

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
F-16 CG, S/N 90-0776
524TH EXPEDITIONARY FIGHTER SQUADRON (EFS), BALAD AB, IRAQ
27 NOVEMBER 2006

On 27 November 2006, at 1332 hours local time, an F-16 fighter aircraft, serial number (S/N) 90-0776, crashed 20 miles northwest of Baghdad while supporting friendly forces under enemy attack. The mishap aircraft (MA) was part of the 524th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron (EFS) deployed from Cannon AFB, NM to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) Balad AB, Iraq. The mishap pilot (MP), deployed from Luke AFB, AZ was serving as the 332nd Expeditionary Operations Group (EOG) chief of standardization and evaluation (OGV). On the day of the mishap, he was flying with the 524th EFS. The MA impacted the target area and was destroyed. The MP made no attempt to eject and died immediately on impact. No personnel or objects on the ground were injured or destroyed during the crash.

The mishap sortie began as a non-traditional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (NTISR) mission. Approximately three hours into the sortie, a coalition helicopter made a hard landing and the MP's two-ship formation was tasked to provide NTISR support. A coalition ground force moving to secure the downed helicopter came under heavy attack from enemy forces employing small/medium caliber weapons and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs). The MP was tasked by the Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) to engage enemy vehicles with his 20 millimeter cannon. While the MP's wingman returned to the tanker to refuel, the MP worked with the JTAC to positively identify (PID) the enemy vehicles by making several low passes. With clearance to engage, the MP made a high angle strafe (HAS) pass and employed the gun at minimum range resulting in damage to an enemy vehicle. After recovering the aircraft at 200' above ground level (AGL), the MP immediately set up for a second attack that placed the MA too low and too close to his intended target. During the second dive, the MP pressed his attack below a recoverable altitude and impacted the ground. The resulting impact destroyed the aircraft and the MP sustained fatal injuries.

By clear and convincing evidence, the cause of the mishap was the MP's channelized attention manifested by his desire to maintain a constant visual positive identification of targeted enemy vehicles and subsequent target fixation on these vehicles while they were traveling at a high rate of speed. These two factors, when combined, caused the MP to begin, and then press his attack below a recoverable altitude.

By substantial evidence, a contributing factor was the pilot's excessive motivation to succeed while operating in a dynamic and stressful combat environment.

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.