

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
F-16CG, S/N 88-0424
CENTCOM Area of Operations (AOR)
12 June 2003

On 12 June 2003, at 0622 local time, an F-16CG, S/N 88-0424, crashed in the Iraqi AOR. The F-16, assigned to the 421 EFS, deployed from the 388 FW, Hill AFB, was part of a Close Air Support mission supporting the CENTCOM Commander's objectives. The mishap pilot (MP) ejected safely and without injury. The crash site was located in an uninhabited portion of the Iraqi desert. There were no other injuries and, other than the total loss of the mishap aircraft (MA), there was no damage to military or civilian property.

The cause of the mishap, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was a combination of trapped external fuel due to an aircraft malfunction coupled with the MP's failure to properly monitor his fuel status. Analysis indicates the trapped fuel condition was caused either by a malfunctioning external vent and pressurization valve, or a combination of a malfunctioning right external refuel/transfer shutoff valve and malfunctioning external fuel transfer override float switch or external fuel transfer override relay. After the final aerial refueling was completed, both external wing tanks on the MA stopped feeding at approximately 2200 lbs of fuel remaining in each tank (4400 lbs total). During the subsequent hour and forty-five minutes of flight, the MP failed to monitor his fuel as required by AFI and TO guidance, thereby missing the fact that his external wing tanks contained trapped fuel. As the MA was approaching the KC-10 for pre-RTB refueling, the engine flamed out due to fuel starvation. The MP ejected safely, and the MA was destroyed upon impact with the ground.

Two additional factors, supported by substantial evidence, contributed to the accident by contributing to the MP's failure to properly monitor his fuel status:

- **CHECKLIST ERROR** – The MP failed to complete step two of the CLIMB/INFLIGHT/OPERATIONAL CHECKS checklist which requires returning the fuel quantity select knob to NORM. By leaving the fuel quantity select knob in EXTERNAL WINGS, the MP prevented proper HUD trapped fuel and bingo warnings which likely would have alerted him of the trapped fuel situation in time to safely recover the aircraft.
- **TASK MISPRIORITIZATION** – The MP failed to properly prioritize fuel checks during the period between his last completed refueling and the flameout. While not completely omitting fuel status from his crosscheck, the MP did not place sufficient priority on performing proper fuel checks to notice that the fuel in his external tanks had become trapped.

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