



AIR COMBAT COMMAND News Release

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ACC releases Abbreviated Accident Investigation Board Report for MQ-9A crash in the European Command Area of Reponsibility

JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, Va. – An Air Combat Command accident investigation board completed its analysis of an MQ-9A Reaper that crashed July 14, 2022 at an undisclosed location in the European Command area of responsibility.

The aircraft was assigned to the 432d Wing at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada, and was briefly flown by a Mission Control Element (MCE) from the 50th Attack Squadron at Shaw AFB, South Carolina. At the time of the mishap, a Launch and Recovery Element (LRE) assigned to the 489th Attack Squadron at Creech AFB was flying the MQ-9A.

The aircraft took off from the undisclosed location and, shortly after handover to the MCE, experienced malfunctions with control systems. After conducting the appropriate checklists, conditions determined the need to land as soon as possible. The MCE elected to return to base and hand the aircraft back to the LRE.

Upon regaining control of the MQ-9A, the LRE crew, comprised of a pilot and sensor operator, incorrectly analyzed the emergency procedure as “stuck [engine] torque.” The pilot determined the only way to successfully recover the aircraft would be an engine-out landing.

When the MQ-9A arrived overhead at the designated airfield, the pilot cut off fuel to the engine and feathered the propeller, effectively shutting down the engine. Due to the prior malfunctions, the indication

on the cockpit display suggested the engine was still operating. Assuming the engine was still operational, the crew attempted an unsuccessful go-around. The aircraft experienced controlled flight into terrain southeast of the intended airfield and was destroyed on impact.

The investigation board determined the cause of the mishap was pilot error based on channelized attention and basic airmanship. The LRE crew relied on erroneous indications from the malfunctions and incorrectly diagnosed the emergency procedures required. After cutting fuel to the engine, the aircraft no longer had the thrust required for a “go around” maneuver. This ultimately resulted in a failed attempt to recover the aircraft and the subsequent controlled flight into terrain.

The mishap resulted in no injuries and no fatalities. The mishap resulted in minimal damage to civilian property. The aircraft, valued at approximately \$14.6 million, was destroyed.

The AAIB report can be viewed at <https://www.afjag.af.mil/Portals/77/AIB-Reports/2022/14%20July%2022%20ACC%20MQ-9%20489th%20ATKS%20AAIB%20Report.pdf>