

FLTLT Neil Pollock (USAF Exchange Nav) 23 Sep 1968 (F-111A – 66-0040)

Successful ejection Nellis AFB, Nevada

Type: [General Dynamics F-111A Aardvark](#)
Owner/operator: 474th Tactical Fighter Wing USAF
MSN: A1-58
Fatalities: Fatalities: 0 / Occupants: 2
Aircraft damage: Destroyed
Location: Nellis AFB ranges, Nevada  [United States of America](#)
Phase: Approach
Nature: Military
Departure airport: Nellis AFB, Nevada

Narrative:

First flew 17 April 1968, and delivered to the USAF on 1 August 1968. Crashed 23 September 1968 at Nellis AFB, Nevada, while assigned to the 474th TFW after only 16 flights and 35.6 hours total. The centre of gravity went aft out of limits and pitch authority was lost after a failure of the Forward/Aft pointers on the fuel gauge which controls the Centre of Gravity when the engine feed fuel switch is left in AUTO.

The aircrew of USN Lt. John Nash and RAAF FLTLT Neal Pollock ejected successfully on late finals to Nellis AFB.



Seated on the right: Neill Pollock



USAF welcome after First F111 Flight, Nellis AFB, 22Jul 1968. L-R: Col Bartholomew, Col Shook, Kev Merrigan, Bob Bruce, Ivan Skipworth, Jim Hannigan, Charlie Furlonger, Brian Frost, Ron Biddell, Wally and Marcia Walters, Pete Elkins, Bill Hughes, Bob Montgomery, Fay and Errol McCormack, Jock Thomson, Pete Hackett.
Kneeling L-R: Jules Wills, Trevor Noblet, Neil Pollock, Col Noble, Brian (Gus) Gribble, Chris Lake, Ian Westmore, Frank Burt, Bob Waring, Blue O'Neill.

Kneeling: 3rd from the left

Sources:

<https://asn.flightsafety.org/wikibase/60442>

http://forgottenjets.warbirdsresourcegroup.org/F-111_aarvark.html

http://web.archive.org/web/20170421194559/http://www.ejection-history.org.uk:80/PROJECT/YEAR_Pages/1968.htm

Eyewitness Account from Chris Neale, USAF (Ret) email 24 Aug 06

At the time, I was a USAF pilot assigned to the 428th TFS of the 474th TFW and was in training as a "right-seater," in the F-111A. I was between classes and was having coffee at the squadron on the flightline at Nellis AFB, NV., when we heard on the squadron radio that the 'accident' aircraft was having problems and was returning to base. As he got closer, we all went outside the building on the flightline side to watch the approach and landing. We were right on the edge of the parking ramp and had a clear view as the aircraft approached the runway. As the F-111 got closer to the ground, maybe 100-200 feet in the air, the nose began to come up and we could hear the crew yelling on the radio that they couldn't stop the nose from coming up.

At about that time, the aircraft rolled off to the left to about a 70-80 degree bank and with the fuselage parallel to the ground and in the steep left bank, the capsule separated from the plane after the ejection sequence was initiated. The aircraft had a strong warning in the Flight Manual about keeping the weight of each crewmember within certain limits. This was due to the fact that the entire cockpit was ejected and any large imbalance between the left seat and the right seat could present problems upon ejection. This was taken in consideration for crew assignments, but was not an issue during the training phase with the instructor.

Luckily for this accident crew, there was a HUGE imbalance between the student trainee in the left seat, and the instructor pilot in the right seat. The ejection took place far outside the "safe parameters" for a successful ejection due to the altitude, airspeed and bank angle. The left seater was a classic slim and trim fighter pilot type and his instructor was rather more rotund and much heavier.

Because of this big imbalance, the capsule trajectory started to lean toward the heavier crewmember and this in fact made the capsule reach almost a vertical path as the rocket motor propelled it high enough for the chute to deploy and swing once before they hit the ground. If they had been the same size, weight wise, they would have both perished.

Later, we were always crewed together based on similar size as that really was the safest plan.

Editor's note: The module crew weight differential limitation was 65lbs. Neil Pollock was a Navigator, seated in the right seat. Looking at the photos it doesn't look like he's rotund, but maybe the pilot was really small ! So can't really be corroborated unless you've got access to the USAF Mishap Report ...

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F-111s Grounded

All USAF F-111As have been grounded following the accident to an F-111A on September 23 at Nellis AFB, Nevada. The aircraft was on finals on a training flight, and was at a height of about 300ft when it "began a smooth slow pull-up." The pilots, one of whom was an RAAF trainee, ejected safely. To date 11 F-111s; nine F-111As and two F-111Bs, have crashed since January 1967