

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION  
RQ-1K, S/N 94-1567  
NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, NV  
23 OCTOBER 2000

On 23 October 2000, at 0042 Local, 2242 Zulu, an RQ-1K, S/N 94-1567, crashed near Dunavo, Kosovo, approximately 180 nautical miles southeast of Tuzla Air Base (AB), Bosnia. The Predator, assigned to the 57th Wing (57 WG), 11th Reconnaissance Squadron (11 RS), Nellis Air Force Base (AFB), Nevada, was part of an Operation JOINT FORGE reconnaissance mission over Kosovo. The aircraft was based at Tuzla AB, Bosnia.

Approximately six minutes before impact, the mishap aircraft pitched nose down approximately 10 degrees. Reference airspeed of 72 nautical miles per hour (knots) was maintained in this descent due to the aircraft's airspeed hold mode engagement. The descent rate varied for the remainder of the flight, but generally exceeded 1000 feet per minute. The mishap pilot's attention was focused on helping the mishap sensor operator with target identification and he did not notice the descent until 20 seconds prior to impact. The altitude continued to decrease, except for a slight pull-up about 20 seconds prior to impact, until contact with the ground.

The primary cause of the mishap, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was mechanical failure in the variable pitch propeller (VPP) control system that caused the propeller to reverse pitch. This caused a complete loss of thrust and a 300% increase in drag, resulting in loss of aircraft control. There is also substantial evidence that maintenance actions during the 28 September 2000 200-hour VPP servo assembly time change were contributing factors to the mishap. The mishap pilot's distraction during the mishap aircraft's propeller failure and subsequent descent was not determined to be causative.

*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.*