

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
F-16CJ, S/N 93-0542
55TH FIGHTER SQUADRON (FS), SHAW AIR FORCE BASE (AFB), SC
5 APRIL 2006

On 5 April 2006, at 1737 hours local time, while performing Basic Fighter Maneuvers (BFM), the mishap pilot (MP) ejected from the mishap aircraft (MA), F-16CJ, Serial Number 93-0542. The MP and MA were assigned to the 55th FS, Shaw AFB, SC. The MP suffered major injuries during the high speed ejection. The MA impacted the Atlantic Ocean 86 miles northeast of Charleston, SC, and was destroyed. There were no fatalities or civilian property damage. Mishap cost is estimated at \$22,861,354.

During the mishap engagement, the MP initiated an 8-9 G descending left turn in order to maintain an offensive advantage over the mishap instructor pilot (MIP). At 20 seconds into the engagement, the MIP observed the MA stabilize in a 60 degree nose low attitude with 45-70 degrees of left bank. Within seconds of making a "knock it off" radio call to the MP, the MIP observed the MP eject from the MA. The MP remembered waking up, seeing the ocean directly in front of him, feeling like the aircraft was at an extremely high speed based on wind noise over the canopy and pulling the ejection handle. The observations by the MIP and testimony of the MP are consistent with a G-LOC in which the pilot loses consciousness, ceases to control the aircraft, and then regains limited consciousness after a short period of total incapacitation.

Ejection was initiated at 6720 feet Mean Sea Level, approximately 80 degrees nose low, 656 knots with a descent rate of 1100 feet/second. The MA impacted the water and was destroyed. The MP was located by a joint US Air Force/US Navy/US Coast Guard rescue operation and recovered by the US Navy's USS Klakring approximately two hours after the ejection.

The AIB President found clear and convincing evidence that the MP suffered G-induced loss of consciousness (G-LOC) that resulted in what the MP correctly assessed as an unrecoverable aircraft attitude based on his diminished cognitive capability. The MP initiated a high speed ejection sustaining major injuries and the MA impacted the ocean and was destroyed.

The AIB President found substantial evidence that an extended break from flying to attend a formal military school, physical fatigue from flying five (5) high-G BFM sorties in three (3) days, and the mental stressors associated with beginning the Instructor Pilot Upgrade (IPUG) were contributing factors to the MP's G-LOC.

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 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.