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Akhtubinsk Flight Test Center (S)

MISSILE RANGES: AIR-LAUNCHED FACILITIES

25X1

USSR

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RCA-25X1 04/83

DECEMBER 1983

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INSTALLATION OR ACTIVITY NAME					COUNTRY
Akhtubinsk Flight Test Center					UR
UTM COORDINATES	GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES	CATEGORY	BE NO.	COMIREX NO.	NIETB NO.
NA	48-17-53N 046-12-15E	[redacted]			25X1

MAP REFERENCE

DMA. USATC, Series 200, Sheet 0235-22, scale 1:200,000

LATEST IMAGERY USED	NEGATION DATE (If required)
[redacted]	NA 25X1

ABSTRACT

1. Akhtubinsk Flight Test Center (FTC) is the largest Soviet facility supporting the development of advanced airborne weapons systems. This includes the testing of new airborne weapons, the testing of older airborne weapons which have been modified or improved, and the integration of these weapons with the delivery aircraft. The FTC is a component of the Vladimirovka Advanced Weapons and Research Complex and is capable of supporting all known Soviet aircraft and their associated weapons systems. (S/WN)

2. This report updates NPIC report, [redacted] dated December 1981, and includes a location map, a table, and 33 annotated photographs. The date of the latest imagery used for this report is [redacted] (S/WN) 25X1 25X1 25X1

INTRODUCTION

3. Akhtubinsk FTC (Figure 1) comprises six facilities (Figure 2): Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield [redacted] Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Area Airfield [redacted], Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka ASM 25X1

