

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

**UH-1N, T/N 69-6603
KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, NEW MEXICO
27 APRIL 2011**

On 27 April 2011, at approximately 1115 local time, a UH-1N, T/N 69-6603, crashed at a remote landing zone near Kirtland Air Force Base (AFB), New Mexico (NM). The mishap crew (MC) was performing hoist operations when the rescue device, in this case a forest penetrator, snagged on a stationary F-111 capsule. The mishap aircraft (MA) entered a descending right turn and impacted terrain. After the MA came to a rest, the MC egressed the MA unharmed. The MA is assigned to the 512th Rescue Squadron, 58th Special Operations Wing, Kirtland AFB, NM.

The MC was conducting an initial instructor flight engineer checkride involving hoist operations. The MC consisted of two pilots (MP1 and MP2) and two flight engineers (MF1 and MF2). During one of the hoist operations, the hoist cable was lowered to the ground with the forest penetrator attached. MF1 initiated a hoist malfunction to test MF2's ability to troubleshoot. During the operation, the MA's hover drifted forward and left. When MF2 cleared the malfunction the hoist cable retracted unexpectedly. When the cable retracted, the forest penetrator raised off the ground and swung forward, snagging a stationary F-111 capsule's window. The MA banked right and MP2 instinctively applied maximum power in an attempt to recover the MA. The MA entered a sharp descending right turn while tethered to the F-111 capsule. When the forest penetrator ripped free, the MPs leveled out the MA before impacting terrain. The MA's main rotor struck the ground twice and the MA came to rest on its left side. The MC egressed with no major injuries. A fire ignited shortly after impact completely destroying the MA. The total cost of the mishap is \$4,811,580.00.

The Accident Investigation Board (AIB) President found by clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the mishap was a combination of four actions by the mishap crew (MC), including three by the mishap flight engineers (MF1 and MF2) and one by the mishap pilot (MP2). These actions included (1) MF2's troubleshooting sequence, (2) MF1's checkride supervision, (3) MF2's channelized attention, and (4) MP2's control inputs. In addition, the AIB President found by a preponderance of the evidence that the use of an old F-111 capsule as a training target during hoist operations and miscommunication between the crew substantially contributed to the incident.

Under 10 U.S.C. § 2254(d), any opinion of the accident investigator as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report, if any, 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.