

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-16C, S/N 85-1474 MISHAP

**113th WING, 121st FIGHTER SQUADRON, ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE,
MARYLAND**

3 NOVEMBER 2004

On 3 November 2004, at 2110 hours Eastern Standard Time, an F-16C, serial number (S/N) 85-1474, gun discharge resulted in an off-range ordnance impact near the Warren Grove Range (WGR), Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey. The mishap aircraft was part of a two-ship F-16C formation launched from Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland for a night time training sortie. The Mishap Pilot (MP) was flying as flight lead. The Instructor Pilot was the wingman pilot of the other F-16C aircraft in the flight. Both the pilots and aircraft were assigned to the 121st Fighter Squadron, 113th Wing, Andrews AFB, MD.

Just prior to the flight-related mishap, the MP was preparing to conduct a High Angle Strafing pass at the WGR. At the time of the gun discharge, the MP pulled the trigger on the flight control stick to command the aircraft's targeting pod to emit a laser marker to illuminate his intended target on the range. The targeting pod attached beneath the aircraft is capable of rotating its seeker head and pointing at a target on the ground independent of the aircraft's flight path. However, the aircraft's gun can only fire directly ahead of the aircraft's flight path. At the time the trigger was pulled, the aircraft was not headed towards the intended strafing target.

Because the aircraft's gun was armed when the MP pulled the trigger to emit a laser marker, the MP's trigger action also caused the aircraft's 20 mm gun to fire a total of 27 rounds of inert training ammunition. Some of the discharged ordnance from the mishap aircraft struck the Little Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School. There were no injuries but the ordnance that struck the school caused holes in the roof, holes in the acoustic ceiling tiles, torn carpet and several indentations in the asphalt parking area surrounding the building.

There is clear and convincing evidence that this flight-related mishap was caused by pilot error, a poorly designed pilot vehicle interface for the laser marker located on the flight control stick trigger, and the lack of published guidance for a commonly utilized range safety procedure for live strafing passes at WGR.

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.