

***High Energy Processes on Aircraft – Structural Integrity Considerations and Lessons Learned  
AVT-302 Research Workshop on Paint Removal Technologies for Military Vehicles***

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**Presentation to  
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  - Larry Butkus, Ph.D. - USAF
- **AFRL: Bob Ware, Mike Hirsch, Jackson Heinz**
- **SwRI – Southwest Research Institute**
- **NATO AVT-302 Committee**

# Reference Materials

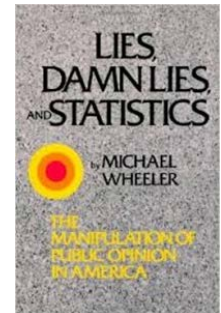
1. [http://index.heritage.org/military/2015/chapter/us-power/us-air-force/#identifier\\_9\\_16](http://index.heritage.org/military/2015/chapter/us-power/us-air-force/#identifier_9_16)
2. SAE MA4872, Paint Stripping of Commercial Aircraft – Evaluation of Materials and Processes, SAE Aerospace, Aerospace Standard, September, 2010
3. Laser Cutting Metallurgical Report, A-10 ASIP, June 2008 (exact reference unavailable)
4. “S. Carlson, Qualification of Advanced Structural Sustainment Tools/Processes within the ASIP Environment – Perfect Point™ E-Drill™,” USAF ASIP Conference, November, 2012
5. D. Andrew & J. Macha, “Two T-38 Test Programs: Sealant Removal – Enemy #1, T-38 ASIP Summit XIV,” Southwest Research Institute, January 2017
6. ASM Handbook, Volume 13, “Corrosion”, p.592, Fig.11, 1996
7. J. Calcaterra, “Effect of Manufacturing Variability on Air Force Systems”, ASIP 2008

## Reference Materials continued

8. **R. Pilarczyk, S Carlson & G. Stowe, “Is ASIP Still Alive” The A-10 Lower Wing Skin Cracking Issue of 2008-2009,” USAF ASIP Conference, November 2009**
9. **The New Weibull Handbook, Fourth Edition, by Dr. Robert B. Abernethy, March 2003**
10. **A Reliability Analysis Approach to Fatigue Life Variability of Aircraft Structures, Whittaker, Air Force Materials Laboratory, Air Force Systems Command, WPAFB, 1969.**
11. **Optimization of Aircraft Laser Coating Removal Processes, Final Report, No. W91ZLK-10-D-005, Feb 12 2014, by Concurrent Technologies Corporation**
12. **Final Draft Fatigue Data Analysis Report, RFQ No. CTC-P-13-0160, Richard C. Rice and Jana Rubadue, Battelle, Nov 22 2013**

# CAVEATS

- **The opinions expressed are those of myself and the coauthors**
- **I am not a statistician**
  - “Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics”
    - *Phrase popularized by Mark Twain*
      - *Interesting book by Michael Wheeler*
- **Weibull is not necessarily the best way to analyze fatigue data ---**
  - *It is an alternative method utilized by commercial aerospace manufacturers*
- **The focus is on the material behavior as a result of the processing → specifically paint removal**
  - Emphasis on high energy processes (plasma, laser, etc.)
    - I am *not* an expert on lasers or plasma



# Presentation Overview

- **Pace of technology**
- **What are some potential challenges from high energy processes?**
- **What does any change from the baseline suggest?**
  - Protecting the airworthiness baseline and structural integrity is paramount!
    - Fatigue/durability
    - Nondestructive Inspections
    - Corrosion
    - Sustainability, etc.
- **Characterizing the microstructure**
  - Initial Discontinuity State (IDS) - Baseline
  - Evolving Discontinuity State (EDS)
- **Distributions and Weibull analyses**
- **Evaluation criteria suggestions**
  - *Evaluations to ensure the candidate process does not compromise the airworthiness baseline*
- **Engineered protections to prevent damage**
- **Conclusions & Recommendations**





# The Pace of Technology

|                           | Aircraft |      |      |        |      |      |       |
|---------------------------|----------|------|------|--------|------|------|-------|
|                           | A-10     | T-38 | F-16 | KC-135 | B-52 | B-1  | F-22A |
| 2005                      | 1977     | 1961 | 1978 | 1957   | 1955 | 1986 | 2005  |
| Original Count            | 716      | 1146 | 2230 | 803    | 744  | 104  | 187   |
| Projected Retirement Age* | 60       | 70   | 36   | 83     | 80   | 52   | ?     |

**Age range: 1955-2017**

*\*Estimated by age of remaining assets and projected date of retirement.*

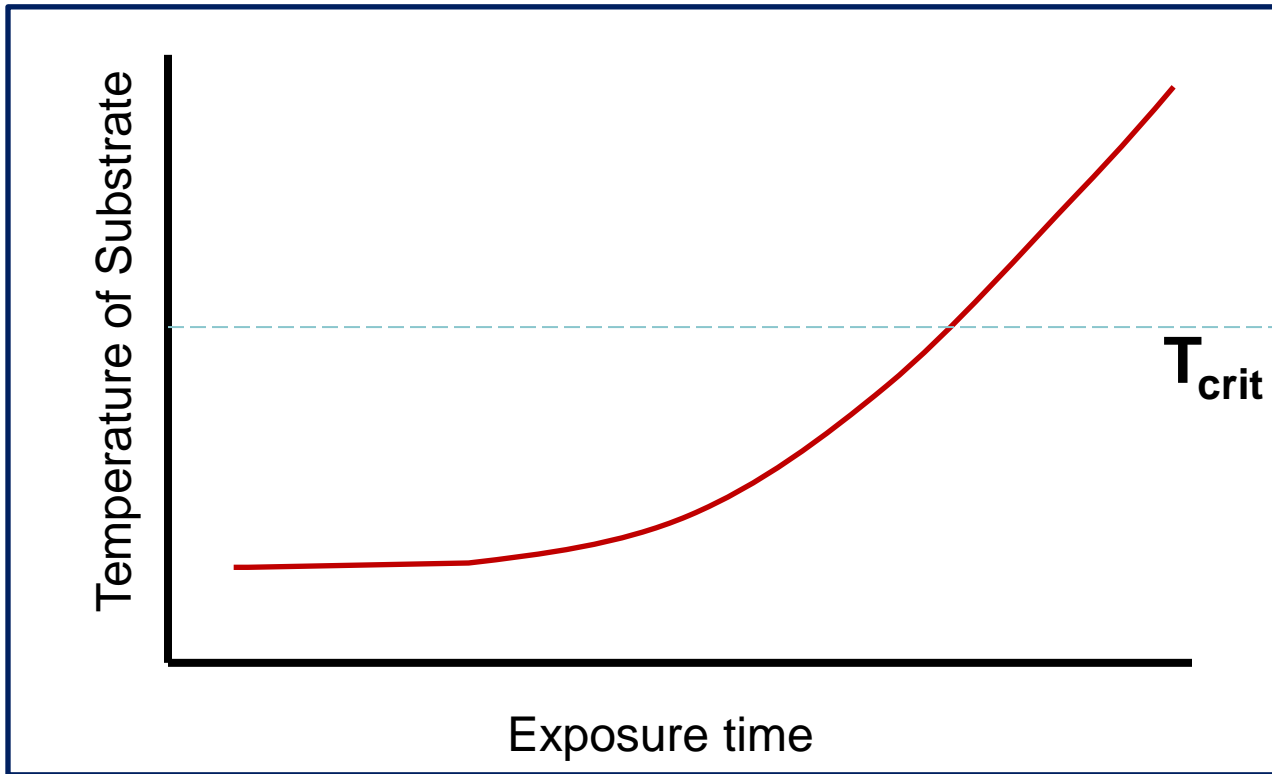
- **27 years old: Average age of USAF aircraft in 2015** *Reference: 1*



*Caution is advisable as new processes emerge.*

# High Energy Process Damage

- High Energy systems utilize **HEAT** to do the work



$T_{crit}$ : Critical temperature below which no change to the micro-structure occurs

Reference: 2

SAE MA 4872: "Substrate temperature shall not exceed 80°C or 180°F"



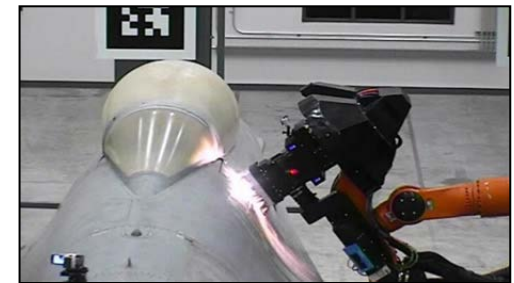
# Potential Thermally Induced Damage

- **Damage goal:**

- Preferred: NONE
- Accepted: Minimized impact to airworthiness:  
predictable, sustainable, detectable, repairable

- **Change to microstructure**

- Durability
- Widespread fatigue damage (WFD)
- Multiple site damage (MSD)
- Multiple element damage (MED)
- Damage tolerance potentially altered
- Fail safety potentially compromised
- Surface integrity
  - Any change or compromise to the structure surface or protection system



