

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
MQ-1L "PREDATOR," S/N 02-3082
AT A DEPLOYED LOCATION ON 20 MARCH 2006

On 20 March 2006, at approximately 2228Z, an MQ-1L Predator, Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), S/N 02-3082, crashed 30 miles west of a forward operating location in the USCENCOM theater. The aircraft departed controlled flight shortly after the mission pilot turned off the Stability Augmentation System (SAS) pitch and roll axes.

The mishap RPA (MRPA) was deployed from the 15th Reconnaissance Squadron, 57th Wing, Nellis AFB, Nevada and flown by the 3rd Special Operations Squadron, 16th Special Operations Wing, Nellis AFB, Nevada. The wreckage was recovered at the impact site. There were no injuries or fatalities from the accident. Upon impact, the MRPA was damaged beyond economical repair. Other than the damage to the aircraft, valued at \$4,368,400, there was no damage to government or private property.

The primary cause of this accident, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was the mishap pilot's (MP) decision to turn off the SAS pitch and roll axes with the aircraft under Ku-band control. Confused over the flight characteristics of the MRPA, the MP erroneously concluded that there was a control problem with the MRPA. The MP used poor judgment when he turned off the SAS pitch and roll axes. This resulted in the aircraft banking excessively in a nose down attitude, thereby losing its satellite communication link. The MP was unable to regain control of the aircraft, which subsequently impacted the ground.

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.