

**BY ORDER OF THE COMMANDER  
AIR COMBAT COMMAND**



**AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 51-503**

**AIR COMBAT COMMAND  
Supplement**

**28 JANUARY 2016**

**Law**

**AEROSPACE AND GROUND ACCIDENT  
INVESTIGATIONS**

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

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OPR: ACC/JAO

Certified by: ACC/JAO  
(Lt Col Candace L. Hunstiger)

Supersedes: AFI51-503\_ACCSUP1, 5  
Sep 13

Pages: 7

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This publication supplements AFI 51-503, *Aerospace and Ground Accident Investigations*, 14 April 2015, DOD Instruction 6055.07, *Mishap Notification, Investigation, Reporting, and Record Keeping*, and Title 10, United States Code, Sections 2254 and 2255. It must be read in conjunction with the original instruction. This ACC Supplement applies to all Accident Investigation Board (AIB) for which COMACC or his designee serves as convening authority, as specified in the base instruction, including those boards involving United States Air Force (USAF), Air Force Reserve (USAFR), and Air National Guard (ANG) military and civilian personnel assigned to Air Combat Command (ACC) installations and those ACC units located on other command or service installations, or assigned to support an ACC AIB. This Supplement describes MAJCOM specific requirements for when and how to conduct both an aerospace and a ground accident investigation; how to prepare and distribute accident reports; how to store and dispose of accident wreckage, related documents and materials; and how to release accident information and interact with the next-of-kin (NoK) of accident victims, Congress, media, and other interested parties. It establishes a process for nomination of AIB members and for ACC staff review of the AIB report. It addresses delegations of authority, required status of ANG AIB members, and requests for extensions. It further prescribes convening authority, AIB president, AIB legal advisor, other AIB members, and host installation commander duties and responsibilities. Only ACC may further amend all sections of this Supplement; Numbered Air

Forces (NAFs) and Wings may supplement Chapter (Ch) 11 of this Instruction. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using the AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; to the ACC Operations Law Division (ACC/JAO), 220 Sweeney Boulevard, Suite 122, Joint Base Langley-Eustis VA 23665-2774.

Ensure all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with the Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS) Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) and the original instruction. Reports generated from this publication are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements and may contain copyrighted information. See Attachment 1 for a glossary of references and supporting information.

### ***SUMMARY OF CHANGES***

This document has been substantially revised due to the rewrite to the parent AFI and must be completely reviewed. This publication integrates policies formerly issued in AFI 51-507, *Ground Accident Investigations*; incorporates the changes from AFI 51-503\_AFGM2013-02 and AFI 51-507\_AFGM2013-01; updates necessary references; changes the standard of proof for the Statement of Opinion; and requires the CA's staff judge advocate (SJA) to forward a copy of approved accident investigation reports to the CA's Chief of Safety and the Air Force Safety Center's SJA if a safety investigation board was previously convened for the same mishap.

#### **2. 8.**

1.1.1. **(Added)** For TDY expenses for ACC assigned personnel, each ACC unit providing AIB members, will use their own fund cite and ACC/JA will provide an emergency and special programs (ESP) code (assigned by the ACC Comptroller) to enable "after the fact" reimbursement by ACC. For individuals outside of ACC, ACC/JA will cross-org the member in DTS providing access to the appropriate fund cite or make other appropriate arrangements for the funding of AIB expenses. (T-2)

2.8.3.1.1. **(Added)** To the greatest extent practicable, transcription should be accomplished by USAF-employed court reporters, in addition to the AIB members. Requests for court reporter assistance may be sent to AFLOA/JAJ. ACC/JA will be responsible for funding any contractual transcription services should commercial court-reporting services be required in lieu of, or in addition to, DoD-employed transcriptionists. Approval for this contractual service must be approved by ACC/JA prior to entering into any agreements with a commercial court-reporting service.