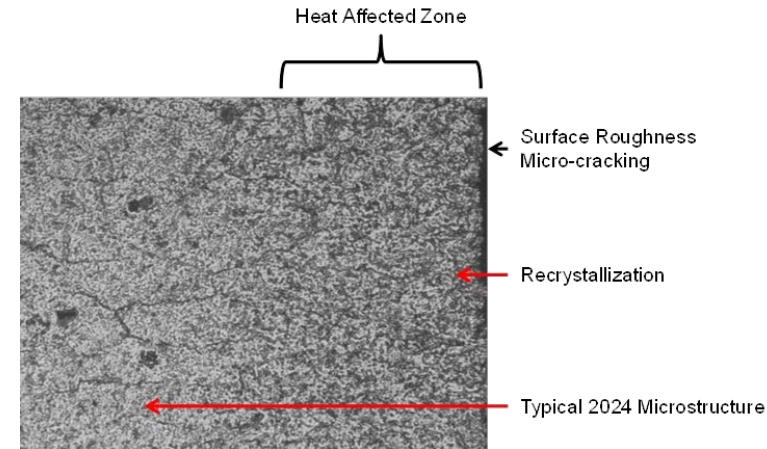
## Potential Damage *continued...*

- **NDI responsiveness considerations**
  - Physics of the method?
    - Probability of detection?
    - Threshold of detection?
    - Cracks hidden by process?
- **Corrosion prevention and control considerations**
  - Change in galvanic differences?
  - Coatings and other protections still viable?
  - Primer/paint adhesion?
- **Ability for Maintenance to respond**
  - Detectability (...is damage detectable?)
  - Reparability (...is damage repairable?)
  - Reliability (...what is the reliability of the repair?)
- **Introduction of residual stresses?**
- **Are the evaluations representative?**

# High Energy Processes – Lessons Learned

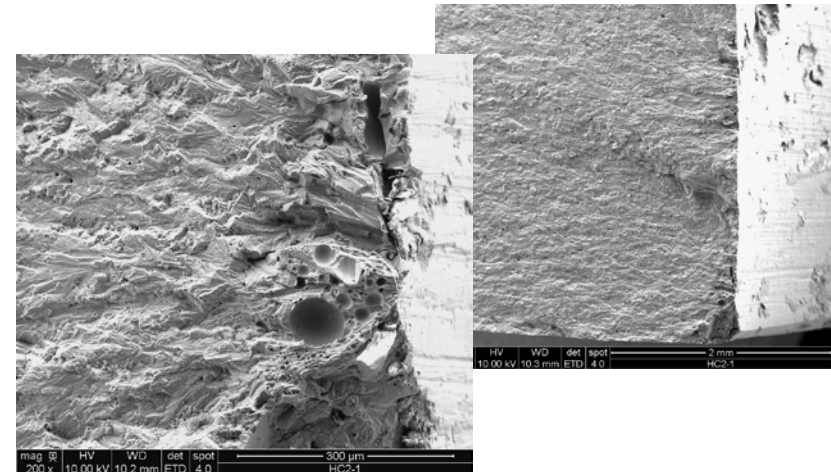
- **Laser Cutting (USAF 2007) Reference: 3**

- Microstructure changed
- H.A.Z. & recast layer
- Micro-cracking
- Surface integrity/durability degraded
- 94% durability downgrade for 2024-T3
- AA-07-02 (*Airworthiness Advisory, Oct. 10, 2007*)



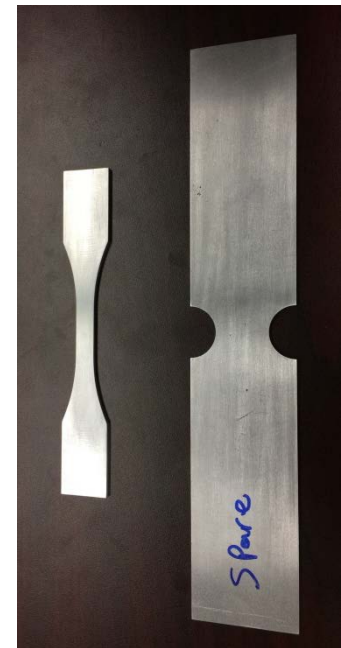
- **Plunge Rotating EDM (USAF 2011) Reference: 4**

- Microstructure changed
- H.A.Z. & recast layer
- Micro-cracking
- Surface integrity/durability degraded
- 96% durability downgrade for 2024-T351
- Damage undetectable after 'cleaned-up'



• **USAF Fiber Laser Sealant Removal Experiment: Parameters**

| Material      | Max Stress (ksi) | Stress Ratio | Thickness (inch) | Kt  | Dwell Time (seconds) | # of passes | Coupon Designation |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|-----|----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 7075-T6 sheet | 40               | 0.1          | 0.032            | 1.0 | N/A                  | N/A         | 32-1.0-B-1,2,3     |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 32-1.0-D10-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 32-1.0-D30-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 32-1.0-P30-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  | 1.6 | N/A                  | N/A         | 32-1.6-B-1,2,3     |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 32-1.6-D10-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 32-1.6-D30-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 32-1.6-P30-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              | 0.090            | 1.0 | N/A                  | N/A         | 90-1.0-B-1,2,3     |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 90-1.0-D10-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 90-1.0-D30-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 90-1.0-P30-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  | 1.6 | N/A                  | N/A         | 90-1.6-B-1,2,3     |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 90-1.6-D10-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 90-1.6-D30-1,2,3   |
|               |                  |              |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 90-1.6-P30-1,2,3   |



**Fatigue Coupon**

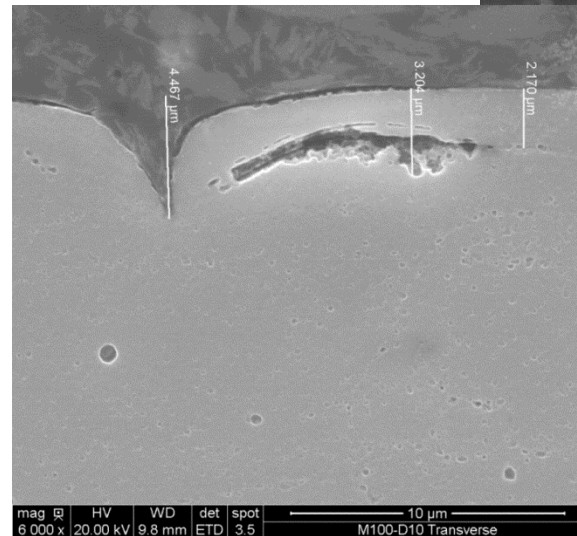
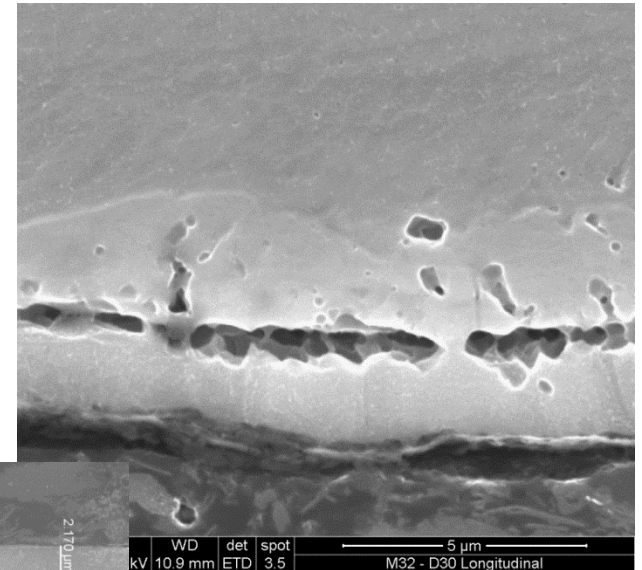
*No process controls for these experiments...  
Likely represents a near worst case scenario...*

