



PRESS RELEASE

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AFSOC RELEASES MQ-9 ABBREVIATED ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARD REPORT

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. – The Abbreviated Accident Investigation Board report for an MQ-9A Reaper accident in 2021, was released on May 26.

An MQ-9A aircraft assigned to the 27th Special Operations Wing, Cannon AFB, New Mexico, crashed prior to liftoff from a base in the Central Command Area of Responsibility on June 13, 2021. During takeoff, the launch and recovery element lost C-band downlink. Simultaneously, the pilot in control of the MQ-9 corrected a left turn bias of the aircraft toward centerline before downlink was lost. This left turn bias continued uncorrected after the lost downlink preventing the MQ-9 from maintaining centerline resulting in the MQ-9 departing left of the runway. The MQ-9 software is designed to continue takeoff without pilot inputs at certain trigger points. Thus, the software took effect when the MQ-9 exceeded 50 knots and the aircraft no longer detected an uplink signal from the controlling ground control station. When the MQ-9 rolled off the runway, the aircraft impacted a runway sign, damaged the landing gear and caused the aircraft to catch fire resulting in total loss of the MQ-9.

The board president found, by a preponderance of the evidence, the accident was caused by the mishap crew failing to de-conflict powering on their aircraft while in close proximity of another aircraft during takeoff. Powering on the other aircraft in close proximity to the mishap aircraft's ground data terminal interfered with the downlink connection, which caused the mishap aircraft to lose its downlink connection.

The estimated cost of damage to the aircraft is valued at approximately \$18,000,000.

For questions concerning the report, or to request a copy, please contact Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs at 850-884-5515.