



News Release

United States Air Force

Headquarters Air Combat Command, Office of Public Affairs
115 Thompson Street, Suite 211, Langley Air Force Base, VA 23665-1987
(757) 764-5007

E-mail: [ACC PA Operations](mailto:ACC_PA_Operations)

Release No: 020915

Date: Sept. 8, 2015

F-16C ACCIDENT REPORT RELEASED

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. – Spatial disorientation and a loss of visual contact with his formation’s lead aircraft led to an F-16C pilot’s fatal impact into the Gulf of Mexico on Nov. 6, 2014, according to an Air Combat Command Accident Investigation Board report released today.

Matthew J. LaCourse, a civilian employee with the 82nd Aerial Targets Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., was killed by the impact and his aircraft was destroyed.

According to the results of the investigation, the mishap occurred during intercept training with another aircraft. While attempting to intercept the other aircraft, LaCourse performed a series of aircraft dynamic maneuvers that stimulated fluid in his inner ear canals which are responsible for perceptions of gravity, balance, movement and direction. As a result, he misperceived his angle of bank, angle of pitch and general position and became spatially disoriented, which resulted in his crash. In addition, the board president found by a preponderance of the evidence that LaCourse’s loss of visual contact with the formation’s lead aircraft substantially contributed to the mishap.

The total loss to government property was valued at \$22 million. There was no damage to private property.

For more information, contact Air Combat Command Public Affairs at (757) 764-5007 or e-mail accpa.operations@langley.af.mil.