Reference: 5



# Metallographic Examination

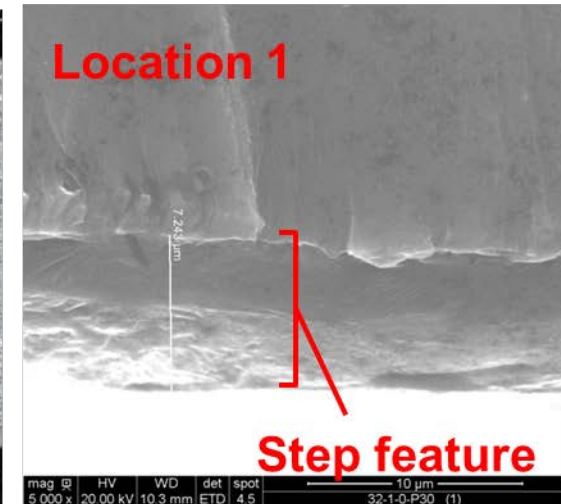
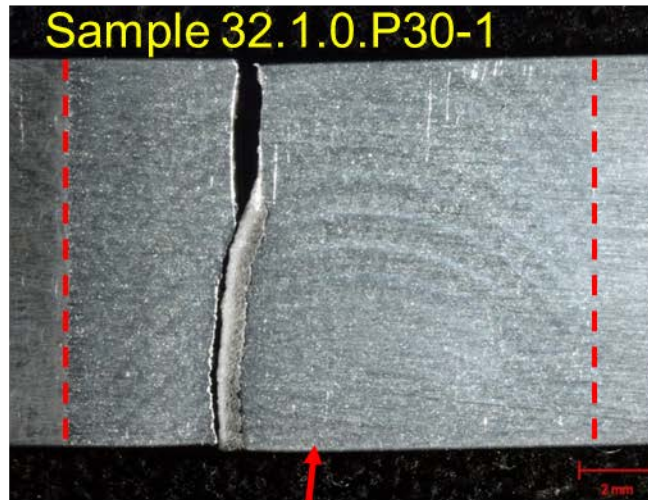
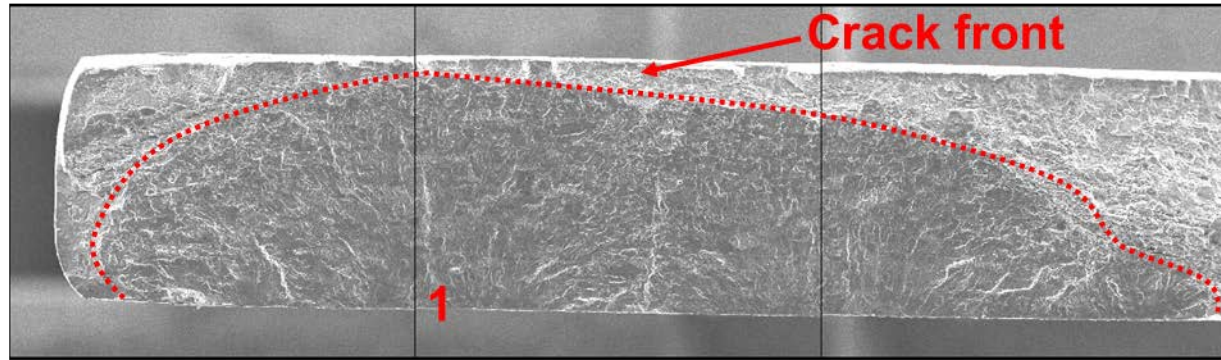
- All pulsed regions were sectioned in longitudinal and transverse directions and examined
- Common microstructural features:
  - Surface and subsurface discontinuities
  - micro-cracking
  - Recast layer
  - Voids
- Many DISCONTINUITIES
  - Many opportunities for crack nucleation



*Reference: 5*

# Fatigue Samples

- Test sample cracks originated at pulsed surface
- Ratchet marks indicate numerous individual crack nucleation sites
  - MSD
- Origin region exhibited discontinuous step feature with similar dimensions to recast zone



Reference: 5



# Fiber Laser Sealant Removal: Fatigue Testing

| Material      | Thickness (inch) | Kt  | Dwell Time (seconds) | # of passes | Coupon Designation | Life (cycles) | Notes               |
|---------------|------------------|-----|----------------------|-------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 7075-T6 sheet | 0.032            | 1   | N/A                  | N/A         | 32-1.0-B-1,2,3     | 8,540,303     | 3/3 Samples Run-Out |
|               |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 32-1.0-D10-1,2,3   | 45,050        | 99.5% Knockdown     |
|               |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 32-1.0-D30-1,2,3   | 34,102        | 99.6% Knockdown     |
|               |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 32-1.0-P30-1,2,3   | 26,995        | 99.7% Knockdown     |
|               |                  | 1.6 | N/A                  | N/A         | 32-1.6-B-1,2,3     | 4,377,733     | 2/3 Samples Run-Out |
|               |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 32-1.6-D10-1,2,3   | 85,050        | 98.1% Knockdown     |
|               |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 32-1.6-D30-1,2,3   | 41,328        | 99.1% Knockdown     |
|               |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 32-1.6-P30-1,2,3   | 65,680        | 98.5% Knockdown     |
|               | 0.09             | 1   | N/A                  | N/A         | 90-1.0-B-1,2,3     | 6,531,630     | 2/3 Samples Run-Out |
|               |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 90-1.0-D10-1,2,3   | 53,487        | 99.2% Knockdown     |
|               |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 90-1.0-D30-1,2,3   | 52,781        | 99.2% Knockdown     |
|               |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 90-1.0-P30-1,2,3   | 61,950        | 99.1% Knockdown     |
|               |                  | 1.6 | N/A                  | N/A         | 90-1.6-B-1,2,3     | 7,873,343     | 1/1 Sample Run-Out  |
|               |                  |     | 10                   | N/A         | 90-1.6-D10-1,2,3   | TBD           | <b>Incomplete</b>   |
|               |                  |     | 30                   | N/A         | 90-1.6-D30-1,2,3   | TBD           |                     |
|               |                  |     | N/A                  | 30          | 90-1.6-P30-1,2,3   | TBD           |                     |

*Many discontinuities induced by the process.*

Reference: 5

# DISCONTINUITIES

are an interruption of the structure

- Types of DISCONTINUITIES

- Initial Discontinuity State (IDS)

- GEOMETRIC ( $IDS_{\text{geometry}}$ )
  - Notches, radii, etc.
- MATERIAL ( $IDS_{\text{material}}$ )
  - Constituent particles, voids, porosity, etc.
- MANUFACTURING ( $IDS_{\text{manufacturing}}$ )
  - Surface gouges, grinding, embedded particles, scratches, etc.

**Baseline / pristine condition**

- Evolving Discontinuity State (EDS)

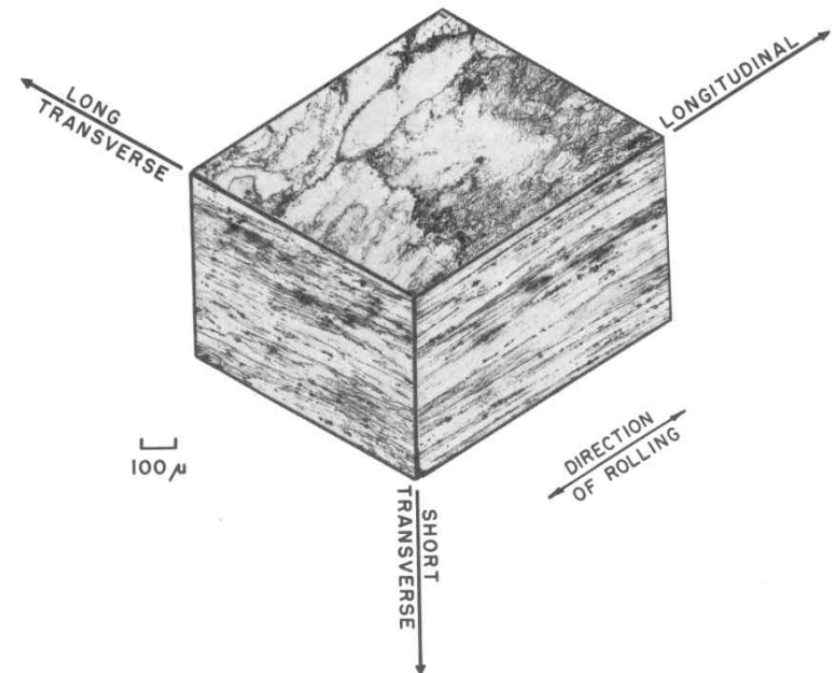
- Environment dependent
- Service loading (usage) induced
- Maintenance and sustainment process induced

