MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summary

Aircraft:	Jaguar GR1A XX732
Date of accident:	27 November 1986
Parent Airfield:	RAF Lossiemouth
Place of accident:	Eskdalemuir Forest
Crew:	One
Casualties:	1 Fatal

Circumstances

1. On the 27 November 1986 at 1235 hrs, a USAF exchange officer took off in a Jaguar GR1A to fly a low level training sortie. The weather was forecast to be good for most of the route, with occasional showers causing a temporary deterioration in cloud base and visibility. At 1305 hours, he passed westwards through Spadeadam Range north of Carlisle, after which nothing more was heard from him. Overdue action was taken at 1402 hrs, and after an extensive search of a wide area by rescue teams the wreckage of the aircraft and the body of the pilot were located at 2045 hrs, near Stechs Hill, Eskdalemuir Forest.

Cause

2. The investigation into the accident was hampered by a lack of firm technical or other evidence, and was unable to determine positively the cause of the accident. Once contact with it had been lost by Spadeadam radar, the only available indication of the aircraft's flight path was a radar plot from the Scottish Air Traffic Control Centre which intermittently plotted the aircraft between 1305 and 1315 hrs. From this, it was possible to establish that the pilot diverged from his planned track by turning on to a northerly heading after leaving Spadeadam Range. He was then probably confronted by a combination of weather and terrain such as to make continuing low-level flight impossible. It is though probable, therefore that he elected to increase his height, which would almost immediately have put him into cloud.

3. From the available technical evidence, it is probable that the pilot used dry power instead of full reheat power for the pull up; as a result, his speed would have reduced at a faster rate than normally occurs in a standard low-level pull-up using reheat. A reconstruction of the aircraft's flight path confirmed that the

aircraft had stopped climbing and had started to descend. It was deduced from this that the pilot had probably been lowering the aircraft's nose to maintain a safe speed, as a result of which the aircraft entered a steady 20 deg dive. The analysis of the wreckage also confirmed that the aircraft hit the ground with wings level in a near horizontal attitude. From this, it was deduced that, at impact, the pilot was attempting to pull out of the dive and was, at that stage, in control of the aircraft.

4. The manoeuvre suggested that the pilot had become disorientated due to the cloud and was probably preoccupied with recovering from the dive to the extent that he was unaware of the proximity of the aircraft to the ground.