

April MQ-1 Predator crash due to power cable failure

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The 14 April, 2012 crash of a General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA) MQ-1 Predator in Nangarhar, Afghanistan was due to an unrecoverable engine failure, according to a US Air Force (USAF) accident report.

Just over an hour after takeoff on a classified mission from Jalalabad airfield, a major US air base, the Predator began losing engine power, with a total loss of power within 20 minutes. The Springfield, Illinois-based crew, flying the aircraft via satellite link, realized the aircraft could not return to Jalalabad, so the decision was made to purposely crash it into a nearby mountain.

The cause of the power loss was caused by "a single point failure of the ignition control system [that] caused both ignition circuits to lose ignition simultaneously," says the report. Such a failure could be caused by only three scenarios, two of which involve operator-flipped 'kill switches.'

No 'kill' signals were sent by the operator, and no spurious signals recorded. The third, and therefore likely point of failure, is that of "a unique data and power cable."

The aircraft and the missile it was carrying were destroyed on the ground by the US Army.

All maintenance records were in order, the report notes. No recommendations were attached to the report.