**Changes to baseline with time, usage, inspections, repairs, paint/strip cycles, etc.**

# IDS (Initial Discontinuity State)

## Examples of Initial Discontinuities

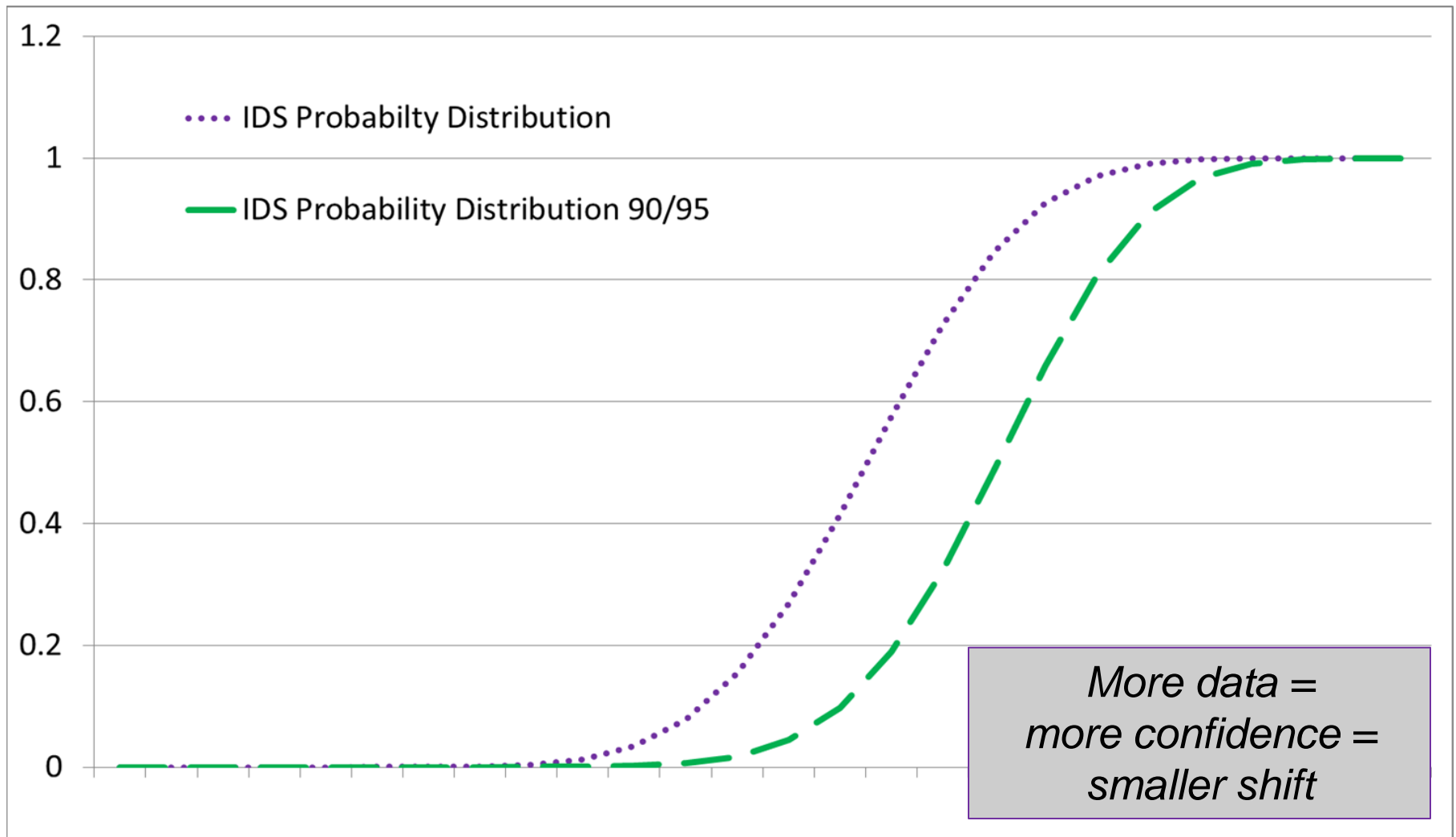
- Constituent Particles
- Grain Size
- Grain Shape
- Grain Orientation
- Porosity
- Voids
- Inclusions
- Various *Phases*
- Manufacturing
- Assembly
- Processing
- Etc.



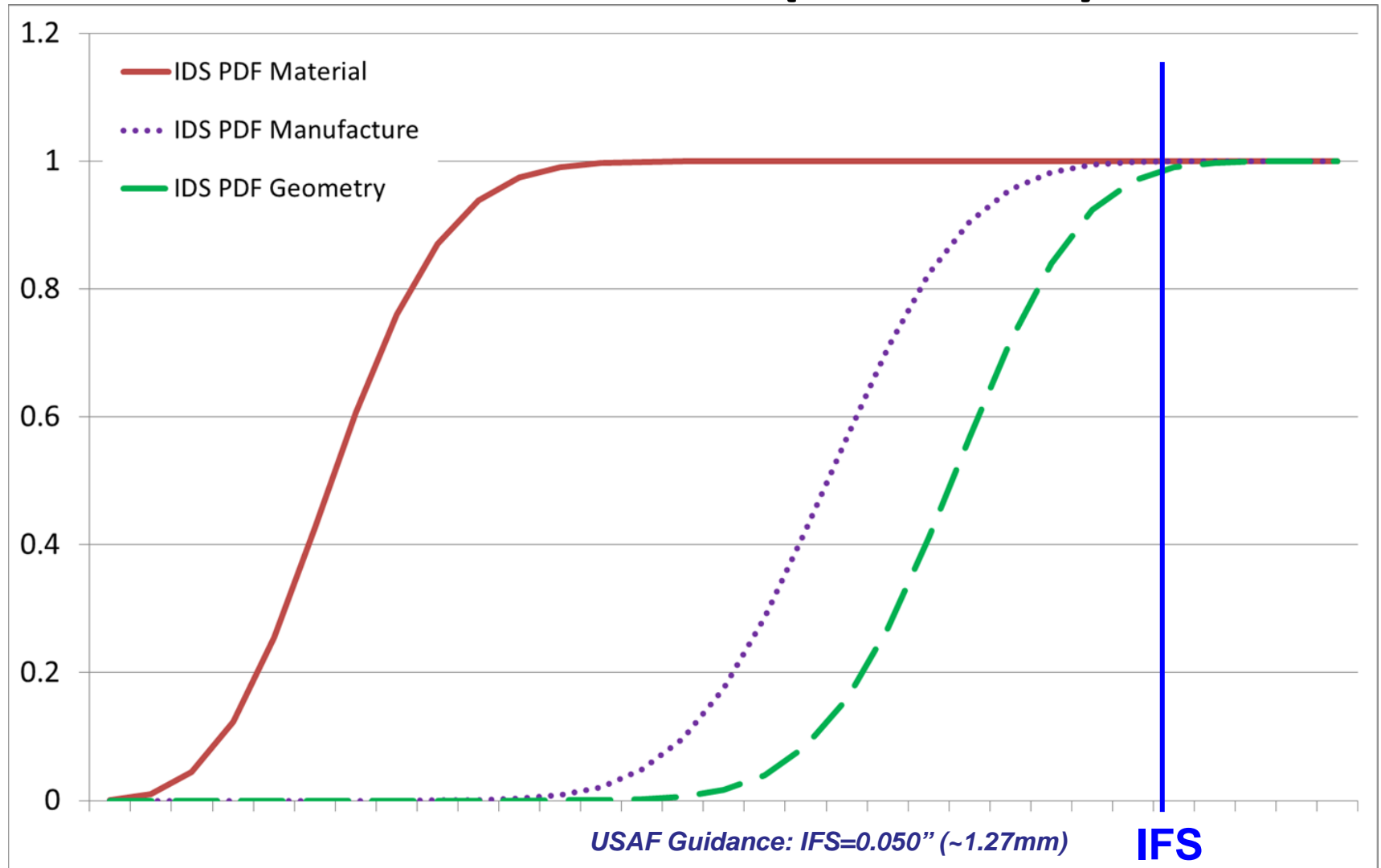
**Distributions can be  
used to characterize  
PROBABILITY**

*Reference: 6*

# IDS Distribution (Notional)



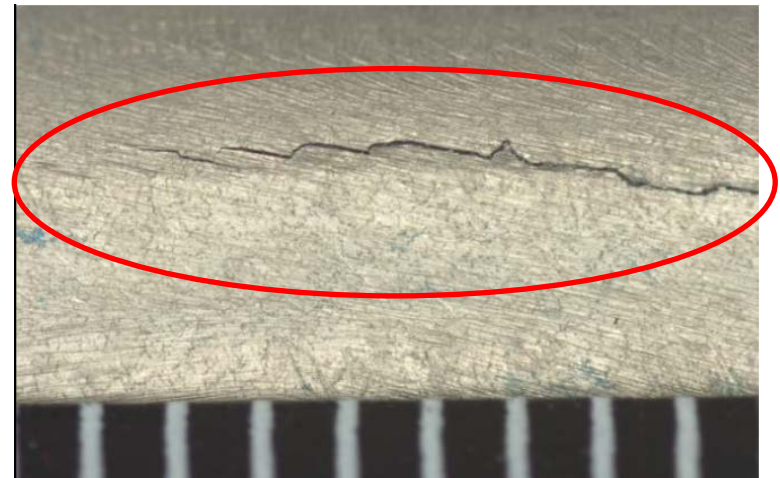
# IDS Distribution (Notional)



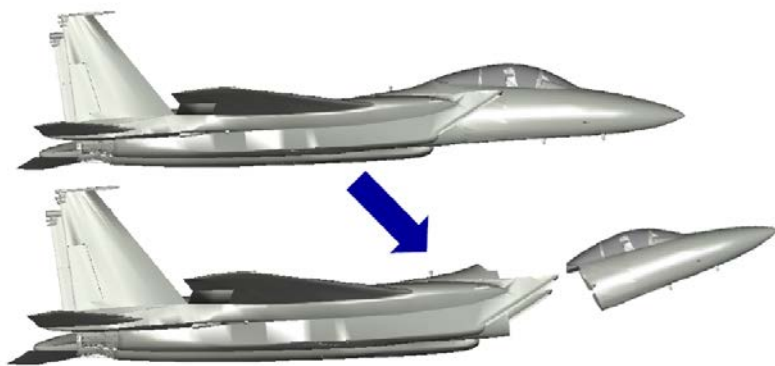


# IDS manufacturing

- **Multiple nucleation sites**
  - Widespread fatigue damage
  - Multisite damage
- **Machining marks**
- ***IFS – DID NOT WORK***



Example: Secondary Crack – surface as machined  
(Cracking from accident aircraft)



