

FACT SHEET

SR-72 *Son of Blackbird*

The Lockheed Martin SR-72 shouldn't be confused with the *Darkstar* fictional crewed hypersonic plane, sometimes identified with the Lockheed Martin SR-72, from *Top Gun: Maverick*.



Colloquially referred to as the *Son of Blackbird*, it's an American hypersonic UAV concept intended for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance proposed privately in 2013 by Lockheed Martin as a

successor to the retired Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird. The company expected an SR-72 test vehicle to fly by 2025.

The SR-71 Blackbird was retired by the USAF in 1998, leaving a potential coverage gap between surveillance satellites, crewed aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles for intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, and strike missions.

With the growth of anti-satellite weapons, anti-access and area denial tactics, and counter-stealth technologies, it was thought that a high-speed aircraft could penetrate protected airspace and observe or strike a target before enemies could detect or intercept it.

The proposed reliance on extremely high speed to penetrate defended airspace is considered a significant conceptual departure from the emphasis on stealth in fifth-generation jet fighter programs and projected drone developments.

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