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[REDACTED]

USSR: CIA Appraisal of the Backfire Bomber

The conclusions which follow are the result of a year-long reassessment of all available evidence, [REDACTED]

The capability of the Backfire bomber to strike the continental US has been a critical intelligence issue since the plane was first identified at a test facility in 1969.

CIA believes that the Backfire, a twin-engine, variable-sweep wing bomber, has significantly less intercontinental capability than we had estimated in NIE 11-3/8-75. [REDACTED]

A reassessment of the Backfire reinforces CIA's conclusion that the aircraft was designed primarily for a peripheral attack mission despite having some limited intercontinental capability.

[REDACTED]

These findings result in lower estimates of the internal fuel capacity and design bomb-load. As a consequence there is a significant reduction in CIA's estimates of the unrefueled range/payload potential of the Backfire.

CIA now estimates that:

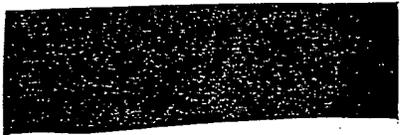
--Backfire can strike targets only in Alaska [REDACTED]

Approved for release
Date _____

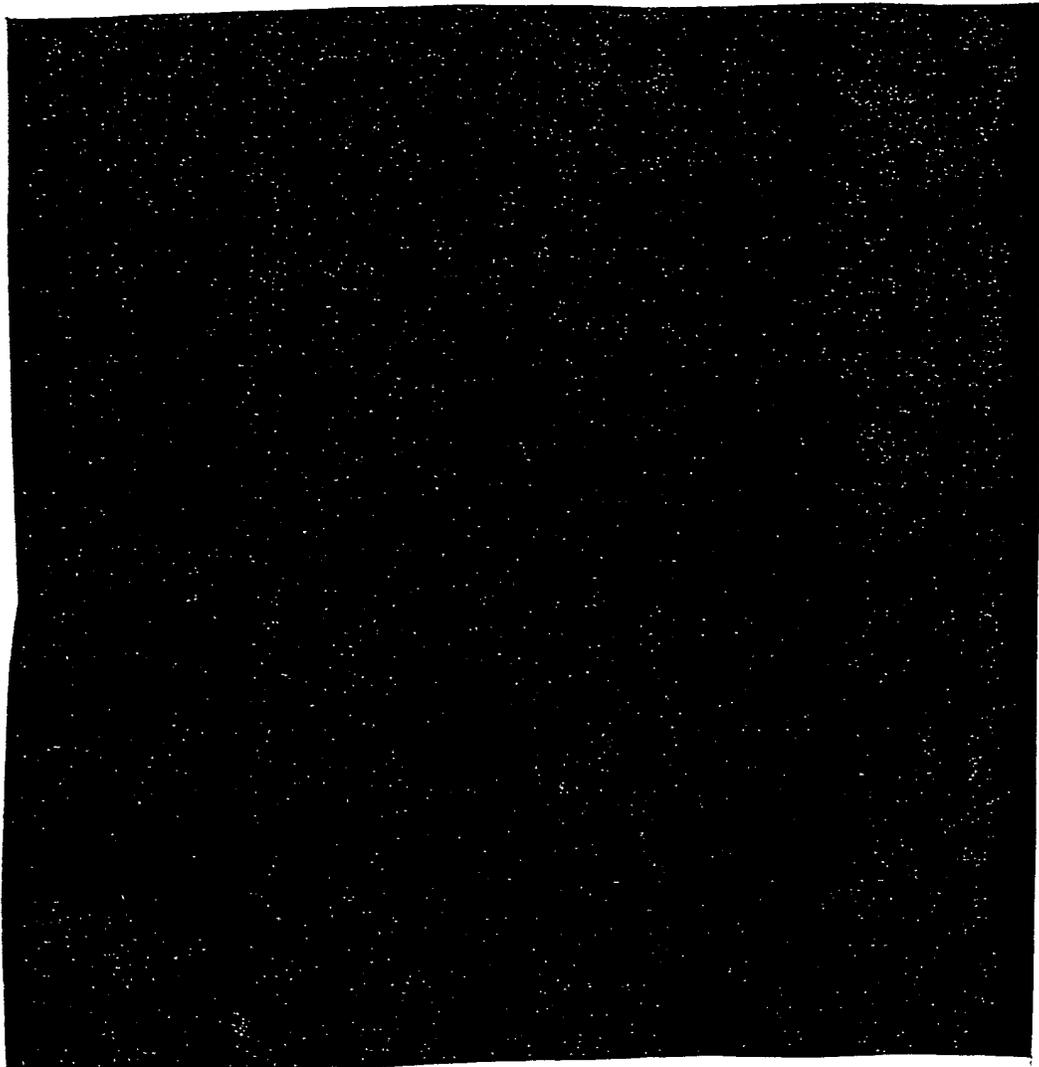
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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
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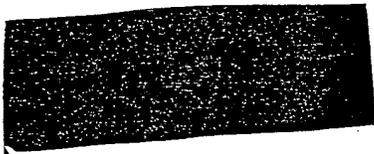
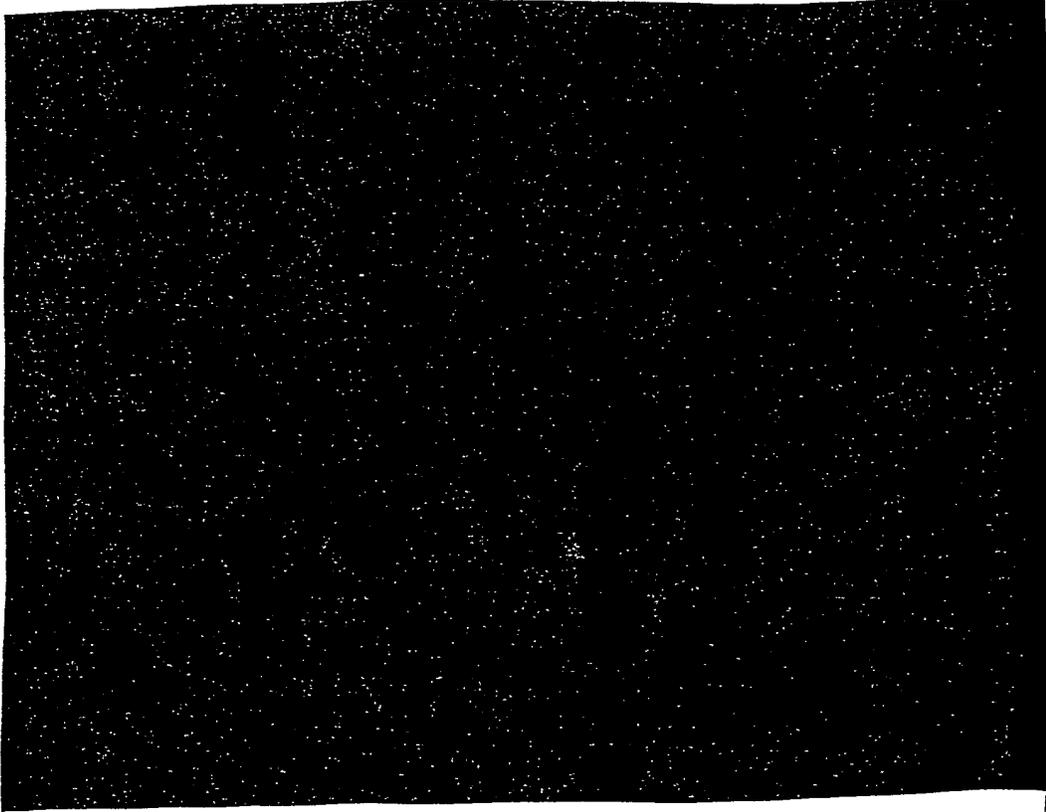


