



News Release

Air Combat Command Headquarters
Public Affairs Directorate
115 Thompson Street, Suite 211
Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va. 23665-1987
Main Line: 757-764-5007
Email: accpa.operations@us.af.mil

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MQ-9A ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT RELEASED

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. – An Air Combat Command accident investigation board completed its investigation of an MQ-9A that departed the runway surface at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, September 24, 2020, suffering catastrophic damage.

At approximately 7:33 a.m. local during the landing rollout, the aircraft lost its satellite uplink and began an uncontrolled turn to the left after a separate flight crew from another unit attempted to launch a different MQ-9A on the same line-of-sight datalink frequency. Line-of-sight datalink frequencies are necessary to send commands between the Ground Control Station and the aircraft during the launch and recovery phase. In accordance with built-in lost link procedures, the aircraft engine attempted to reach full power and take off. It departed the prepared surface of the runway and came to a stop on the ground.

The AIB determined the causes of the accident, both of which were necessary, were: (a) the other unit improperly using the uplink frequency to launch and land aircraft after the frequency allocation plan had been adjusted and distributed; and (b) during landing rollout, the aircraft entered the beamwidth for the other unit's ground data terminal, causing the aircraft to receive two different uplink signals on the same frequency, preventing it from receiving data from its own ground data terminal and resulting in the loss of uplink.

At the time of the incident, the contractor Remotely Piloted Solutions was in control of the government-owned aircraft.

Loss of government property is valued at approximately \$42 million. There were no reported fatalities, injuries, or damage to civilian property.

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