3.1.7. **(Added)** Upon notification of an ACC Class A mishap involving AFRC/ANG aerospace vehicles, ACC/JA will solicit the appropriate ARC for AIB members through the proper ARC/JA.

3.2.2.1. **(Added)** ACC/JA will contact ACC/A1L for assistance in identifying Board Presidents in fatality mishaps. ACC/A1L will determine the availability of candidates assigned to ACC and will solicit assistance from the Air Force General Officer

Matters Office (AFGOMO) if two candidates are not available in the command. ACC/JA and ACC/SEF will separately forward their respective nominee(s) to the convening authority.

3.2.4.1. **(Added)** It is the responsibility of the USAF Warfare Center (USAFWC) and each Numbered Air Force (NAF) Chief of Safety (SE) to: (1) ensure there is a sufficient number of Air Force Safety Center (AFSEC)-trained board presidents in accordance with AFI 91-204\_ACC SUP 1, *Safety Investigations and Reports*, within their command to satisfy AIB requirements in addition to Safety Investigation Board requirements; and (2) to maintain an accurate accounting of all the AFSEC-trained board presidents assigned to the NAF/USAFWC.

3.2.4.2. **(Added)** The owning NAF/USAFWC SE will confirm or update the accuracy of the list of their AFSEC-trained board presidents as soon as possible, but not later than the preliminary safety message report of a Class A flight mishap involving an ACC active or ACC-gained unit. The owning NAF/USAFWC A3 or CV will ascertain the availability of potential board presidents. The NAF/USAFWC A3/CV will provide a list of members eligible and available to be the AIB president to the owning NAF/USAFWC CC (or CV at the discretion of the NAF/USAFWC CC), who will select the best available candidate. The NAF/USAFWC JA will forward the nominee for AIB president to ACC/JA within 5 duty days of the mishap, with an information copy to ACC/A3 (205 Dodd Blvd, Suite 101, Joint Base Langley-Eustis AFB VA 23665-2789). Requests for AFRC/ANG AIB nominations will be requested through the appropriate ARC/JA. All nominations should summarize the member's qualifications and availability and have a Report on Individual Personnel (RIP) for the nominee attached. ACC/JA will forward the nomination, along with the RIP, to the convening authority for approval.

3.2.4.2.1. **(Added)** For MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper mishaps, the NAF/USAFWC should not immediately identify a Board President but rather, should do so upon request from ACC/JA.

3.2.4.3. **(Added)** If the owning NAF/USAFWC CC (or CV) determines that there is no qualified candidate available to be the AIB president, the owning NAF/USAFWC JA will immediately contact ACC/JA. When so contacted or when otherwise deemed appropriate, ACC/JA will notify ACC/A3 who will identify a candidate from the MAJCOM staff, task an alternate NAF/USAFWC, or otherwise identify a candidate.

3.4.3.1. **(Added)** Following a mishap that requires an AIB, ACC/JA will contact those MAJCOM directorates which are required to nominate members with technical expertise for an AIB. The directorate may request nominees from any ACC unit other than the mishap wing. If no members outside the mishap wing are identified, ACC/JA may waive the limitation or the staff directorate will assist in locating a qualified candidate from outside ACC. In no case shall the member be from the mishap squadron. ACC/A4 will nominate maintenance members; ACC/SG will nominate flight surgeon members; ACC/JA will nominate legal advisor members and recorders; and ACC/A3 will nominate rated members as required. ACC/JA will contact appropriate directorates to obtain other specialty AIB members with technical expertise, as needed.

3.4.4.1. **(Added)** The ANG Advisor to COMACC (ACC/CG) or the Reserve Advisor to the Commander (ACC/CR) may help locate reserve component members when needed, for mishaps involving an ACC-gained air reserve or air guard aerospace vehicles, with appropriate command approval.

3.5.5.1. **(Added)** In the case of Abbreviated Accident Investigation Boards, the Board President, Legal Advisor and Recorder will ordinarily be the only Board Members. SMEs will not automatically be designated. The board must provide substantial justification for the travel and use of an additional board member or SME.

