EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-15C, T/N 79-0075 and F-15C, T/N 81-0043
GULF OF MEXICO, 44NM SOUTH OF TYNDALL AFB, FLORIDA
20 FEBRUARY 2008

On 20 February 2008, at 1332 local/1932 Zulu (or Greenwich Mean Time), two F-15C aircraft (tail numbers 79-0075 and 81-0043) collided and were completely destroyed 44 nautical miles south of Tyndall Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, during a scheduled day high aspect basic fighter maneuver training mission engagement. Following the midair collision, mishap pilot 1 ejected with minor injuries requiring no treatment. Mishap pilot 2 was fatally injured at the time of collision. Search and rescue efforts recovered mishap pilot 1, mishap pilot 2, and wreckage from both aircraft. The mishap occurred within Warning Area 151B, an authorized restricted airspace for military training, and caused no damage to private property.

Both mishap aircraft and pilots were assigned to the 58th Fighter Squadron, 33d Fighter Wing, Eglin AFB, Florida. The 33d Fighter Wing's mission is air superiority in support of national security objectives. Mishap pilot 1 has served on active duty since 2002 and has been qualified in the F-15C since 2005. He is a current and qualified four ship flight leader. Mishap pilot 2 graduated from formal training at Kingsley Field, Oregon, in August 2007, and was a mission qualified F-15C pilot for approximately four months.

The mishap flight was a two ship of F-15Cs flying in surge operations. The mission was planned as a high aspect basic fighter maneuvers training sortie. The mission proceeded as briefed and scheduled until the third high aspect pass of the first engagement.

The Accident Investigation Board President determined that the mishap was unrelated to the airworthiness and maintenance of the aircraft.

The Accident Investigation Board President determined, by clear and convincing evidence, the primary cause of this mishap was pilot error, in that both mishap pilots failed to clear their flight paths and failed to anticipate their impending high aspect mid-air collision.

The Accident Investigation Board President investigated the following factors which could have contributed to the mishap, however there was insufficient evidence to determine that any one particular factor or combination directly contributed to this mishap.

1. Loss of Mishap Pilots flight proficiency during the F-15C fleet stand down.
2. Lack of a pilot and integrated mission Operational Risk Management program.
3. Lack of integrated Training Rule program that identifies and informs squadron leadership and flight members of training rule violations.

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 of the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements.