



News Release

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F-16CM THUNDERBIRD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION RELEASED

JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, Va. - A throttle trigger malfunction and inadvertent throttle rotation resulted in an F-16CM being destroyed upon impacting the ground south of Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, June 2, 2016, according to an Accident Investigation Board report released today. The Thunderbird pilot ejected and sustained a minor injury.

The mishap occurred after a flyby of the United States Air Force Academy graduation in Colorado Springs. The F-16CM was part of a six-ship formation from the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, the Thunderbirds.

After beginning landing procedures, the pilot inadvertently rotated the throttle, placing it into an engine cut-off position. Normally, this full rotation cannot occur unless a throttle trigger is affirmatively actuated or pressed. However, the throttle trigger was “stuck” in the “pressed” position. The accident investigation board observed debris accumulation in the throttle trigger, combined with wear on the trigger assembly.

Once the engine cut-off occurred, the aircraft immediately lost thrust. The pilot attempted engine restart procedures, but restart was impossible at the low altitude of the aircraft. The pilot safely delayed his ejection until he navigated the aircraft to a grass field.

The aircraft, valued at approximately \$29 million, was destroyed. There was no known damage to civilian property. At the time of the accident, the pilot was a current and qualified air demonstration pilot,

with more than 1,200 hours flying the F-16 and a total flight time of 1,447 hours. He resumed demonstrations with the team.

The pilot and the aircraft are assigned to the 57th Wing, Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

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