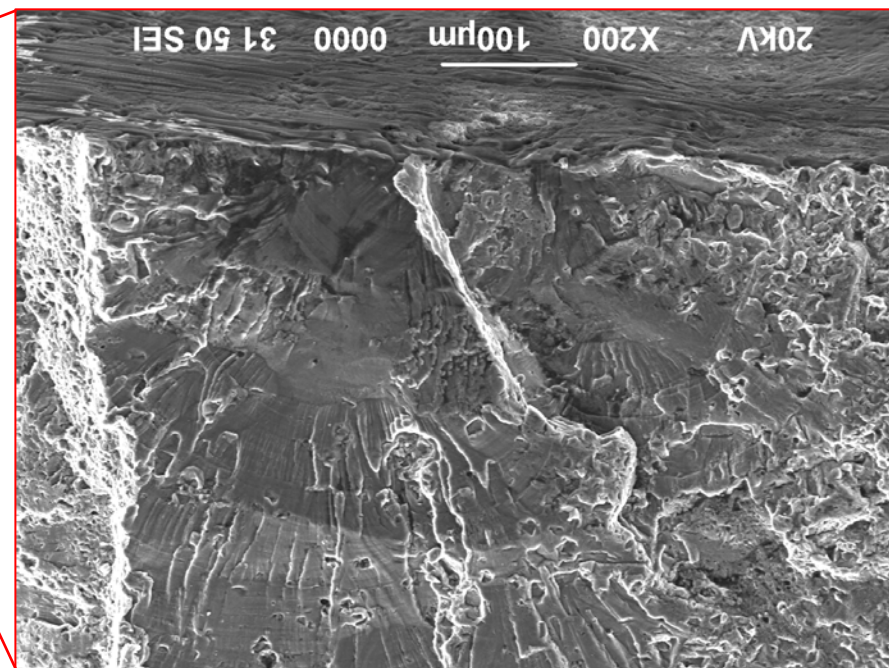
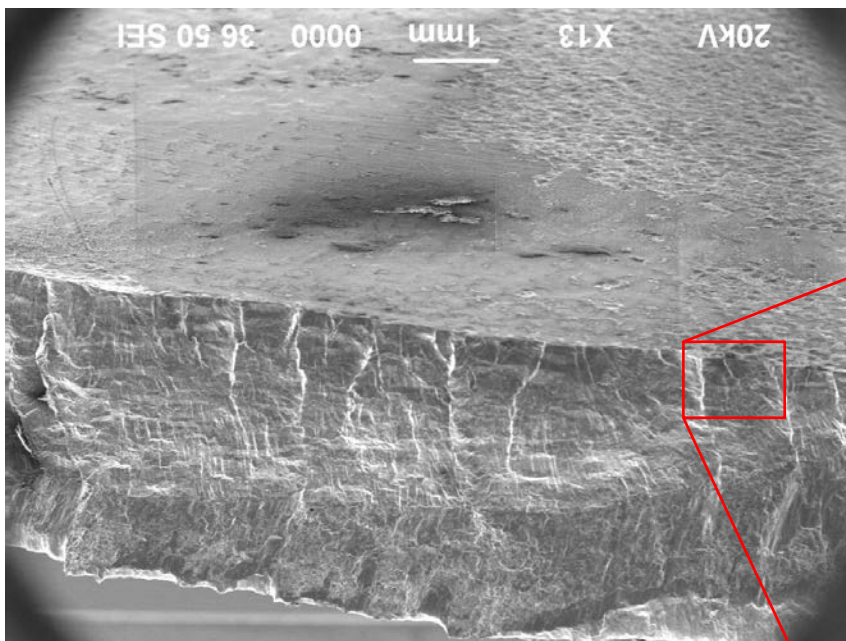
Based on Pilot Testimony

Reference: 7





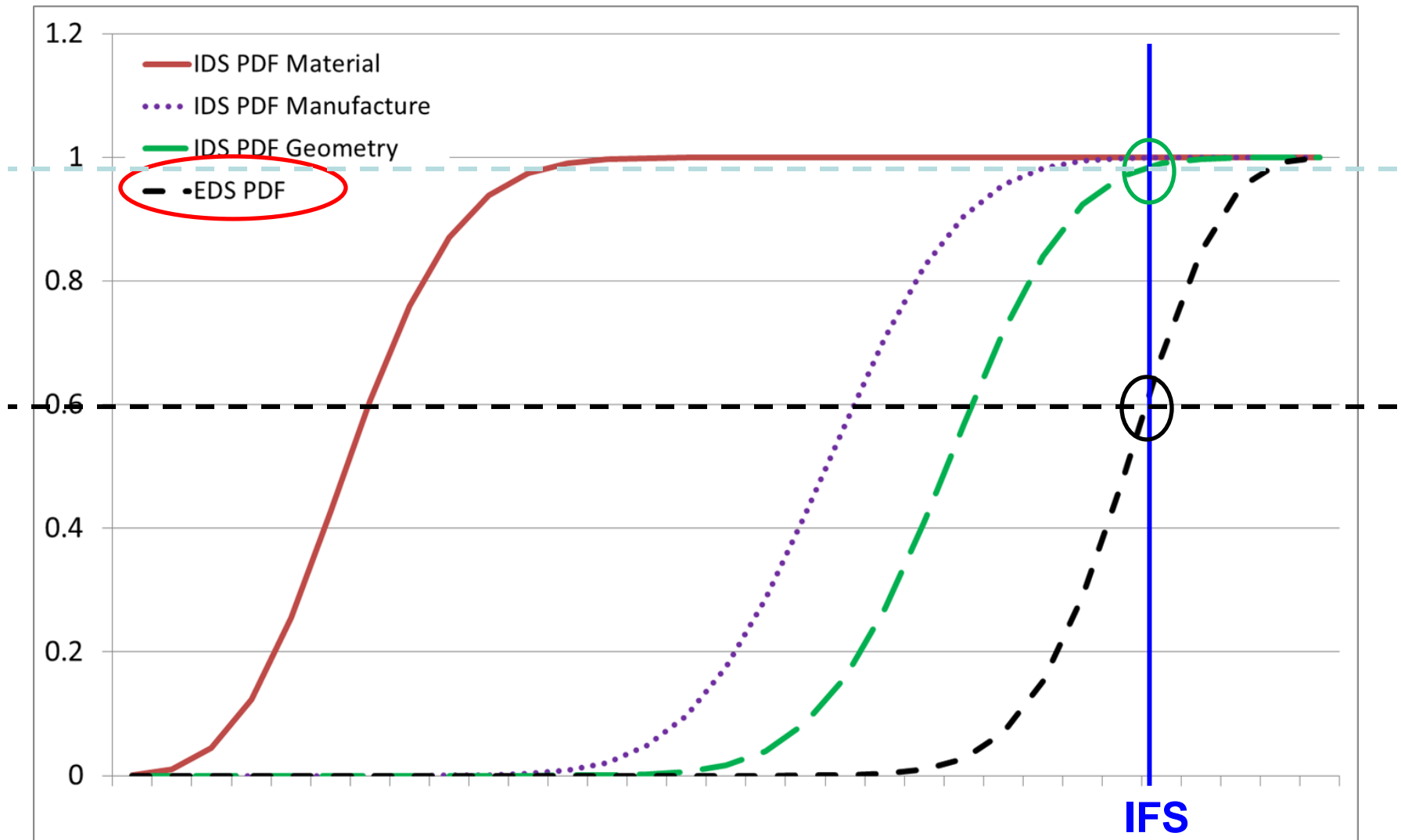
# Pitting Corrosion EDS; Leads to Fatigue (MSD)



*Reference: 8*

*Removed from a USAF aircraft in 2008*

# IDS & EDS Distribution (Notional)

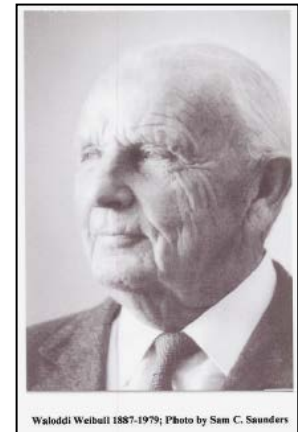


# Two-Parameter Weibull Distribution

$$F(t) = 1 - e^{-\left(\frac{t}{\eta}\right)^\beta}$$

- $F(t)$ : *Unreliability or 1-R(t) where R(t): Reliability*
- $t$ : *failure time (cycles, usage, etc.)*
- $\eta$ : *(Eta) characteristic life or scale parameter*
  - *Life where the Weibull line intersects 63.2% probability*
- $\beta$ : *(Beta) slope or shape parameter*
- $e$ : *2.718281828, the base for natural logarithms*