4.3.8.1. **(Added)** The AIB President must send an original color hardcopy AIB report, and if applicable, one (1) additional color hardcopy for each Next of Kin (NOK) that will be briefed, plus a complete electronic copy to ACC/JA within 30 calendar days after the start of the investigation. The convening authority's SJA may approve extension requests totaling 14 days or less. Extensions totaling more than 14 days must be approved by the convening authority.

4.6.8.1. **(Added)** Except in mishaps involving a fatality or serious injured personnel, the medical member may be released by the Board President from further AIB duties when substantive medical duties are complete and after coordination with ACC/JA.

4.8.2.2. **(Added)** For non-fatality investigations the recorder shall be a graduate of either the Accident Investigation Course or the ACC Recorder Training provided by ACC/JA.

4.11. 9 **(Added)** The staff judge advocate for the ACC installation that has oversight of the personnel or property involved in the mishap will provide to ACC/JA the details of any administrative or judicial action contemplated and a summary of expected and received claims arising from the accident. This notification should be made by an e-mail to the ACC/JAO organization e-mail box as they become known. Information on any similar developments associated with the mishap that become known after this notification, will be forwarded as soon as they become known.

5.2.4.3.5. **(Added)** Any communications between members of the AIB and SIB following initial transfer of the SIB Part 1 to the AIB should occur only after the legal advisor is informed of the planned communication and permission has been granted by the AIB Board President.

5.2.7.1. **(Added)** For investigations when a face-to-face handoff is not practical, ACC/JA should direct the storage location of the SIB Part 1 and other evidence; the legal advisor should confirm such location before the AIB travels.

5.3.1. **(Added)** Provide ACC/JA with a weekly formal update of the progress of the investigation. The update should include the progress of redacting the tabs, status of interviews/investigation, any items that have been completed, any issues that the board is having in obtaining information/evidence/witnesses/reports and the plan for the following week. The update is due to the ACC/JAO office by COB every Wednesday.

6.3.5.5.2.1. **(Added)** If the SIB provides non-privileged testimony of a witness, a verbatim transcript of additional testimony is usually not necessary. In the interests of reducing the transcription burden, summarize any additional

testimony from that witness unless that witness is a key witness to the mishap, or verbatim transcription is otherwise necessary.

6.9.2.4. **(Added)** All abbreviated AIB testimony should be summarized unless transcription is critical to documenting the mishap or supporting the board president's Statement of Opinion.

8.3.20. **(Added)** The AIB report is a publicly releasable document. Ensure that any information in the report and Tabs (primarily SIB Part 1) is viewable by the public. If there are links to other files in the Part I tabs, ensure that the linked information is available in a separate CD or DVD that is provided with the report. In particular, this applies to video files. It does not apply to links for readily-accessible electronic publications such as Air Force Instructions or DoD Instructions.

8.11.3.2. **(Added)** The "informal quality review" (also called the "72 hour review") is mandatory. This is a review of the Executive Summary, Summary of Facts, Statement of Opinion and all redacted Tabs. Before the AIB President completes his/her report, the AIB President shall e-mail ACC/JA an electronic copy of the Executive Summary, Summary of Facts, and Statement of Opinion and place the redacted Tabs on AMRDEC Safe giving the appropriate ACC/JA personnel the right to access them (<https://safe.amrdec.army.mil/safe/Default.aspx>). The report must be watermarked "DRAFT DO NOT RELEASE". The report must also be password protected. Password will be given to the AIB by ACC/JAO. The AIB recorder should begin marking the Part I tabs for redaction as soon as they are received from the SIB, and each tab should be sent to ACC/JA as soon as redactions are marked (do not apply marked redactions until they have been reviewed by ACC/JA). It is not necessary to wait to send the tabs with the informal quality review (72 hour review), though all tabs must be redacted and sent by the time of the informal quality review (72 hour review). Place the tabs on AMRDEC Safe as they are completed. Waiting to send the redacted Part I Tabs with the other parts of the reports for the informal quality review (72 hour review) is not necessary or desired. ACC/JA will complete an informal review after all required documents are received. These informal quality review (72 hour review) comments do not preclude more detailed comments or review after the report is submitted.

