

April 13, 2025

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Washington, DC

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Lt. General Stephen L. Davis
Inspector General
United States Air Force
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1140 AF Pentagon
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Re: Request for Both the Aircraft Accident Board and the Mishap Board to be Re-Opened for Fatal Virginia Air National Guard Crash involving Major William Jay Monahan: 9 February 1982.
Basis for Request: Conflict of Interest of the Accident Board (All 192d TFG/149th TFS Personnel); Significant Maintenance / Systems Failures Prior to the 192d TFG/149th TFS First Operational Mission of this A-7D recently transferred to the 192d TFG/149th TFS, particularly re: The Automatic Flight Control System (AFCS) of the A7-D, which only very recently came to light – thanks to AI and Chat GPT4 to define acronyms, identify aircraft parts, and to provide previously unavailable information on the A7-Ds AFCS (Which are Undefined, Unexplained, and/or Unaddressed in the AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT).

Dear Lieutenant General Davis:

At the suggestion of Lieutenant General Bradley C. Hosmer (Ret.), USAF, and on behalf of Captain Phyllis Lehn Monahan, Army Nursing Corps during Vietnam (Ret'd), and widow, along with her only child, me, I am sending your office the attached hotline complaint. The complaint regards the unreported facts leading to the death of Ms. Monahan's husband (and my father), Major William Jay Monahan (Deceased), Virginia Air National Guard, 192d Tactical Fight Group (TFG) / 149th Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS).¹

This matter regards a Class A, High-Interest aircraft mishap, which current Air Force directives and instructions mandate shall include a full, complete, and impartial accident investigation/report. *Please see* Air Force Instruction (AFI) 51-503, Aerospace and Ground Accident Investigations, at 1.5.1.3 and 7.3 (14 April 2015). As will be shown, neither the AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT / ACCIDENT

¹ **The 149th TFS was the 192d TFG's only flying squadron.** *Please see* [192d Tactical Fighter Group](#) (HISTORY, 1st Paragraph). "Other squadrons assigned into the group were the 192d Headquarters, 192d Material Squadron (Maintenance), 192d Combat Support Squadron, and the 192d USAF Dispensary." *See id.*

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INVESTIGATION REPORT or the releasable portion of AF 711b AIRCRAFT FLIGHT MISHAP REPORT, contained relevant and/or required information. The record will further show that a significant conflict of interest existed: the entire Accident Board was selected by, and composed from, the 192d TFG and 149th TFS. And directly related to the conflict issue, are numerous significant maintenance issues with the subject A-7D aircraft which were described only by their undefined acronym and without discussion of their relevance to the A-7D and/or its flight control systems – particularly as they related to the 192d TFG/149th TFS's only known operation mission flight of this A-7D. Under no circumstance could a member of the general public, unfamiliar with the specifics of an A-7D and its flight control systems, understand on their own the significance of these “significant maintenance issues.”

On 9 February 1982, Major Monahan was piloting the 192d/149th's believed first – and last – operational mission of A-7D, Corsair II, SN 72-0233 (SN 72-0233). A-7D SN 72-0233 was only then-recently cleared from Red-X status on 19 December 1981, which status the aircraft had been promptly placed in upon transfer to the 192d TFG/149th TFS in August 1981.² The same day SN 72-0233 was cleared from Red-X status, the aircraft failed its Functional Check Flight (FCF) due to numerous, significant maintenance malfunctions: *inter alia*, (1) the radar altimeter was displaying inaccurate altitude that was effectively 30 degrees off actual when the speed brake was applied, (2) the FLR³ was malfunctioning and not properly ranging⁴ - the 192d Material Squadron (Maintenance) didn't have test equipment to check it, so they just ignored this malfunction, and (3) the rudder servo that controlled the tail/tail wing was malfunctioning – again (The rudder servo had recently been replaced). On February 5, 1982 - four days before its first 192d TFG/149th TFS mission - A-7D SN 72-0233 was test-flown for the first time post-failed FCF. The fire warning light was found to be inoperable. There is no evidence or witness testimony in the AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT that this warning light was fixed – or what electrical or other event caused the warning light to become “inoperable” in the first place.

On 9 February 1982, Major Monahan led a three-aircraft low altitude engagement sortie of A7-Ds from the 192d TFG/149th TFS in Richmond, Virginia to Stumpy Point Gunnery Range, located on the Pamlico Sound in North Carolina. After descending at high speed from medium to low altitude through what another of the three sortie pilots described as zero horizon below 1000' AGL with difficult depth perception (this pilot also called it “a great day for visual illusion”), Major Monahan's A7-D crashed into the “mirror-like” water of the Pamlico Sound.