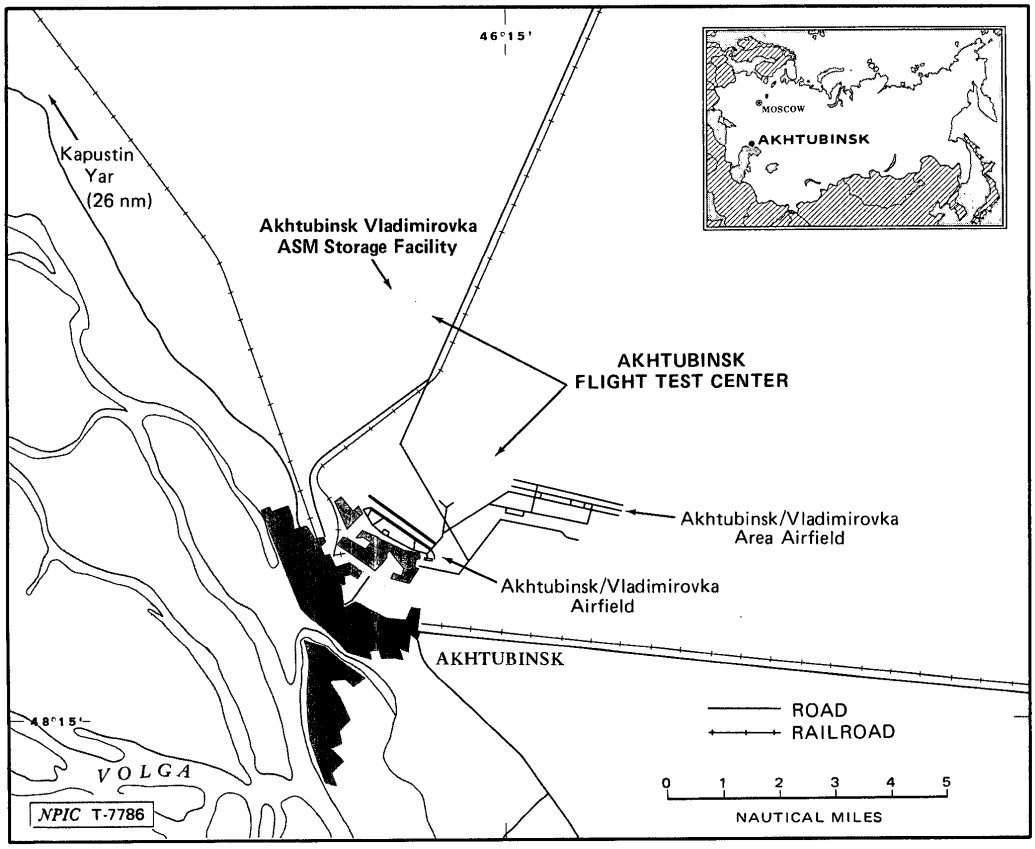

FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF AKHTUBINSK FLIGHT TEST CENTER, USSR [redacted] 25X1

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Support Complex ( ) Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka ASM/AAM Support Complex ( ) Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka ASM Storage Facility ( ) and Akhtubinsk Air Warning Radar Facility 3 ( ) All construction activity and most of the weapons development programs observed at the FTC since ( ) are discussed in this report. The numbering system used in this report is a continuation of that used in previous NPIC reports.[1] (S/WN)

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BASIC DESCRIPTION

New Construction Activity

Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield

4. Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield contains 16 separate support areas. Since October 1981, construction has been observed in seven of these areas. (S/WN)

5. **Flightline and Operational Support Area.** Since October 1981, limited construction activity has occurred in this area, which directly supports airfield flight operations. Two support buildings and a vehicle maintenance shed were constructed within the southeast portion of the area (items 14, 15, and 16, Figure 3). In addition, a large parking apron was in the early stage of construction at the extreme northwest end of the area. (S/WN)

6. **Southeast Storage Area.** This area formerly served as a small-arms firing range. During 1980 and 1981, an extensive program was underway to convert the range to a fully revetted, separately secured storage area.[1] By 1982, construction in this area was complete, and numerous objects were stored within it. The heavy revetment of this area may indicate that some of the items stored within it are of a highly explosive nature. (S/WN)

7. **Motor Pool Area A.** Two storage/support buildings and a vehicle maintenance building (items 13, 14, and 15) were completed in this area during the reporting period. (S/WN)

8. **POL Storage Area A.** This area has been extensively upgraded since October 1981 (Figure 4). The fence was realigned in the northeast corner of this facility to enclose several new support buildings (items 3 through 8). A large fuel bunker containing four large (40- by 6-meter) horizontal POL tanks has replaced the numerous small aboveground POL tanks on the east side of the facility. A probable control bunker was constructed immediately west of the large fuel bunker. Two small fuel bunkers, each containing two 12- by 3-meter horizontal POL tanks, flank the probable control bunker. A large vehicle fueling apron with three hydrants has also been completed west of the probable control bunker. (S/WN)

9. **Administration and Housing Area.** A three-story administration building (item 42, Figure 5) was completed during the reporting period. (S/WN)

10. **Support Area A.** A large shop/maintenance building (item 8) was constructed in 1983. (S/WN)

11. **Storage Area B.** The expansion of this rail-served area, begun during the last reporting period, continued into 1983. Construction of a storage building (item 49) and a support building (item 50) was completed during 1982. In addition, three other buildings (items 48, 51, and 52) were still under construction in October 1983. A new rail on-/off-loading ramp was also completed during 1983. (S/WN)

Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka ASM Support Complex

12. Several new buildings, including a large shop building (item 39, Figure 3) and two support buildings (items 41 and 42), have been completed since October 1981. A large multistory building (item 43) was still under construction in October 1983. The function of this building has not been determined. (S/WN)

Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka ASM/AAM Support Complex

13. Numerous construction projects were observed within this complex during the reporting period (Figure 6). The most significant activity was the completion of the large multistory administration/engineering building near the center of the complex (item 63). In addition, resurfacing of the parking apron outside the Sukhoi-associated hangar (Figure 7) was completed. This hangar was used to support FLANKER operations throughout 1982 and 1983. (S/WN)

Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Area Airfield

14. Several construction projects were initiated at the Area Airfield during this reporting period (Figure 8). The two most significant projects were the completion of a third MAINSTAY (formerly CANDID AWACS [airborne warning and control system]) hardstand and the ongoing construction of a large hangar for the new Tupolev-designed strategic bomber, the BLACKJACK. Construction of the clerestory hangar (item 7) was begun in March 1982 and had progressed to the late stage by October 1983. This hangar is identical to one constructed at Ramenskoye Flight Test Center (BE [redacted] which is used to house the BLACKJACK flight test prototype. The hangar at Akhtubinsk will probably be complete by late 1983 or early 1984 and will probably be used to house a BLACKJACK prototype during the weapons test program of this aircraft. (S/WN) 25X1

Significant Aircraft and Weapons Systems Developments

Strategic Cruise Missile Programs

[redacted] 25X1

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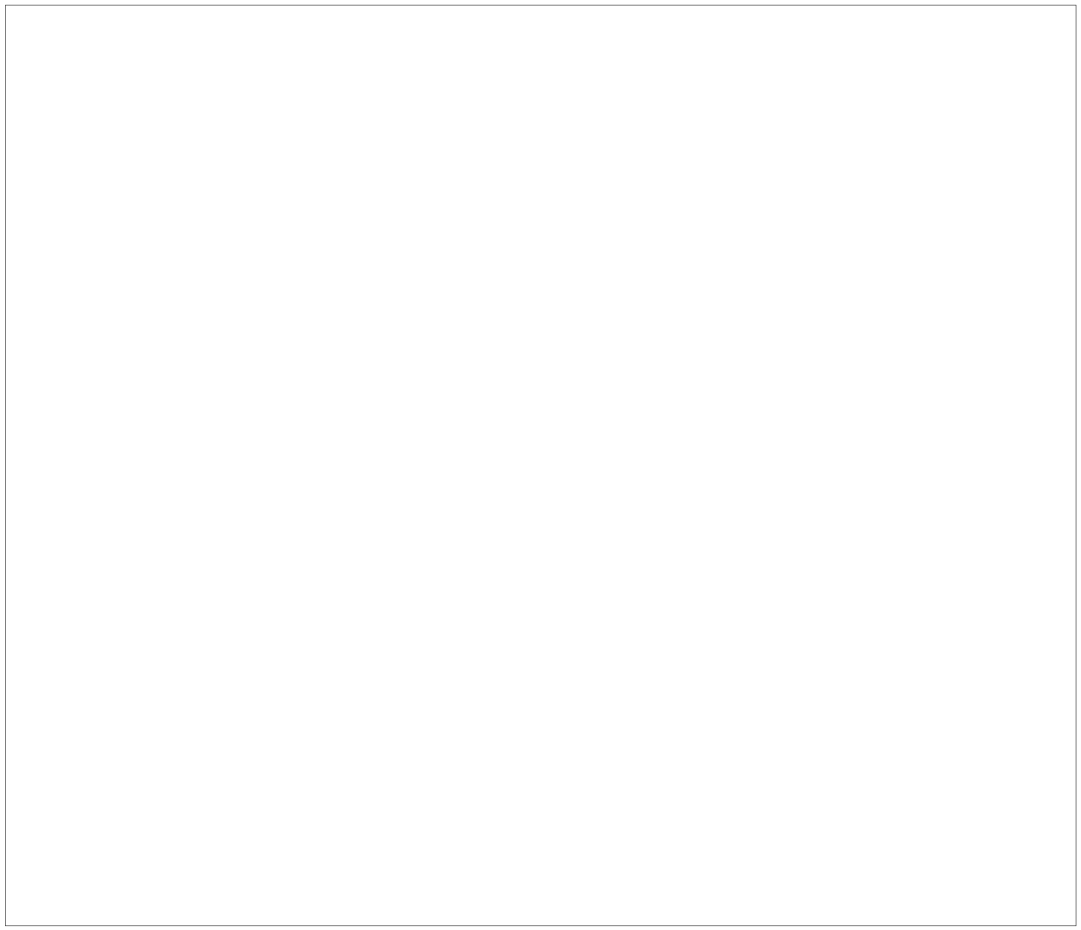