Reference: 9

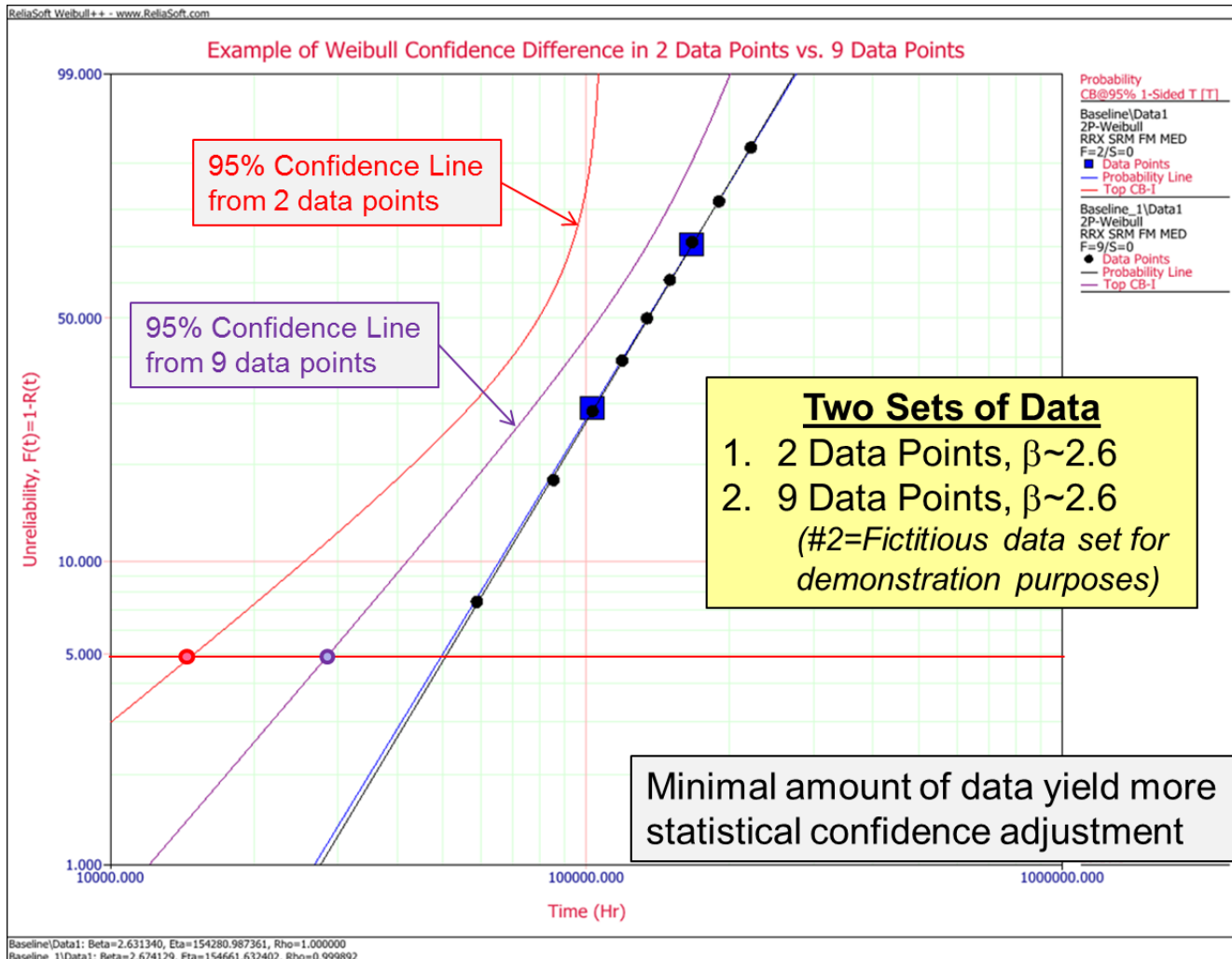


## Waloddi Weibull (1887 – 1979)

Claimed function:  
“...may sometimes  
render good  
service.”

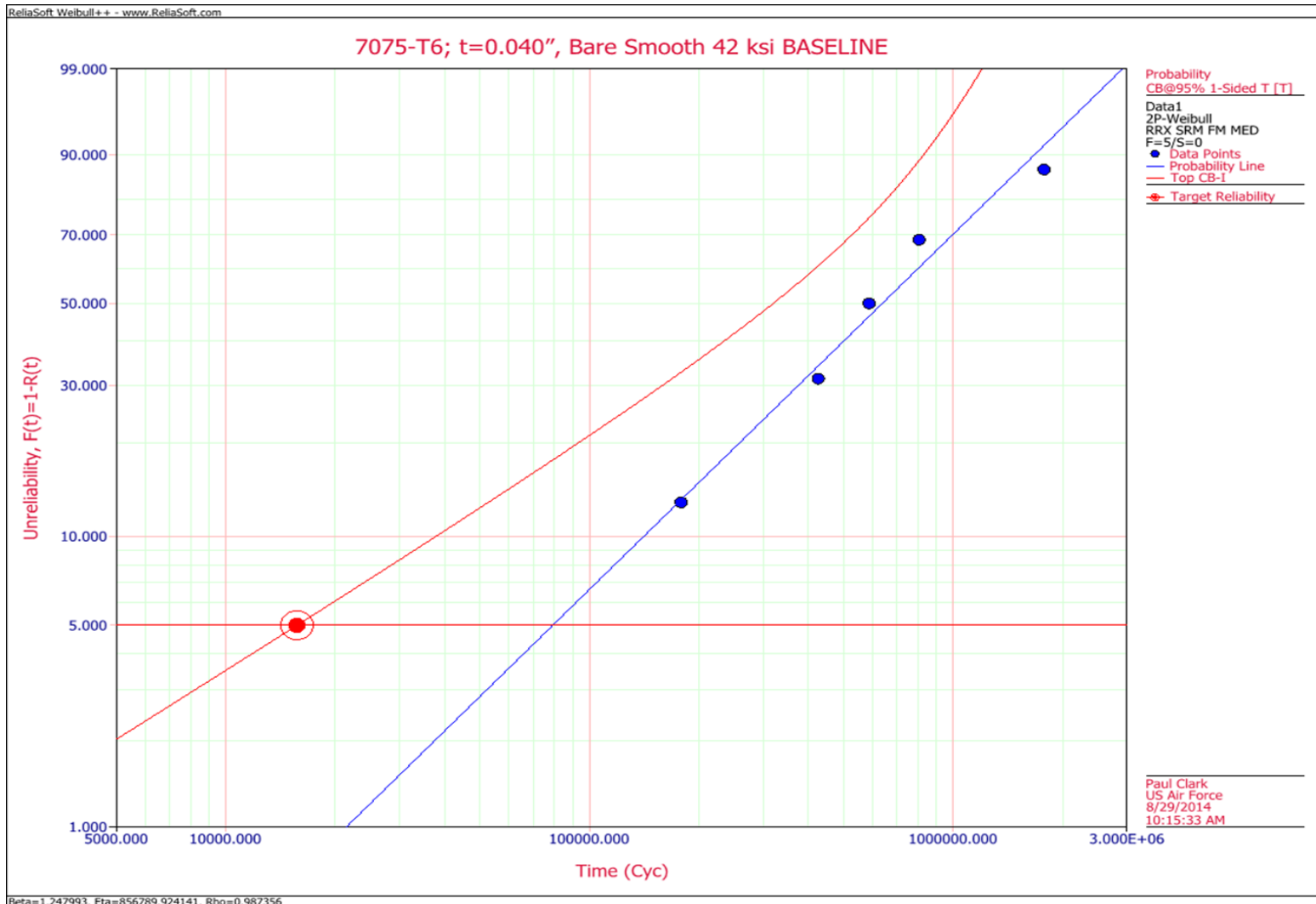
U.S. Air Force  
funded Weibull's  
work until 1975

# Confidence Adjustment - Data



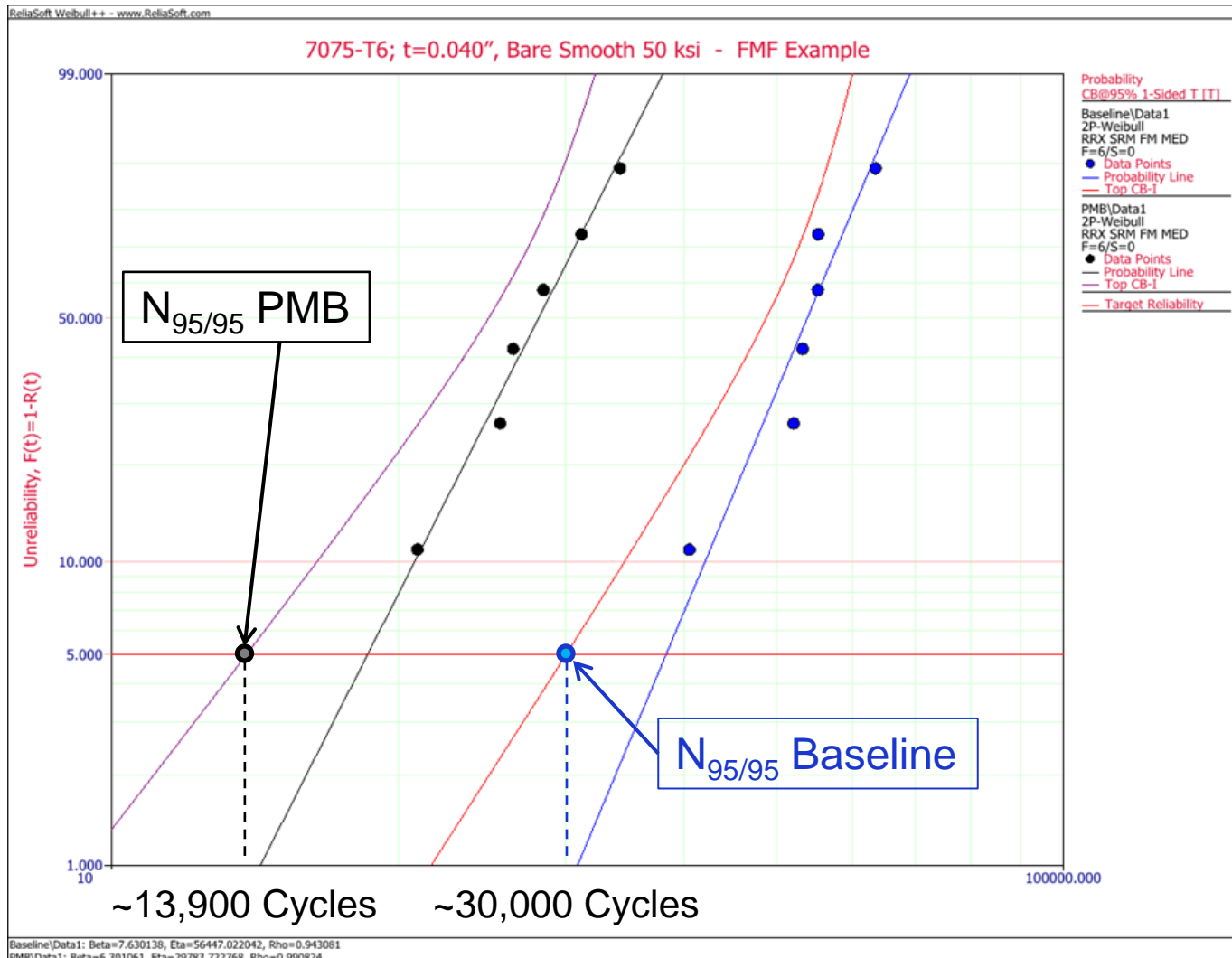
Reference 10 for Weibull Analysis  
References 11 & 12 for Paint Removal Data

