

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-15C, S/N 78-0541

Kadena AB, Japan

21 August 2002

On 21 August 2002, at 0955 Japan Standard Time (0055 Zulu), an F-15C, serial number 78-0541, crashed about 60 miles south of Kadena AB, Japan while performing advanced handling characteristic (AHC) exercises. The mishap pilot (MP) ejected safely and the mishap aircraft was destroyed with the loss valued at \$37,235,924. The aircraft and MP were assigned to the 44th Fighter Squadron, 18th Wing (WG), Kadena Air Base, Japan, and were on a routine training mission. There were no deaths, injuries, or civilian property damage.

The crash occurred 57 minutes into the sortie while the MP was operating single-ship in assigned training airspace. In the sequence leading up to the mishap, the MP had launched as number 4 in a four-ship air combat maneuvering training mission. After one engagement, the number 3 aircraft experienced an engine problem. The MP escorted number 3 back to a safe landing at Kadena and then returned to the training area to practice advanced handling. Beginning at 19,000 feet above water level (AWL) and 370 knots, the MP completed an idle power break turn (defensive turn), rolled inverted and executed a jink turn (rapid change of aircraft plane of motion) resulting in an 80-degree nose low descent.

The AIB President found that there is clear and convincing evidence that the MP then initiated inappropriate control inputs while executing a second jink turn. The MP did not detect airspeed increasing to 255 knots prior to beginning the maneuver. The MP aggressively applied forward stick to reduce G forces and began a rapid left roll. While still rolling, the MP initiated abrupt, full aft stick and failed to detect or correct a rapid loss of airspeed, increase in angle of attack (AOA), and adverse yaw. As a result, the aircraft departed from controlled flight and entered an erect spin at 13,000 feet AWL. The AIB President found that there is substantial evidence to conclude the resulting disorientation and G forces prevented the MP from applying effective anti-spin controls and recovering the aircraft to controlled flight. The MP ejected at approximately 6,000 feet AWL and the aircraft continued to spin until impact with the water.

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