

Entire F-15 fleet returning to flight -- ACC commander sends message to F-15 community

by Air Combat Command Public Affairs

11/21/2007 - **LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS)** -- Gen. John D.W. Corley, commander, Air Combat Command, sent a message today to F-15 pilots, weapons systems officers, and maintenance professionals, outlining the actions the Air Force has taken following the Nov. 2 F-15C mishap that resulted in the loss of the aircraft.

The message reads:

(Quote) Airmen

On 2 November, the Air Force experienced an F-15C mishap resulting in the loss of the aircraft. The circumstances of the mishap indicated catastrophic structural failure. On 3 November, the Air Force grounded its F-15 fleet. This decision was not made lightly. It was the right thing to do based upon the nature of this mishap.

Grounding a fleet of nearly 700 front-line aircraft has significant operational impact. Total Force, joint and coalition partners were able to mitigate that impact.

The cause of the mishap remains under investigation. Air Force maintenance and operations professionals and industry experts are working with the Accident Investigation Board to examine all aspects of the mishap. At the same time, structural engineers have conducted in-depth technical reviews of data from multiple sources. We continue to proceed in an inclusive and transparent fashion to derive, as best as humanly possible, the cause of the mishap.

We evaluated the grounded fleet. First, we focused on the F-15Es. They are the newest F-15s and have been exposed to less stress. They are structurally different than the A-D models. Problems identified during years of A-D model usage were designed "out" of the E-model. Given these differences, and after consultation with Warner Robins ALC and the AIB, we returned the F-15E fleet to flying status following successful inspections.

Next, we concentrated on the remainder of the grounded fleet. The AIB is now focused on the area just aft of the cockpit and slightly forward of the inlets. Warner Robins ALC mandated a thorough inspection and repair of all structural components in this area. I have directed each F-15 aircraft be inspected and cleared before returning to operational status. Today, ACC issued an FCIF and Warner Robins ALC issued an Operational Supplemental Tech Order to further direct and guide your pre-flight and post-flight actions.

The F-15 is a formidable war fighting aircraft and workhorse for our Air Force. I applaud each and every Eagle pilot, WSO and maintainer for the meticulous and disciplined way you approached this challenge. Mission accomplishment entails risk. Together, we must remain vigilant and focused on Operational Risk Management to mitigate this risk. Airmen speak up when they see something wrong. I rely on you to ensure all operations and maintenance parameters are in order before flight. The F-15 community can take great pride in the fact that

you have met this challenge. We must deliver air power on time, on target given our overriding duty to defend our Country. (End Quote)

There are nearly 700 F-15s in the Air Force inventory. As of today, 219 of the 224 E-models and 294 of the 442 A-D models in the inventory have been inspected and cleared for flight.

In releasing the F-15 fleet to fly, General Corley said the Air Force was accepting a degree of risk: "We accept this risk because of our overriding duty to provide unrivaled combat air power for the defense of our Country."