² In the Fall of 1981, the 192d TFG/149th TFS began flying A-7D Corsair IIs, which were transferred from at least one other unit. Previously, the 192d/149th was flying F-105D Thunderchiefs, which notably, did not have an Automatic Flight Control System. It is unclear what, if any, training had been provided to the 192d Material Squadron Maintenance Technician assigned to SN 72-0233 as it relates to the AFCS, including the FLR, the radar altimeter, or even the A7-D itself generally (or whether this Maintenance Technician was previously assigned to maintain Major Monahan's and Lt. Col. Gunter's F-105D, which exploded on 10 March 1981).

³ A search on Chat GPT-4 revealed that “FLR” for the A-7D stands for “Forward Looking Radar.”

⁴ A failure of the FLR to range *in any mode* could have serious effect on instrument readings for orientation during level-off over water.

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A-7D SN 72-0233 initial impact with the water left only scrap metal behind. The aircraft traveled with an adverse-yaw left for 750 feet parallel to the water before entering an uncontrolled roll and losing its tail – and almost immediately afterwards, its engine. At roughly 1000' from initial impact, the aircraft struck the water at full impact, leaving an 8'x10' depression below the water (the tailpipe continued for the length of almost two more football fields – 1500' from initial impact). *Please see* Accident Investigation Report, TAB R, DIAGRAMS (FALLOUT-IMPACT AREA, ETC) (diagram shows the recovery of the PDMS TAPE, which tape contains, *intra alia*, the radar altimeter's AGL readings). The location where the aircraft came down towards the water – past the target ship – and headed away from the ship might well be explained by the recorded data from the recovered PMDS Tape.⁵

Prior to the recent advance of artificial intelligence (*e.g.*, Chat GPT4), it was impossible to know what A7-D part number RT-1046 was, or for what the undefined acronyms “FLR” or “AFCS” stood-for. *Please see* Aircraft Accident Report, TAB H-3. It was impossible for non-aircraft specialists (*e.g.*, the general public, like Major Monahan's family), who were not familiar with the A-7D or its flight control systems, to understand for several significant reasons. First, the AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT contained numerous undefined acronyms in its significant maintenance issues section. *Please see* Accident Investigation Report, TAB H (AFTO Form 781). Second, there was no explanation of what functions these undefined acronyms performed. Third, there was no discussion on how these undefined acronyms/systems related to the flight operation of the A-7D – particularly on this medium to low altitude IFR on a visual illusion day over mirror-like water.

More specifically, there was no mention in the Aircraft Accident Report of the following A7-D instrument system: Head-Up Display (HUD). Nor was there any explanation for how the Report's acronym “FLR” (Forward Looking Radar) and AFCS Automated Flight Control System operated, what functions these systems performed, or why these acronyms were included in the “significant” maintenance issues. *Please see* Accident Investigation Report, TAB H-3. If anything, the Report's reference to FLR was seemingly insignificant and unimportant. To my family, the FLR must have been insignificant - because when the 192d Material Squadron (Maintenance) did not have the test equipment to check the pre-flight, malfunctioning FLR for SN 72-0233, the 192d cleared the aircraft for a medium to low altitude engagement over mirror-like water on a visual illusion day – with the sun rising over the water. *Please see* Aircraft Accident Report, TAB H-3. If there had been any discussion along these lines, TAB H of the Aircraft Accident Report would have revealed that this aircraft *should have been grounded*. *See* enclosed Report. As will be demonstrated, under no circumstances was A-7D SN 72-0233

⁵ With the exception of one transmission stating “Not there yet”, all flight recordings of Major Monahan simply don't exist; just like Major Monahan's A-7D's AFTO Form 781 containing the actual maintenance records. The unit that transferred SN -72-0233 to the 192d TFG/149th TFS on approximately 10 August 1981, apparently did not transfer their maintenance records either.

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mechanically/operationally fit to fly its first operational mission since its August 1981 transfer to the Receiving 192d TFG/149th TFS.

