINING GROUP, 3d FLYING TRAINING SQUADRON  
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

3 APRIL 2004

On 3 April 2004, at 0916 Eastern Standard Time (EST), a T-6A, S/N 99-3553 crashed 1540 feet south of runway 27 at Savannah Hilton-Head International Airport, Savannah, Georgia. The mishap aircraft (MA), a T-6A Texan II, assigned to the 3d Flying Training Squadron (3 FTS), 479th Flying Training Group (479 FTG), Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, was on a continuation training (CT) cross country mission. The Mishap crew (MC), consisting of Mishap Pilot 1 (MP1) and Mishap Pilot 2 (MP2), were assigned to the 39th Flying Training Squadron (39 FTS) and were fatally injured in the mishap. MP1 ejected after the MA was out of the survivable ejection envelope. The aircraft impacted the ground within the Savannah Hilton-Head International Airport causing minimal property damage. The MA was destroyed with the loss valued at \$4,200,000.

The MC had been cleared for takeoff and one left closed traffic pattern before departing under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) to the west. After takeoff, the MC retracted the landing gear and flaps, leveled off at 30 feet above the runway, accelerated to 168 knots, pitched up 37 degrees nose high (3.6 times the gravitational force (Gs) ) climbing to an altitude of 530 feet while simultaneously rolling into 131 degrees of left bank (nearly inverted). MP1 ejected at an altitude of 337 feet above ground level (AGL), three seconds prior to the MA impacting the ground in a 45 degree nose down attitude.

Clear and convincing evidence suggests the cause of this fatal aircraft mishap was pilot error. For unknown reasons, the pilot flying the MA performed a closed pattern exceeding the maximum bank angle of 90 degrees and allowed his airspeed to decrease to 131 knots, below the minimum airspeed of 140 knots as directed in Air Force Manual 11-248. The 37 degree 3.6 G pitch up coupled with the high bank angle and slow airspeed caused the MA to stall and roll further towards inverted flight. The MC made no attempt to apply proper stall recovery procedures. As a result, the MA was nearly inverted at a much lower than normal altitude and was too low for safe ejection. Aircraft engine and flight control systems were operating normally when the aircraft crashed.

**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.**