



News Release

United States Air Force

Headquarters Air Combat Command, Office of Public Affairs
115 Thompson Street, Suite 211, Langley Air Force Base, VA 23665-1987
(757) 764-5007

E-mail: [ACC PA Operations](mailto:ACC_PA_Operations@usaf.mil)

Release No: 070114

Date: Jul. 01, 2014

MQ-9 REAPER ACCIDENT REPORT RELEASED

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. - A series of system malfunctions led to the crash of an MQ-9 Reaper into Lake Ontario, New York, Nov. 12, 2013. The crash occurred approximately 35 miles southwest of Fort Drum, New York according to an Air Combat Command Accident Investigation Board report released today.

The mishap aircraft and mishap aircrew were assigned to the 17 4th Attack Wing, Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, New York. The aircraft, valued at \$10.6 million, was destroyed on impact; there was no damage to private property.

After the MQ-9 departed Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield, New York, for the Oswego Military Operating area to conduct a routine training mission, control of the MQ-9 was turned over from the launch recovery element (LRE) aircrew to the mission control element aircrew (MCE) at Hancock Field. During the training mission, the MCE aircrew noticed a series of warnings indicating a partial failure in the MQ-9's onboard GPS and inertial navigation system. In response, the MCE aircrew at Hancock Field initiated the appropriate emergency checklist and informed the LRE aircrew of the situation. While the MCE aircrew was in the process of returning the MQ-9 to Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield, the aircraft lost link with the MCE aircrew and began to fly its pre-programmed

contingency return-to-base flightpath on its own. This pre-programmed flightpath allows the aircraft to return to base via a series of waypoints designed to safely avoid populated areas and potential obstructions.

The MCE aircrew followed the checklist instructions and disabled their command link to the aircraft to enable the LRE aircrew to attempt to gain control. While the LRE aircrew was initiating the link through their ground data terminal transmitter, the MQ-9 suffered an additional failure in its GPS and inertial navigation system. A few seconds later, the aircraft began an autopilot turn to the right that inverted the aircraft and eventually led to an unrecoverable flat spin. Shortly thereafter, the MQ-9 impacted Lake Ontario and was destroyed.

The accident investigation board president found by clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the aircraft crash was multiple failures within the MQ-9's GPS and inertial guidance system, in conjunction with that system passing invalid flight control data to the aircraft's autopilot system.

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