



# PRESS RELEASE

*UNITED STATES AIR FORCE*

**Headquarters Air Education and Training Command**

**Office of Public Affairs**

**aetc.pao@us.af.mil**

**100 H Street East, Suite 4**

**JBSA-Randolph, TX 78148**

**(210) 652-4400**

## **AETC officials release findings from Laughlin T-38 accident investigation**

**JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas** – Today, Air Education and Training Command officials released the Accident Investigation Board report from the fatal mishap involving two T-38C Talon aircraft at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, Nov. 19, 2021.

One pilot died and two were injured as a result of the accident. The student pilot who died was 2nd Lt. Anthony D. Wentz, 23, from Falcon, Colorado. One instructor pilot is still recovering from life threatening injuries and one has since recovered from minor injuries.

According to the accident investigation board president, the two aircraft assigned to the 47th Flying Training Wing, whose pilots were participating in a training sortie together, collided at 10:12 a.m. while landing on the runway.

The mission plan called for a formation approach, with one aircraft landing and the other performing a low approach. However, miscommunication between the pilots on who would land and who would perform the low approach resulted in both pilots attempting to land simultaneously.

The first aircraft, on the right side of the second aircraft, ended up below the second aircraft on final approach and in a position where neither aircraft was visible to the other. When the second aircraft landed on top of the first aircraft, the landing gear impacted the first aircraft's horizontal stabilizer and both aircraft were rendered uncontrollable.

The pilot in the first aircraft to land egressed the aircraft on the ground, while the pilots in the second aircraft experienced an interrupted ejection sequence after the aircraft inverted itself.

Based on evidence discovered during the investigation, the AIB president identified two causes of the accident. First, during the formation approach, the instructor pilot in the second aircraft with Lt Wentz failed to communicate, and the instructor pilot in the first aircraft failed to verify, which aircraft would land. This led to pilots in both aircraft simultaneously attempting to land.

Second, the instructor pilot in the second aircraft with the student pilot failed to recognize a precarious situation developing after the “cleared off” call and failed to intervene and prevent the second aircraft from impacting the first aircraft on landing.

The AIB president also noted two factors substantially contributed to the mishap. The first factor was the instructor pilot in both aircraft used conflicting techniques to perform the 1-up/1-down maneuver, which is where one aircraft lands following a formation approach and the other aircraft performs a low approach.

The second factor was the student pilot’s call sign usage, affected by the administrative lead change and various techniques for referencing position number, was improper and confusing.

The administrative lead change is used during undergraduate pilot training formation sorties to allow the student pilot to fly in either the lead or wing position for the first half of the sortie, then swap places and practice responsibilities in the other position for the remainder of the flight.