

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

QF-4E, S/N 72-0136

HOLLOMAN AIR FORCE BASE, NEW MEXICO

11 February 2003

On 11 February 2003, at 0922 local time, a QF-4E, S/N 72-0136, crashed 16 miles southwest of Holloman AFB on the confines of the White Sands National Monument. The QF-4E was assigned to the 82 ATRS, 53 WG, Eglin AFB. The QF-4E was being operated by the 82 ATRS, Det. 1 at Holloman AFB. The QF-4E was functioning as a Full Scale Aerial Target Remotely Piloted Vehicle supporting a live AIM-9X mission and was unmanned. The QF-4E was scheduled to be destroyed during the missile profile but was not damaged at that time. There were no injuries and there was no significant property damage.

Shortly before impact, the mishap drone was configured for landing at 1000 feet above ground level on an auto land profile. It then experienced a rapid and uncommanded pitch down reaching 55 degrees nose low in less than four-tenths of a second. The drone controller was unable to regain control of the drone and it impacted the ground approximately 85 degrees nose low. The drone was destroyed on impact.

The primary cause of the mishap was a spurious electrical input that was received by the pitch system of the Primary Automatic Flight Control System (PAFCS) and interpreted as a maximum pitch down request. There was not enough evidence to positively determine from where this input came.

*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.*