



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

Date: April 7, 2021

MQ-9A ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT RELEASED

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. – An Air Combat Command accident investigation board completed its examination of an MQ-9A that crashed June 25, 2020, at Syracuse Hancock International Airport, in Syracuse, New York.

At the time of the incident, the 108th Attack Squadron Launch and Recovery Element located at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in Syracuse was in control of the aircraft.

Shortly before 9:30 a.m. EST, the aircraft lifted off the runway and began to climb out for departure. Approximately seven seconds after becoming airborne and about 150 feet above the ground, the MQ-9A lost engine power. In accordance with emergency procedures, the pilot and sensor operator began running the critical action procedures for an engine failure. The aircraft impacted the ground 21 seconds later, striking a portion of the airport's runway lights.

The AIB determined the cause of the accident was the pilot misidentifying the flap lever and the condition lever that controls the fuel shutoff valve and feathers the propeller. Instead of retracting the MQ-9A's flaps after taking off, the pilot inadvertently pulled back on the condition lever. This cut the supply of fuel to the engine causing it to stop, and the aircraft subsequently impacted the ground. The AIB also determined the design of the pilot ground control station control console throttle quadrant, including the proximity of the condition lever and flap lever and the lack of markings, color differentiation or safety guard were substantially contributing factors.

Loss of government property is valued at approximately \$6 million. Damage to civilian property was minimal and localized to Syracuse Hancock International Airport. There were no reported injuries or fatalities.

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

