

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION MQ-1B, "PREDATOR," T/N 07-3183 AT A FORWARD OPERATING LOCATION 13 MAY 2009

On 13 May 2009, the Mishap Aircraft (MA), a Block 15 MQ-1B Predator, tail number (T/N) 07-3183, was lost and presumed crashed at a forward operating location. The MA was carrying one AGM-114P HELLFIRE missile. The Predator was owned by the 432nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and flown by the 15th Reconnaissance Squadron, 432d Wing, Creech Air Force Base, Nevada. At 1506L (local Creech time), 2206Z (Zulu time), the MA lost its return link (RL) while flying a sortie in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. RL refers to the data transmission capability from the aircraft to the Ground Control Station (GCS) via the Predator communication systems. Attempts to reestablish the RL were unsuccessful. The MA did not return to its forward operating base and is presumed crashed with no known injuries, deaths, or reported property damage. The aircraft loss is valued at approximately \$3.9 million.

After normal maintenance and preflight checks, the MA taxied and departed from its forward deployed location at approximately 1025L for a planned 22 hour mission. At 1506L, the RL between the MA and the GCS was lost. The Mishap Crew (MC) followed the required standard procedures in an attempt to regain the link but was unable to do so. At 1509L the Identify Friend or Foe (IFF) signal from the MA was lost and never recovered. Subsequent Tactical Control (TC) and Launch and Recovery Element (LRE) attempts to locate the MA were also unsuccessful. Contact with the MA was not re-established and the aircraft is presumed crashed. No wreckage was found.

The post-mishap investigation revealed no anomalies with regards to the MA at the time of the lost link. Preflight procedures and launch of the aircraft were all normal. The GCS was thoroughly examined and no anomalies were found. There was no evidence of negative maintenance trends or issues, and maintenance records showed no discrepancies. The MC reported no anomalies with the operation of the MA immediately prior to the mishap.

The AIB President could not determine the cause of this mishap. The AIB President did find sufficient evidence to determine that the mishap was not caused by weather, icing, the GCS, MC performance or qualifications, fuel starvation or maintenance discrepancies.

**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.**