One final note regarding the missing undefined acronym definitions and system functions regarding the maintenance records of the subject A-7D warrants noting. *Please see* AFTO Form 781 (TAB-H). The omission of the names, definitions, and functions of these multiple AFCS related and other systems allowed the expert reports in the AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT to stand alone. That is, the expert report only noted that the post-crash, *recovered* physical evidence was working properly. As a result of the report's omissions regarding any discussion of the maintenance issues of this aircraft prior to its fatal first and only known operational mission flight, the expert reports told an incomplete – and misleading – story of what occurred.

This is particularly true as SN 72-0322's first operational mission at 192d TFG/149th TFS was pursuant to an Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) only flight plan, requiring Major Monahan's descent from medium to low-altitude over mirror-like water on a visual illusion day using only his AFCS instruments. And especially, low altitude was required in order to visually clear a target ship for bombing by another pilot, who Major Monahan was to engage as they flew toward each other and the target ship at low altitude over the water. Virtually none of this information, however, is contained in the official Aircraft Accident Report, drafted by Major Learned D. Barry, 192d TFG.

Major Barry - of the 192d TFG - was appointed to the Accident Board and designated to draft the findings of the Aircraft Accident Investigations and Accident Board. *Please see* Accident Investigation Report, TAB X, ORDERS APPOINTING ACCIDENT BOARD; *see also* Accident Investigation Report, TAB A-2. In fact, everyone involved in Major Monahan's Accident Board was from the 192d TFG or its only flying squadron, the 149th TFS. *Please see* Accident Investigation Report, TAB X; *see also* Accident Investigation Report, TAB A-2. This includes Colonel Claude E. Heath (Assistant Adjutant General and then-recently appointed Wing Commander of the 192d TFG/149th TFS), who, at the direction of Major General / Adjutant General William J. McCaddin (over the 192d), authorized the appointment of Major Barry. *Please see* Accident Investigation Report, TAB X; *see also* Accident Investigation Report, TAB A-2.

A conflict of interest exists because had the maintenance and/or flight worthiness of A7-D SN 72-0322 been found to be at fault in the mishap, the commanders of the 192d TFG, 149th TFS and 192d Material Squadron (Maintenance) would have been found responsible for allowing SN 72-0322 to be flown on this low-altitude, IFR engagement.

To place the Accident Board's interests in context, the 192d TFG/149th TFS's then-recent flight safety history warrants a brief review. On 10 March 1981, less than one year prior to Major Monahan's crash, a 192d TFG/149th TFS F-105D exploded shortly after takeoff, killing the pilot, Lieutenant Colonel

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James P. Gunter, Jr. The F-105D was found to be the probable cause of the explosion; not Lt. Col. Gunter. For a small guard unit like the 192d TFG/149th TFS to have a second aircraft fatality within a 12-month period, where the aircraft in both incidents were the probable cause of the fatalities/crashes, would likely have had a significant adverse effect on the above-chain of command at the 192d TFG/149th TFS and perhaps higher echelons as well.⁶ Regardless, there appears to be a significant conflict of interest, warranting a full re-opening and re-investigation of this mishap.

As the conflicted Accident Board failed to include most (or virtually all) of the relevant information in its Aircraft Accident Report, and Chat GPT4 functions only recently have been able to allow the widow and son to piece together what happened that day, I am respectfully requesting the following. That:

- (1) Both the aircraft accident board and the mishap board be reopened and explicitly include the missing material that I have cited regarding repeat hydraulic leaks with no diagnosis, radar failures rendering the aircraft unsafe for instrument flight conditions, especially considering the flight profile and weather conditions for that sortie, etc., and
- (2) Assurance independent and technically qualified investigators are appointed, and both investigations be reviewed by the Air Force Safety Center, and
- (3) Radar, flight control, instrument and hydraulic issues be fully considered as the cause of the accident, and
- (4) Major Monahan's – and his family name - be fully cleared of fault in this crash by the Secretary of the Air Force; and
- (5) Captain Phyllis Monahan and family be made whole.

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Very respectfully,
Will Monahan
William J. Monahan
Georgia Bar No. 801028

Enclosures: - REVISED AIRCRAFT INVESTIGATION REPORT (with attachments)
- AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT (Tabbed)

⁶ Until 15 December 1981, Colonel Heath was the Director of Operations for 192d TFG/149th TFS. Effective 15 December 1981, Major General McCaddin appointed Colonel Heath to serve as Major General McCaddin's Adjutant General and as the Group Commander of the 192d TFG. Since 1970 and through 9 February 1982, Major General McCaddin served as Major General and Adjutant General over the 192d/149th TFS.