17. Although the modified CANDIDs involved in the AS-X-15 program are based at Ramenskoye,[6] they have on occasion been observed at Akhtubinsk. The modified CANDIDs, [redacted] feature a distinctive tail extension which is [redacted] diameter. The dates that one of these aircraft was observed at Akhtubinsk include [redacted] (Figure 9). (S/WN)

18. BEAR H aircraft have also been observed at Akhtubinsk (Figure 10). The BEAR H, a new variant of the TU-95 series, entered production at Taganrog Airframe Plant Dimitrov 86 [redacted] during 1981.[7] A BEAR H was stationed at Akhtubinsk from late April to mid-October 1982. During this period, no weapons or weapons-related support equipment was associated with this aircraft. Since the BEAR H aircraft that appear to be directly involved in the AS-X-15 test program are based at Ramenskoye, it is not likely that the aircraft observed at Akhtubinsk was participating in the ALCM testing. It is more likely that the BEAR H was deployed to Akhtubinsk to facilitate testing of the aircraft's offensive/defensive avionics, and possibly other subsystems, prior to deployment of these new bombers to an operational base. (The first deployment of BEAR H to an operational base occurred in December 1982 at Dolon Airfield [redacted] (S/WN)

[redacted]

[redacted]

testbed transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) used for the SSC-X-4 has remained at Kapustin Yar since it arrived in October 1980. Other vehicles which support GLCM launches and associated activity are housed in a motor pool south of the administration and housing area of Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield (Figure 5). These vehicles are deployed to Kapustin Yar for the SSC-X-4 tests. [redacted]

20. The SSC-X-4-related support vehicles are stored in the corner of a motor pool on the southern edge of Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield (Figure 11). Construction of this facility was begun during the late 1970s and completed during 1981. The GLCM-related vehicles are divided into two categories: the launch support vehicles and the general support vehicles. The launch support vehicles are a set of four van-bodied trucks which probably contain advanced electronics/computer equipment. At Kapustin Yar, these vehicles have been observed cable connected to both the SSC-X-4 TEL and the Site 1 launch control center. The general support vehicles (which have also been observed at Kapustin Yar) include a KRAZ-214 truck with an [redacted] raised flatbed, a truck-mounted crane, and several vans and buses. The KRAZ-214 and the crane are probably used to

