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Pilot Dies in 'Classified' Plane Crash at Nevada Training Range



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Eric Schultz, then an Air Force captain, became the 28th pilot to fly the F-35 when he took off from Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., in F-35A AF-1 for a 1.3-hour test mission on 15 September 2011.

Military.com | 8 Sep 2017 | by Oriana Pawlyk and Brendan McGarry

A pilot was killed in another plane crash this week at the Nevada Test and Training Range, the Air Force said.

Lt. Col. Eric Schultz, 44, died from injuries sustained in an accident in which an aircraft crashed around 6 p.m. local time on Tuesday at the range, located about 100 miles northwest of Nellis Air Force Base, according to a release from the base issued Friday evening.



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The aircraft, the type of which wasn't specified, was assigned to Air Force Materiel Command and was flying a training mission at the time of the mishap, the release states.

"Information about the type of aircraft involved is classified and not releasable," Maj. Christina Sukach, chief of public affairs for the 99 Air Base Wing at Nellis, said in an email.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein, while traveling Saturday morning to the annual conference of the National Guard Association of the United States in Louisville, Ky., ruled out speculation the aircraft involved may have been an F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

"I can definitely say it was not an F-35," he told a Military.com reporter accompanying him on the trip.

In [an article](#) on the website of The Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland, Schultz was identified as a 1991 graduate of Annapolis High School and a former civilian test pilot who received multiple graduate degrees before joining the Air Force in 2001.

A [YouCaring page](#) to establish a memorial fund for Schultz's family states he received six degrees, including a doctorate in aerospace engineering from the California Institute of Technology and a master's of business administration from Penn State University.

Schultz was a U.S. Air Force combat veteran and test pilot with over 2,000 hours flying numerous aircraft, including the F-35 and CF-18, Canada's variant of the F/A-18 Hornet, and the F-15E, in which he flew more than 50 close air support missions in Afghanistan, according to the page.

He also held management positions, serving as director of operations and exchange officer at the Canadian Forces Flight Test Center, and performed systems engineering for the Airborne Laser program, the page states.

Prior to joining the military, Schultz was the senior scientist and business development manger at the Pratt & Whitney Seattle Aerosciences Center, and a rotary wing flight test engineer at the Naval Air Warfare Center, it states.

He's survived by a wife, Julie, and five children, Noah, Elijah, Zion, OliviaMae, and Naomi; parents Larry and Linda Schultz of Annapolis; brother Lars (his children Ava and Tristan) of Alexandria, Virginia; and aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews, according to the YouCaring page.

Schultz in 2011 was also named the 28th pilot to fly the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter a stealthy fifth-generation fighter jet made by Lockheed Martin

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Corp., according to information released by the Air Force and the manufacturer.

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The F-35 is the Pentagon's most expensive weapons acquisition program, estimated to cost more than \$400 billion to develop and buy more than 2,400 of the single-engine fighters.

While the program has encountered cost overruns, schedule delays and mishaps in decades of development, including engine fires -- one in 2016 resulted in burns to a pilot's head, neck and face -- the airframe hasn't yet experienced a fatal accident.

The deadly crash occurred a day before a pair of [A-10 Thunderbolt II](#) ground-attack aircraft [crashed at the same training range](#). Both pilots safely ejected in that incident, according to a separate release from Nellis issued Thursday.

The A-10C jets, known as Warthogs, from the 57th Wing at Nellis were also on a routine training mission when they went down around 8 p.m. The service didn't say whether the planes collided.

It wasn't immediately clear why Friday's release came three days after an accident involving a fatality.

Both mishaps are under investigation.

"These are separate incidents and both are currently under investigation to determine their causes," Sukach said in a separate email.

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