# Confidence Adjustment - Variance

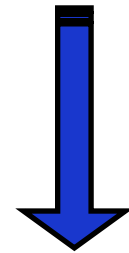




# Fatigue Modification Factor (FMF)



$$FMF = \frac{\sim 13,900 \text{ Cycles}}{\sim 30,000 \text{ Cycles}}$$



$$FMF \sim 0.46$$



# Experimental Data

- **Baseline**
  - Material tested as received → “un-processed”
    - *Exception:* Steel Baseline were grit-blasted
- **Fiber Laser Depaint**
  - Continuous wave 6 kW fiber laser, stripped to substrate (5 cycles)
- **Hand Held Laser Depaint**
  - Q-Pulsed 300 W Nd:YAG laser, stripped to substrate (5 cycles)
- **Plastic Media Blast (PMB) Depaint**
  - IAW Air Force T.O. 1-1-8, Type V, stripped to substrate (5 cycles)
- **Hand Sanded Depaint (Dual Action Sander )**
  - IAW Air Force T.O. 1-1-8, stripped to substrate (5 cycles)
- **Chemical Strip Depaint**
  - IAW Air Force T.O. 1-1-8, Cee-Bee® R-256, stripped to substrate (5 cycles)

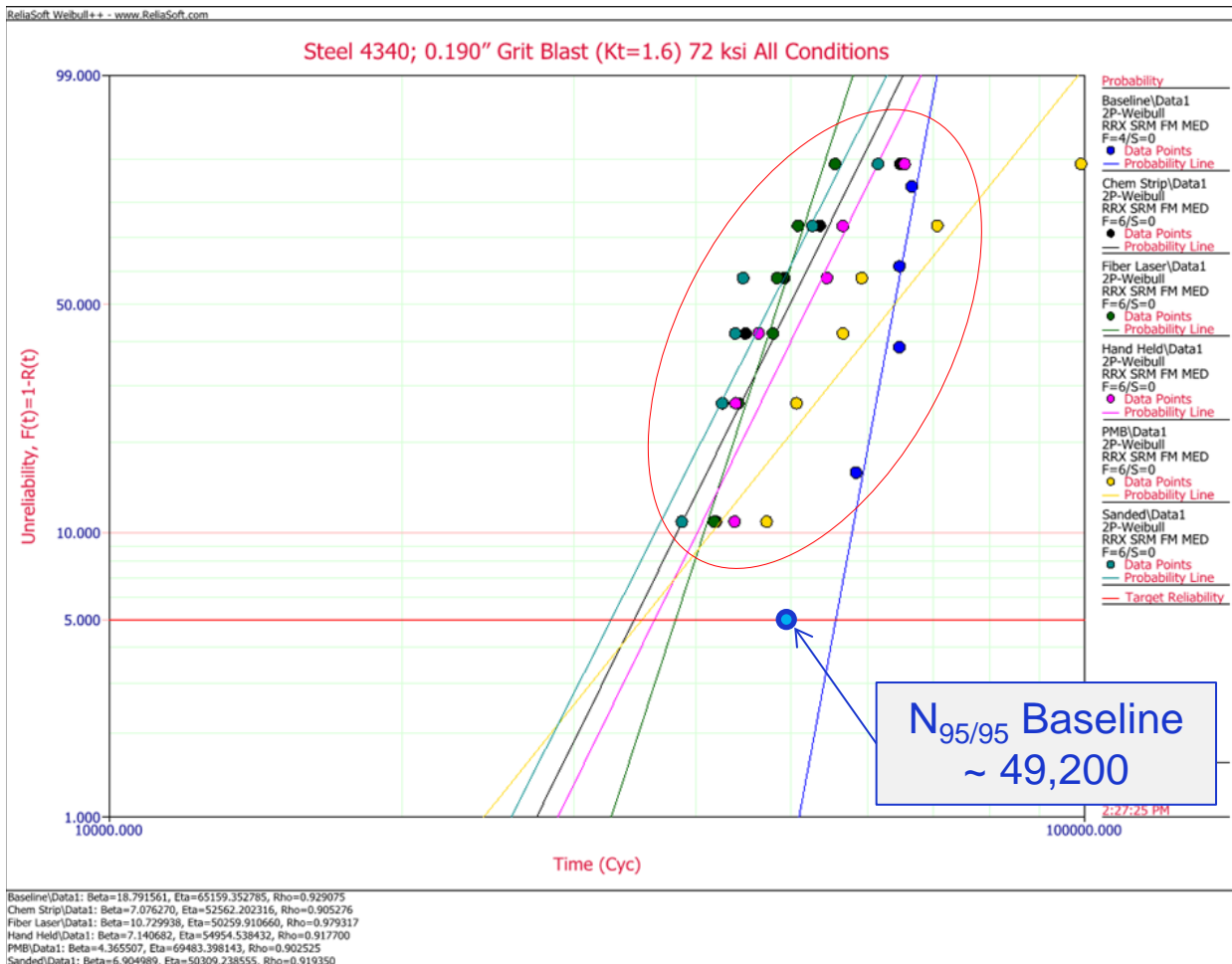
- **Compatible**
- **Difficult to Utilize**
- **Impossible to Draw Useful Conclusions**

*It is recognized that these categories are subjective. They are use for demonstrative purposes.*

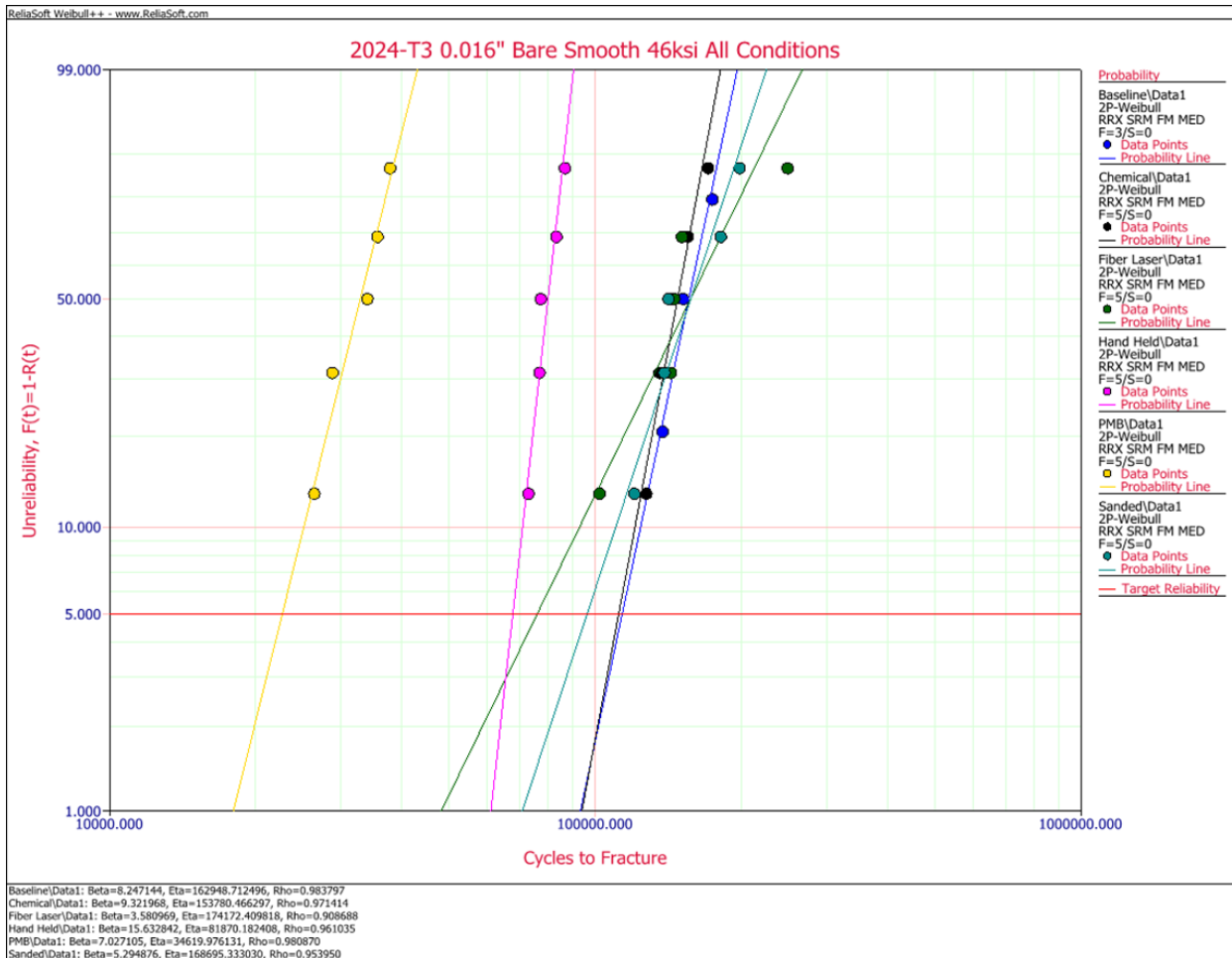
# Compatible

- **Compatible Betas (4.37-10.7) except...**
- **Baseline**  
 $\beta \sim 18.8$   
Minimal confidence adjustment
- **Large beta has impact on FMF**
  - Perhaps artificially low FMF for processes investigated

