

PILOT KILLED IN CRASH WAS WEST HARTFORD NATIVE

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The Air Force Friday identified Lt. Col. William Morel III, 42, a **West Hartford** native, as the pilot killed earlier this week when his jet fighter crashed during an evening training flight over an Oregon desert.

Morel, a 1974 Conard High School graduate who entered the service as an enlisted airman, died late Wednesday as did Capt. Jeffrey Fahnlander, of Minnesota, when their F-15E fighter went down in Malheur County, Ore., about 35 miles east of McDermitt, Nev., said Sgt. Sonja Whittington, an Air Force spokeswoman.

The F-15E is made by **Boeing Co.**, which describes it as "devastatingly effective flying at night and in bad weather."

Eric Morel said his brother, one of three siblings, had taken his most recent assignment within the past 18 months after training on the F-15. William Morel's assignment was the latest in a 23-year career climb, his brother said.

"He went through the ranks the hard way," said Eric Morel, who noted that his brother obtained several college degrees studying part-time while rising through the ranks straight from high school. "He had flown for a decade with the F-111. But they took that aircraft out of service."

Morel and Fahnlander were on an exercise with other planes of the 366th Operations Group out of Mountain Home Air Force Base, located about 80 miles away in southwestern Idaho.

Morel, operations officer of the 366th's support squadron, was the pilot, Whittington said. Fahnlander, wing standardization and evaluation officer for the group, was the weapons systems instructor.

Morel, father of a teenage daughter and son, was the son of a career Air Force serviceman, said his brother, who still lives in West Hartford.

The crash was the first fatal training accident at Mountain Home Air Force Base in 11 years and the first

involving a plane from the 366th Wing since the Gulf War, said Sgt. Rene Kirkland, Air Force spokeswoman.

Air Force liaisons have told Morel family members that the combination of speed, altitude -- the plane was flying at about 100 feet at the time of the accident -- and darkness may have contributed to the accident, Eric Morel said.

"At this point, they are very guarded about what they are saying," Eric Morel said. "Everything is inconclusive at this time."

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