--Backfire has some capability to strike the continental US on one-way missions from forward bases.

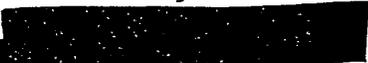


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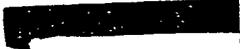



CIA further believes that assigning the Backfire to three bomber bases in the western USSR, where the aircraft can cover ground and naval targets in Europe and the Middle East, supports a judgment that Backfire was designed primarily for peripheral attack where it can capitalize on its capabilities for supersonic dash and low-altitude penetration of heavily defended areas.

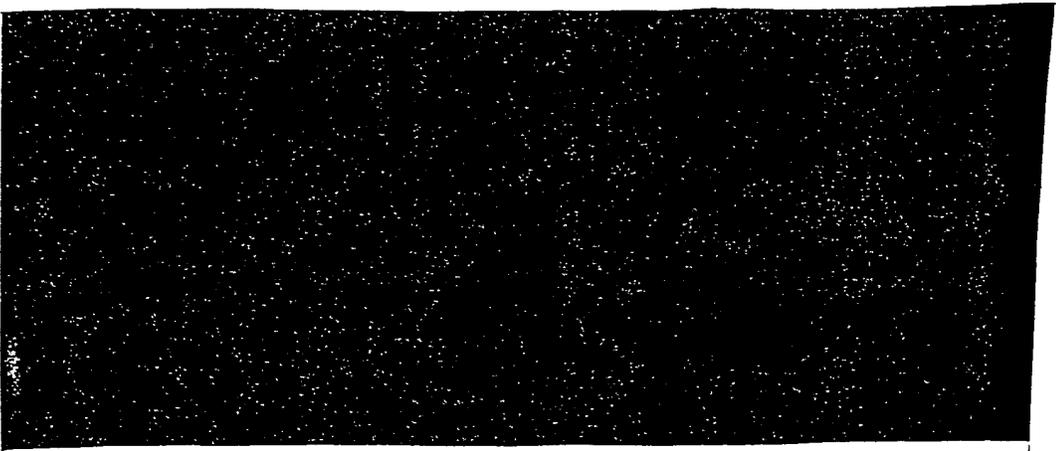
Another indication that the Backfire is intended primarily for peripheral attack is its designation as a variant of the intermediate-range 

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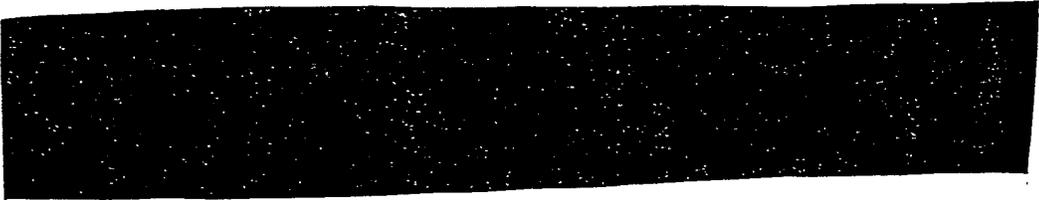
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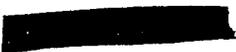



In 1969, Soviet Defense Minister Grechko referred to the poor performance of the Blinder and said that a replacement aircraft was in production. The timing of Grechko's remarks, the fact that the Blinder went out of production in 1969, and the chronology of production indicate that the aircraft being described was the Backfire. Since that time,  the Backfire is designated as the TU-22M.



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