| Fatigue Modification Factors (FMF) |                 |      |        |          |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|------|--------|----------|
| Automated Fiber Laser              | Hand Held Laser | PMB  | Sanded | Chemical |
| 0.65                               | 0.57            | 0.46 | 0.50   | 0.53     |



# Difficult to Utilize

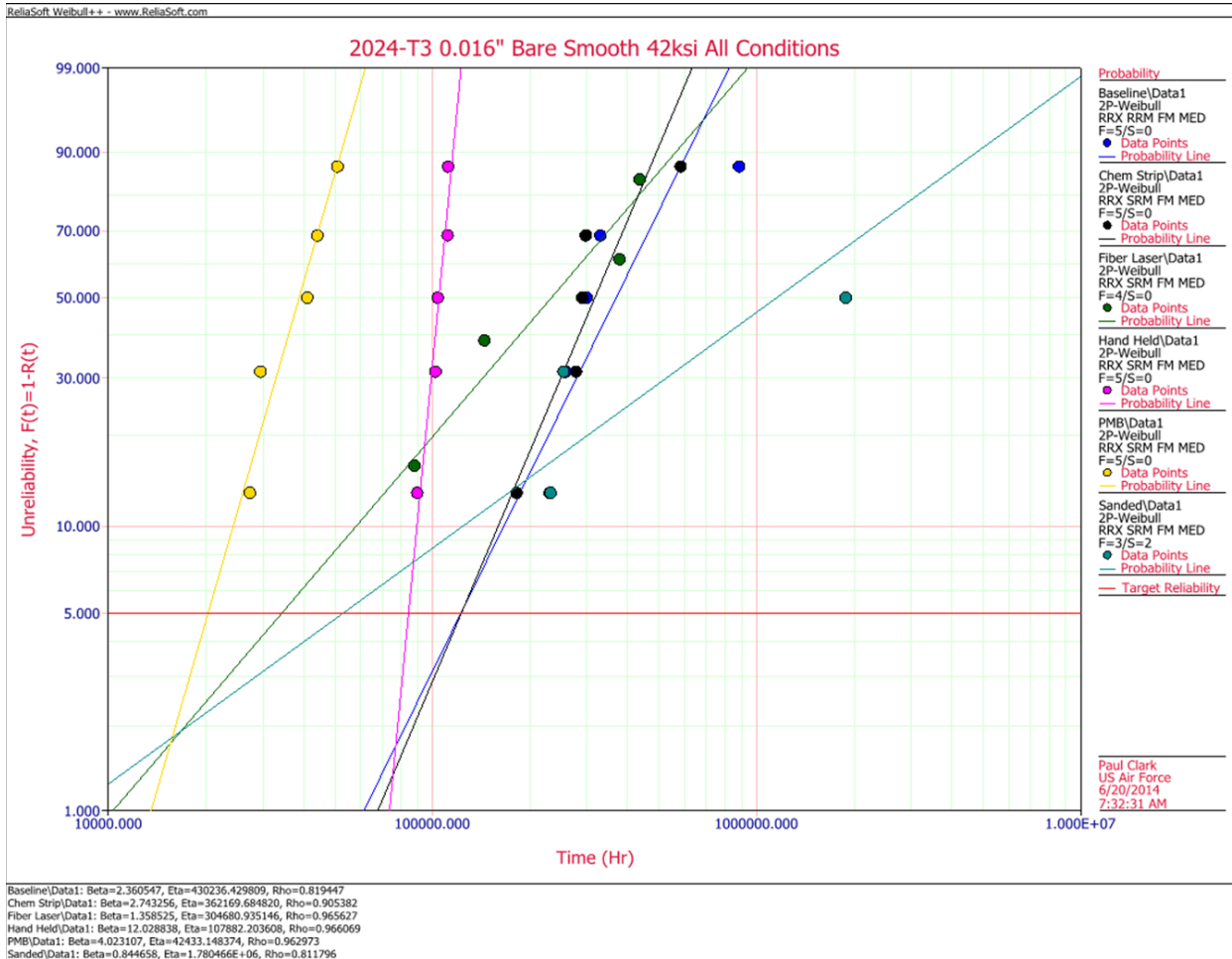


- Compatible Betas (5.29-9.32) *except...*
- Fiber Laser  $\beta \sim 3.58$
- Hand Held Laser  $\beta \sim 15.3$
- Relatively comparable for  $N_{95/95}$
- $FMF_{Chem}$  is positive

## Fatigue Modification Factors (FMF)

| Automated Fiber Laser | Hand Held Laser | PMB  | Sanded | Chemical |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------|--------|----------|
| 0.51                  | 0.71            | 0.20 | 0.78   | 1.08     |

# Impossible to Draw Useful Conclusions



- Betas mixed (0.84-12.0)
- Compatible groups:
  1. Baseline & Chemical
  2. Others NOT Baseline
- Lower beta (2.36)
- Sanded lowest life at high  $R(t)$ , yet test data highest overall
- $\beta \sim 0.84$ 
  - Seen in FMF<sup>Sanded</sup> ~96% knockdown
- **No consistency in data or results...**

| Fatigue Modification Factors (FMF) |                 |       |        |          |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|--------|----------|
| Automated Fiber Laser              | Hand Held Laser | PMB   | Sanded | Chemical |
| 0.137                              | 1.550           | 0.265 | 0.038  | 1.261    |

# Evaluation Criteria Suggestions

- **SAE MA4872 – Aerospace Standard**
  - Title: “Paint Stripping of Commercial Aircraft – Evaluation of Materials and Processes”
    - “The OEMs were directly involved in the development of the requirements and test methods.”
- **BASELINE is the foundation**
  - A compromised baseline = questionable comparisons
- **Regarding the process to be evaluated**
  - Will the process affect airworthiness and/or sustainment?
- **Generating, collecting, and analyzing data**
  - Consider a ‘round robin’ (multiple labs)
    - Demonstrates a robust test protocol
    - More data means more confidence
  - Consider incorporating Weibull analysis
    - Improved understanding of variability and statistical confidence

# Engineered Protection Considerations

- **Preserving the airworthiness baseline and structural integrity of aircraft is paramount!**
- **Engineer solutions to prevent damage to structure**
- **Prevent damage from abuse (accidental or intentional)**
  - Prevent users from 'turning up the heat'
- **Examples**
  - Locked controls for power intensity settings
  - Motion, temperature and contrast sensors
- **Methods for detecting and repairing damage**
- **Analysis tools for assessing life and inspection intervals from unexpected damage and subsequent repairs**

*Training technicians is insufficient.*



# Lessons Learned

- **Processes that induce heat (thermal utilization) have the potential to alter the microstructure**
  - Can lead to widespread fatigue damage
  - Degradation to durability
  - Compromises to structural integrity
  - Compromises to airworthiness
- **Processes may induce damage that is not detectable through NDI**
  - May lead to a quality escape and potential threat
- **Weibull Analysis**
  - Can be flexible and beneficial for capturing variability and confidence
  - It is NOT a “one-size-fits-all-needs” analysis tool
- **Murphy was an optimist**

# Conclusions

- **Technology is advancing rapidly**
  - It is our duty to understand the impact of new processes *prior* to implementation to minimize unintended consequences
- **Lasers and other high energy processes show great promise for improving the removal of paint**
- **High energy processes have the potential to induce compromises to structural integrity**
- **Evaluations should be thorough and standardized**
- **Weibull Distribution**
  - Another way of looking at the data
  - Can help reveal *not-so-obvious* characteristics of data
  - Good representation of variability

# Recommendations

- **Understand the impact to airworthiness and sustainment**
  - Investigate and understand failure mechanisms
- **Engineer methods and processes to protect structure**
- **Control the application of high energy processes**
- **Take advantage of lessons learned**
- **Utilize existing or develop standards for evaluation**
  - SAE MA4872 (Aerospace Standard – Paint Stripping)
  - EZ-SB-13-001 (Material Substitution Guidelines - Metallics)
- **Take experiments and Test Protocol Development**  
***...one step at a time***

**Thank you for your attention.**

**Are there any questions?**

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