



Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

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| Location: | Belleville, MI | Accident Number: | CEN23FA361 |
| Date & Time: | August 13, 2023, 15:15 Local | Registration: | N23UB |
| Aircraft: | Mikoyan Gurevich MIG-23UB | Injuries: | 2 Minor |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Air race/show | | |

On August 13, about 1515 eastern daylight time, a Mikoyan Gurevich Mig 23UB, N23UB, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Belleville, Michigan. The pilot and pilot rated observer received minor injuries. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 airshow exhibition flight.

The flight was performing at the “Thunder over Michigan Airshow” held at the Willow Run Airport (YIP), Ypsilanti, Michigan. The accident flight was scheduled to be the second to last act.

The accident airplane was a privately owned Russian designed military fighter airplane that employed variable geometry wings that allowed the wing sweep angle to be changed in-flight. The airplane was powered by a single turbojet engine with afterburner capability.

The pilot reported that the flight departed from runway 23 at YIP, followed by a right turn to a “banana pass” (a low-level knife edge pass) along runway 23. Following the pass, he started banking the airplane and noticed that the engine afterburner did not ignite, and the airspeed began to decrease. He brought the swing wings into the fully forward position (16° sweep) to increase lift and began troubleshooting the problem. He was actively troubleshooting when the rear seat observer stated that they needed to eject. The pilot reported that he was not ready to eject and was still troubleshooting the problem and maneuvering the airplane toward runway 27 at YIP when his ejection seat fired, and he was out of the airplane. He stated that if either occupant pulls the ejection handle, both seats eject.

The rear seat observer stated that the airplane made a pass along the runway and the plan was to go to the left for another pass followed by a landing. He stated that the engine was not accelerating. He and the pilot had a brief discussion and began to climb up and gain altitude. They determined that they had some type of engine problem and needed to get back on the ground. He stated that they determined they did not have sufficient altitude to make it to a

runway at the airport. He said they were compressed for time and needed to get out. When asked if he had pulled the ejection seat handles, he stated that he could not specifically remember but thinks that he would have pulled them.

Video evidence indicated that the airplane was in a left bank when the ejection seats fired. The airplane continued in the left bank and descended into the ground about 1 mile south of the approach end of runway 27 at YIP. The wreckage path was about 600 ft. long on a heading of about 35°. There was a postimpact explosion and fire. The fuselage section that contained the tail surfaces and engine came to rest adjacent to an apartment building. The remainder of the airplane was fragmented and distributed along the wreckage path. There were no reported injuries on the ground.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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| Aircraft Make: | Mikoyan Gurevich | Registration: | N23UB |
| Model/Series: | MIG-23UB | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Amateur Built: | | | |
| Operator: | On file | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Designator Code: | | | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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| Conditions at Accident Site: | VMC | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | KYIP, 716 ft msl | Observation Time: | 02:53 Local |
| Distance from Accident Site: | 1 Nautical Miles | Temperature/Dew Point: | 17°C / 15°C |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Clear | Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction: | 3 knots / , 280° |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Visibility: | 10 miles |
| Altimeter Setting: | 29.91 inches Hg | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Departure Point: | Belleville, MI (YIP) | Destination: | Belleville, MI (YIP) |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Minor | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Passenger Injuries: | 1 Minor | Aircraft Fire: | On-ground |
| Ground Injuries: | | Aircraft Explosion: | On-ground |
| Total Injuries: | 2 Minor | Latitude, Longitude: | 42.218353,-83.510833 |

Administrative Information

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| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Brannen, John |
| Additional Participating Persons: | Rick Anderson; FAA - East Michigan FSDO; Belleville, MI |
| Investigation Class: | Class 3 |

Note: