

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION  
F-16D, S/N 92-3927  
NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, NEVADA**

**18 MAR 2005**

On 18 March 2005, at 0834L (1634Z) the mishap aircraft (MA), an F-16D, Serial Number 92-3927, crashed short of the runway at Nellis Air Force Base (AFB), Nevada. The MA, assigned to the 57th Wing, Nellis AFB, Nevada, was departing on a two-ship cross country deployment mission to Tyndall AFB with a planned fuel stop at Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas. The mishap pilot (MP) had completed an afterburner (AB) takeoff and, when attempting to de-select AB, discovered the throttle was stuck in the full AB position. Multiple attempts to free the throttle were unsuccessful. A high fuel consumption rate eventually led to an engine stall/stagnation due to fuel starvation while the pilot was aligning for a planned engine-out landing. The MP, assigned to the 16th Weapons School, was unable to glide the aircraft to the runway and ejected at approximately 200-300 feet above ground level. The MP was in good condition following the ejection. The aircraft was destroyed on ground impact approximately 1,700 feet short of the runway and came to rest just north of the Nellis AFB perimeter road. There were no casualties and no civilian property damage on the ground. Aircraft damage is estimated at \$22,708,379 and damage to runway approach lights is estimated at \$76,400.

Following a normal AB takeoff, the MP, call sign Vegas 61, was unable to de-select AB due to the throttle being physically stuck in the full AB position. The MP initiated an immediate climb, used high-G turns to bleed off airspeed, and attempted to maintain a position near enough to Nellis AFB to accomplish an engine out landing in case the engine flamed out for any reason. After attaining a safe altitude, the MP attempted to free the throttle by rotating it outboard and using the cutoff, or "pinky" switch, as well as by using brute force; however, all attempts to free the throttle were unsuccessful. After coordinating with the supervisor of flying (SOF), squadron supervisor (Top 3) and Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company, the MP selected secondary engine control (SEC) and this action terminated AB operation, with the throttle still stuck in the same position. The MP elected to set up for a straight-in flameout landing approach and planned to shut down the engine using the Main Fuel Shutoff Valve (MFSOV), operating the aircraft on emergency power unit (EPU) with the jet fuel starter (JFS) on. While the MP was maneuvering for a straight-in flameout approach, the engine stalled/stagnated and the MP began the approach to runway 21L at Nellis AFB. When he realized the MA would not reach the runway, the MP arrested the sink rate and ejected from the MA.

The cause of this mishap, supported by clear and convincing evidence, is twofold. First, there is clear and convincing evidence that the MP failed to follow guidance in Air Force Instruction 11-2F-16 Volume 3, *F-16--Operations Procedures*, by allowing three items, including a large briefcase, to be carried in the unoccupied rear cockpit. There is clear and convincing evidence that items in the rear cockpit shifted during takeoff and physically stuck the throttle in the full AB position. However, this breach of discipline itself did not result in the loss of this aircraft. Second, there is clear and convincing evidence that the MP did not properly respond to the stuck throttle condition. Once the MP had obtained altitude and airspeed within 1F-16CJ-1 flameout landing high key parameters, he did not maintain a position from which he would be able to land the MA on the runway in the event the engine failed.

*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 the 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.*