

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-16C, S/N 84-1303

147th FIGHTER WING, ELLINGTON FIELD, TEXAS

22 SEPTEMBER 2003

On 22 September 2003, at 1300L (1800Z), an F-16C fighter aircraft, S/N 84-1303, call sign Rader 2, crashed near Rosepine, Louisiana, just southwest of Polk Army Airfield, Louisiana. The Mishap Aircraft (MA) and Mishap Pilot (MP), assigned to the 147th Fighter Wing, Ellington Field, Texas, were participating in a six-ship, unopposed Surface Attack Tactics (SAT) training mission when the MA experienced an engine fire approximately 30 minutes after takeoff. The MP ejected safely and the MA impacted the ground in a sparsely populated wooded area approximately 12 nautical miles southwest of Fort Polk Army Airfield, Louisiana. There were no civilian injuries or damage to private property.

As the Mishap Flight (MF) reached its assigned operating area and began a descent for a low altitude ingress to the target area, the MP heard a loud bang followed soon thereafter by an engine fire light and engine failure. The MP arrested his descent, made a distress call on the radio and attempted to ascertain the status of his aircraft. Upon confirmation of a sustained fire as corroborated by other members of the MF and considering the loss of altitude due to engine failure, the MP assessed the trajectory of his aircraft to ensure its impact in an uninhabited area and ejected. The MP received very minor injuries (abrasions), was transported to a medical facility by an Army helicopter within 15 minutes of ejection, and was treated and released.

Based upon post accident technical analysis, there was clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the mishap was catastrophic failure of the first stage of the engine high-pressure turbine (HPT) due to the fatigue fracture of at least one of its blades resulting in an engine failure and fire.

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.