



AIR COMBAT COMMAND News Release

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ACC releases Accident Investigation Board Report for F-16CM Crash in Louisiana

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. – Air Combat Command released an accident investigation board report today regarding an F-16CM crash that occurred March 23, 2022, in Beauregard Parish, Louisiana.

The pilot, who was assigned to the Oklahoma Air National Guard's 138th Fighter Wing, safely ejected and sustained minor injuries. The aircraft, valued at approximately \$26.95 million, was destroyed upon impact.

The mishap occurred during an Aerospace Control Alert launch training mission, when the two-ship formation flight was conducting intercept and air-to-air refueling training.

While conducting this training, the flight lead directed the formation to conduct an unplanned intercept of a general aviation aircraft, with the training objective being to accomplish a low/slow visual identification intercept in order to acquire the aircraft's tail number.

The pilot and flight lead conducted the intercept of the general aviation aircraft together. The flight lead collected the first five digits of the aircraft's tail number, but was unable to collect the sixth, and then split off from the formation. The pilot continued the intercept and collected the final digit of the aircraft's tail number, then started to climb up and away from the general aviation aircraft.

In a low-speed and low-altitude environment, while in close proximity to the general aviation aircraft, the pilot inadvertently selected the Digital Backup switch instead of retracting the trailing edge flaps. The two switches are shaped the same and located next to each other on the flight control panel. This selection caused the aircraft to shudder, which while normal, was unanticipated by the pilot and led him to believe it was an uncommanded aircraft response. The pilot then ejected.

The AIB president found that the cause of the mishap was the pilot's ejection from the aircraft following his incorrect assessment that the aircraft had departed controlled flight. The pilot inadvertently placed the Digital Backup switch to "Backup," resulting in an incorrect assessment that the aircraft had departed controlled flight and a misperceived inability to recover the aircraft before initiating ejection.

The Board President also found two substantially contributing factors to the mishap, lack of flight leadership and lack of flight discipline, in the flight lead's and pilot's violation of various training rules.