8.11.3.3. **(Added)** Use of the ACC AIB Report Checklist is mandatory. The legal advisor and the recorder shall both review the entire draft AIB report, using the ACC AIB Report Checklist to ensure accuracy before the draft is sent to ACC/JA for the informal quality review (72 hour review). A copy of the completed checklist must be sent with the informal quality review (72 hour review) draft.

8.12.3. **(Added)** Before sending the AIB report to ACC/JA, ensure that the report is thoroughly reviewed, cohesive and all of the citations are correct and support the facts and opinion stated in the report. The legal advisor and recorder must review the entire AIB report, using the ACC AIB Report Checklist for accuracy and to ensure the report meets standards after any modifications. The report must be watermarked "FINAL DO NOT RELEASE" and password protected with the password given to the AIB by ACC/JAO. Forward the completed checklist with this AIB report.

8.12.4. **(Added)** ACC/JA must receive the AIB report in electronic form and give specific clearance for the AIB members to depart from the location of the investigation. Except under paragraph 4.6.8.1. of this supplement, no member of the AIB may depart for their home station without approval from ACC/JA.

8.12.5. **(Added)** The AIB President shall provide an electronic copy of the entire AIB report to include tabs and send one color hard copy report to include tabs to ACC/JA, 220 Sweeney, Suite 122, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA 23665-2774. The electronic copy of the AIB report must be in a format such that it can be edited or revised. No changes will be made to the report without the AIB President's approval.

8.12.5.1. **(Added)** If the original AIB report contains any color photographs, charts, illustrations, or graphs, then all required copies of the AIB report must include color reproductions of these materials. Copies of the AIB report may not contain black and white reproductions of color photographs, charts, illustrations or graphs.

8.12.6. **(Added)** The AIB President shall sign the report when submitted. Upon receipt of staff comments, the AIB President may choose to alter or edit the report. In this event, the original signature and/or date may be kept for minor changes. For significant or substantive changes, the AIB President will re-accomplish the signature and re-date the report. It is up to the AIB President's sole discretion whether any subsequent edits are significant or substantive. No changes or edits will be made without the AIB President's approval.

11.3.2.1. **(Added)** SMEs are not normally provided for abbreviated AIBs unless the Board President can substantially justify why a SME is critical to the investigation.

11.4.1. **(Added)** All abbreviated AIB testimony should be summarized unless transcription is critical to documenting the mishap.

KENNETH M. THEURER, Colonel, USAF  
Staff Judge Advocate

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

*References*

AFI 51-503, Aerospace and Ground Accident Investigations, 14 April 2015

*Abbreviations and Acronyms*

**ACC**—Air Combat Command

**ACC/JA**—ACC Staff Judge Advocate

**ACC/JAO**—ACC Operations Law Division

**AFGOMO**—Air Force General Officer Matters Office

**COMACC**—Commander Air Combat Command

**ACC/A1L**—ACC Directorate of Manpower and Personnel

**ACC/A3**—ACC Directorate of Air and Space Operations

**ACC/A4**—ACC Directorate of Logistics

**ACC/CG**—ACC Directorate of Air National Guard Forces

**ACC/CR**—ACC U.S. Air Force Reserve Advisor

**ACC/SE**—ACC Office of Safety

**ACC/SG**—ACC Office of the Command Surgeon

**ACC/SEF**—ACC Flight Safety Division

**RIP**—Report on Individual Personnel

**USAFR**—United States Air Force Reserve

**USAFWC**—United States Air Force Warfare Center