

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION  
MQ-1B PREDATOR S/N 03-3112  
DEPLOYED LOCATION  
17 January 2007

On 17 January 2007 at 2035Z, an MQ-1B PREDATOR, S/N 03-3112, 15th Reconnaissance Squadron, Creech AFB, Nevada, crashed during a reconnaissance mission while operating from a deployed location in the Central Command Area of Responsibility. Upon ground impact, the unmanned aircraft was severely damaged with losses valued at \$4,160,391.00. No one was injured in the accident. Other than the Mishap Aircraft (MA), there was no damage to government or private property. There was very limited media interest. Approximately 14 hours into a 20 hour sortie, the aircraft sustained a momentary (two (2) seconds) drop in engine rotations per minute (RPM) followed 15 minutes later by catastrophic engine failure. Data logger analysis of changes in RPM, oil pressure, turbo oil temperature, and propeller pitch subsequent to the original two second RPM drop indicate the engine was failing over a period of approximately 15 minutes. However, monitored engine parameters remained within normal ranges until approximately the last minute before the engine seized. Therefore, the MA did not generate any form of caution or warning to the pilot of the impending failure until approximately 60 seconds prior to the engine completely failing.

There is clear and convincing evidence that the first point of failure was a crack in the crankshaft which propagated over time to the area of the #4 connecting rod bearing. The # 4 connecting rod ultimately failed and wedged itself in the opposing #3 cylinder causing the crankshaft to immediately stop approximately 15 minutes after the initial two second drop in engine RPM.

The pilot took appropriate actions to establish a glide to an unpopulated area with the intent to land the MA via KU band (satellite) control. By telephone, the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) directed the Mission Commander (MCC) to crash the MA rather than attempt a landing if there were no friendly personnel to secure the aircraft. The CAOC decision was based on the classified equipment the MA was carrying and the two Hellfire missiles. The CAOC determined that there were no friendly forces to secure the MA on the ground nearby so the Mishap Pilot 2 (MP2) intentionally crashed the MA into an unpopulated area. The remains of the MA and all classified equipment and weapons were recovered.

*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.*