

Another F-16 Crashes in West Desert

BY JOHN HEILPRIN and GREG BURTON

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

WENDOVER — For the second day in a row, an Air Force F-16C fighter jet has crashed in Utah's western desert — and the pilot has survived.

The \$20 million jet went down Thursday minutes before 5 p.m. in the Utah Test and Training Range, near the Bonneville Salt Flats. It exploded in a fireball 100 miles west of Hill Air Force Base, Air Force officials said.

Pilot Judd Kelley ejected safely six miles north of Interstate 80 and landed three miles closer to the road.

It took rescuers about an hour to find Kelley, and they were only able to find him in the dark because the pilot set off a flare.

"I'm sure glad to see you guys," Kelley told them upon meeting. Other than feeling a little cold, the pilot with the 388th Fighter Wing's 34th Fighter Squadron said he felt fine.

Wendover Volunteer Fire Chief Wayne Hayes said he heard a page that the plane had been having trouble. He was driving his tractor-trailer on I-80 when he saw the plane fall at a slight angle.

"I automatically started watching the sky, and I kind of glanced at the plane out of the corner of my eye," he said. "Then I saw a

big explosion, like a fireball on the ground. And after that, there was quite a bit of black smoke."

One of the rescuers who first found Kelley, Tooele County Sheriff's Deputy Steve Elton, said of the area where the plane crashed: "There's nothing out there but a big black dark void of mud."

He said a passing motorist saw Kelley parachuting toward the ground.

Kelley ejected near the Silver Island Mountains and was met by rescue personnel from the sheriff's office and fire department. Then a Utah Army National Guard helicopter took him to the base hospital for treatment.

"Initial indications are that he is in good condition," said Frances Kosakowsky, a spokeswoman for the 388th Fighter Wing. "It's a horrible thing to have planes all buggered up, but it's far worse to have a pilot injured."

On Wednesday, two F-16Cs, also from the 388th, collided in midair during a training run. It was the first such midair collision for Hill jets in Utah; pilots Paul Hertzberg and Scott Hufford survived with minor injuries.

In that crash, Hertzberg ejected



Douglas C. Pizac/The Associated Press

Wednesday's F-16 crash created a crater near Wendover. Another F-16 crashed Thursday.

safely while his aircraft crashed and burned. Hufford was able to land his plane at Michael Army Airfield at Dugway Proving Ground.

Ron Fly, commander of the 388th, ordered all flights halted through Friday for an emergency safety review. The wing has 55 of the 70 F-16s at Hill; the 419th

Fighter Wing, which is not affected by the stand-down, has the other 15.

"If you are going to declare a stand-down in flying, that shows a very high level of concern, and it's something we treat very seriously," Hill spokesman Bruce Collins said. "It is a very unusual set of circumstances that these [crashes]

would occur like this."

Kelley was on a simulated bombing run, away from other jets, when "some type of catastrophic failure occurred," said Collins. "He had some type of in-flight emergency, and it's not related to yesterday's accident."

F-16 Crash Is Second In Two Days

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The F-16C is equipped to hold AIM9 Sidewinder missiles for air-to-air combat, but it also can carry other armament.

Kelley's F-16C, which carried 25-pound practice bombs and 510 20 mm practice rounds, was practicing bomb drops on a stationary target.

There have been 11 deaths in Utah related to F-16 accidents. Contrary to information on the number of deaths in a *Tribune* story Thursday.

Thursday's crash is the 38th involving F-16s at Hill. There are four types of F-16s: A and C are single-seaters, while B and D are two-seaters. The first operational F-16A was delivered in January 1979 to Hill's 388th.

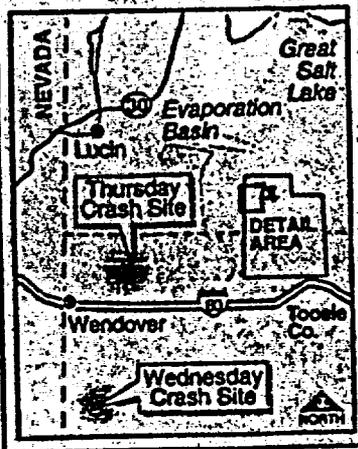
The Air Force has 809 F-16s in use, including those at Hill. Since 1975, there have been 234 major F-16 crashes and 62 deaths in the United States.

Last year, during more than 369,000 collective flying hours, there were 11 major accidents in the U.S. and one death involving the jets.

Just before Thursday's crash, the Tooele County Sheriff's Department dispatch got a call from the military asking permission for an emergency landing at Wendover Airport. Moments later the dispatch received another call

Two Crashes in Two Days

Thursday, a second Air Force F-16C fighter jet crashed in Utah's western desert, this time near Interstate 80. Wednesday, two F-16Cs collided midair, destroying one of the two \$20 million aircrafts. All pilots survived.



