

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
F-15D 85-0131
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARD
NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, NEVADA
30 July 2008

On 30 July 2008 at approximately 1117 local (Pacific Daylight Time), F-15D serial number 85-0131 assigned to the 65th Aggressor Squadron, 57th Wing at Nellis Air Force Base, departed controlled flight and entered into a spin while executing a planned maneuver during exercise Red Flag 08-3. The aircraft impacted the ground 20 miles northwest of Rachel, Nevada in an uninhabited area on the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) belonging to the Bureau of Land Management. Both aircrew ejected. The back seat observer pilot sustained minor injuries and was rescued; the front seat pilot hit the ground before his parachute fully deployed and died immediately upon ground impact. The aircraft and associated equipment were destroyed with the aircraft loss valued at \$38,003,021. There were no civilian casualties or additional damage.

The Board President found by clear and convincing evidence this mishap was caused by a sudden departure from controlled flight during a routine maneuver when the mishap pilot momentarily exceeded the allowable angle of attack. Through extensive simulation, he found each of the following factors substantially contributed to the mishap: (1) an external wing fuel imbalance of at least 750 pounds; (2) F-15D left yaw/roll phenomenon when configured with two external wing tanks; and (3) a radome (nose cone) imperfection. After the mishap pilot recovered the aircraft from the spin, spatial disorientation hampered the dive recovery. The Board President found clear and convincing evidence that at low altitude, this spatial disorientation was also causal to the mishap and ultimately led to the mishap pilot's death.

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