The Salt Lake Tribune

saying the plane had to crash land.

At the military's request, the department sent three firefighters and two emergency medical technicians to meet the pilot. They drove about 20 miles and parked on I-80, then walked toward the remaining flames of the plane.

One firefighter, Leo Wheeler, recalled that by the time the rescuers had arrived, Kelley already was sending his coordinates by radio for the helicopter pickup.

"There were still some shooting flames, but it looked like just out of the wiring," Wheeler said. "And we were still about two miles away from the plane."

Jets Collide Over Utah; Pilots Live

BY JOHN HEILPRIN

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Two Air Force F-16C fighter jets collided in midair during a training run Wednesday, injuring both pilots and destroying one of the \$20 million aircraft.

Pilots Paul Hertzberg and Scott Hufford were treated for minor injuries from the 1:30 p.m. collision over the Utah Test and Training Range, 105 miles west of Hill Air Force Base, officials said.

Hertzberg safely ejected from his crippled jet, which crashed in a fireball. Hufford managed to land his damaged single-engine fighter at Michael Army Airfield at Dugway Proving Ground. Both pilots are with the 421st Fighter Squadron.

F-16 Facts



- The Air Force has 809 F-16s in use, and 70 are at Hill Air Force Base.
- F-16s can travel in excess of twice the speed of sound.
- Since 1975, there have been 233 major F-16 crashes and 62 deaths in the U.S.
- Hill has had 37 F-16 crashes since 1979—with no deaths.
- Wednesday's accident was the first midair collision at Hill.

Hertzberg was picked up by a Utah Army National Guard helicopter about 17 miles from where the planes collided, and was flown to a hospital at the base for treatment. Hufford was treated at the scene.

The collision, which occurred over the remote area of western Utah desert, was the first midair collision for active-duty jets stationed at Hill since the base

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To: Clay Parr
Mike Later
Brian Allen

From: Steve Christiansen

Here are examples of more accidents in Tooele County associated with existing high risk facilities there.

Pilots Safe After Midair Collision

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opened in 1940. The base oversees maintenance for more than 3,900 F-16s for the United States and 17 other nations.

"Luckily in this crash, since it happened on the range, there was nothing in the way," said Air Force spokesman Rob Koon, speaking from the Pentagon.

It wasn't the first midair crash in Utah. In 1987, a SkyWest Metroliner and Mooney aircraft crashed over Kearns, killing 12 people.

Wednesday's collision took place while six F-16Cs were training for air-to-air combat. Four jets in a fanlike formation were acting as the "blue air," or good guys. Two others, side-by-side, were taking the offensive as the "red air," or bad guys.

Hufford, on the red team, hit Hertzberg, on the blue team, while playing a supersonic game of hide-and-seek, according to Air Force officials. That much is known, though investigators likely will take months to figure out exactly what happened.

"Unfortunately, we can't be sure who collided with who," said Dennis Mehring, spokesman for the 388th Fighter Wing. "Fortunately, there were no reports of any serious injuries."

The F-16Cs were carrying inert AIM9 Sidewinder missiles bolted to the jets. During training, the missiles are used only for the electronic eye that pilots see through for targeting.

Fuel from Hertzberg's jet — one of 70 active-duty F-16s belonging to the 388th and 419th fighter wings at Hill — apparently caused the explosion.

"I don't know how much is left of it. Presumably not much,"

Mehring said. "We believe it to be a total loss."

An interim safety investigation board has been formed to probe the cause of the incident, officials said, while a convoy of military personnel was dispatched to the scene Wednesday night.

The Air Force has 809 F-16s in use, including those at Hill. There are four types: A and C are single-seaters, while B and D are two-seaters.

Last year, during more than 369,000 collective flying hours, there were 11 major accidents in the United States and one death involving the jets.

Hill was the first base to have an operational wing for F-16s. It

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also is the nation's only major maintenance base for F-16s, which can travel faster than twice the

speed of sound, or more than 1,200 mph.

Since the fighters arrived at Hill in 1979, there have been 37 F-16 crashes — and no deaths.

Last February, for example, two Hill pilots were injured when their two-seater F-16 was struck by a bird. Midair crashes by U.S. military planes are rare, however.

There have been three recent ones outside Utah. Last March, two F-16s collided over the Gulf of Mexico on a training run.

Then in September, two more midair collisions occurred. A U.S. C-141 and a German TU-154 struck each other off the coast of Africa, killing nine Americans and 24 Germans.

Just three days later, two F-16s collided in midair during routine training at New Jersey.

In those F-16 crashes — as in Wednesday's collision in Utah — one pilot ejected safely while the other landed the plane.

Hill spokesman Bruce Collins said it takes months for the military to determine the cause of a crash or collision.

"Usually we're not going to find a single cause," Collins said, "since most accidents are caused by number of factors that all come together at the wrong time."