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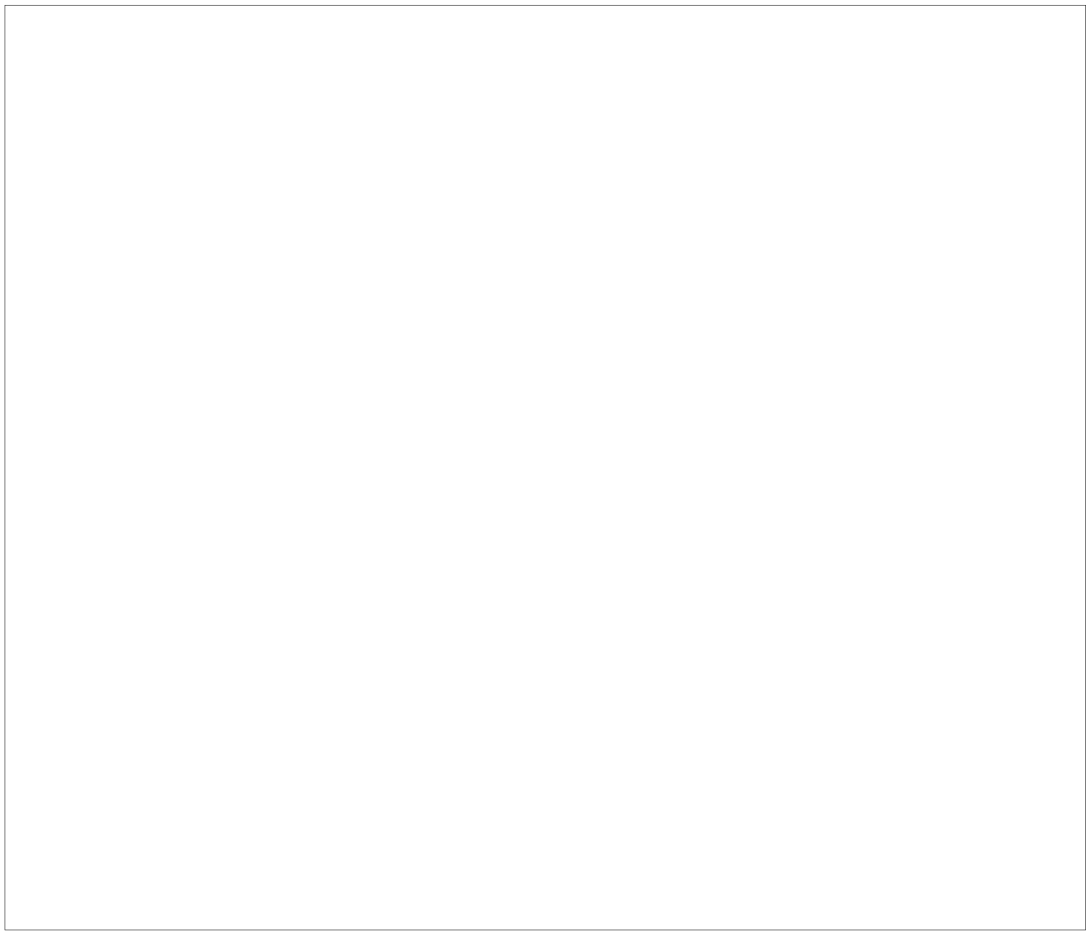

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transport SSC-X-4 canisters from Akhtubinsk to Kapustin Yar and to load the canisters on the TEL. These vehicles may also be used to recover the spent SSC-X-4 canisters after launches.[8] The SSC-X-4-related vehicles have been used exclusively in support of the GLCM flight test program since

The first two observations of modified CANDIDs at Akhtubinsk were probably related to initial testing of the GLCM system.[2]

AS-4 KITCHEN Missile

22. Test-/integration-related activity involving the AS-4 KITCHEN missile system was observed during 1982 and 1983. Most of the activity was associated with BACKFIRE C aircraft. Throughout June and July 1982, a BACKFIRE C with two wing-mounted AS-4s (Figure 12) was observed at the Area Airfield. BACKFIRE C/AS-4 activity was also observed in April 1983. In addition, a BEAR G (formerly BEAR B/C Modified) with wing-mounted KITCHEN missiles was observed on (S/WN)

23. From a probable AS-4 missile simulator was on the main parking apron of the Area Airfield (Figure 13). The probable simulator was adjacent to a BACKFIRE B and a BLINDER B, both of which are AS-4 capable. By 27 April, the probable missile simulator had been moved to Kapustin Yar Complex D SSM Support Facility Figure 14), where it remained in open storage through the end of the reporting period. (S/WN)

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24. The probable AS-4 missile simulator resembles a standard AS-4 KITCHEN without the main wings/control surfaces. This device is probably used for fit checks and compatibility tests. The probable simulator is nearly identical to a missile airframe first observed at Akhtubinsk in 1973 and believed to be associated with the BEAR G/AS-4 integration program.[9] (S/WN)

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FAD-890/-903 Weapons-Associated Program

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26. This aircraft is a BADGER A (TU-16), and it usually occupies a parking position in the east parking area of Ramenskoye FTC. During periods of FAD-890/-903 activity at the VAWARC, this

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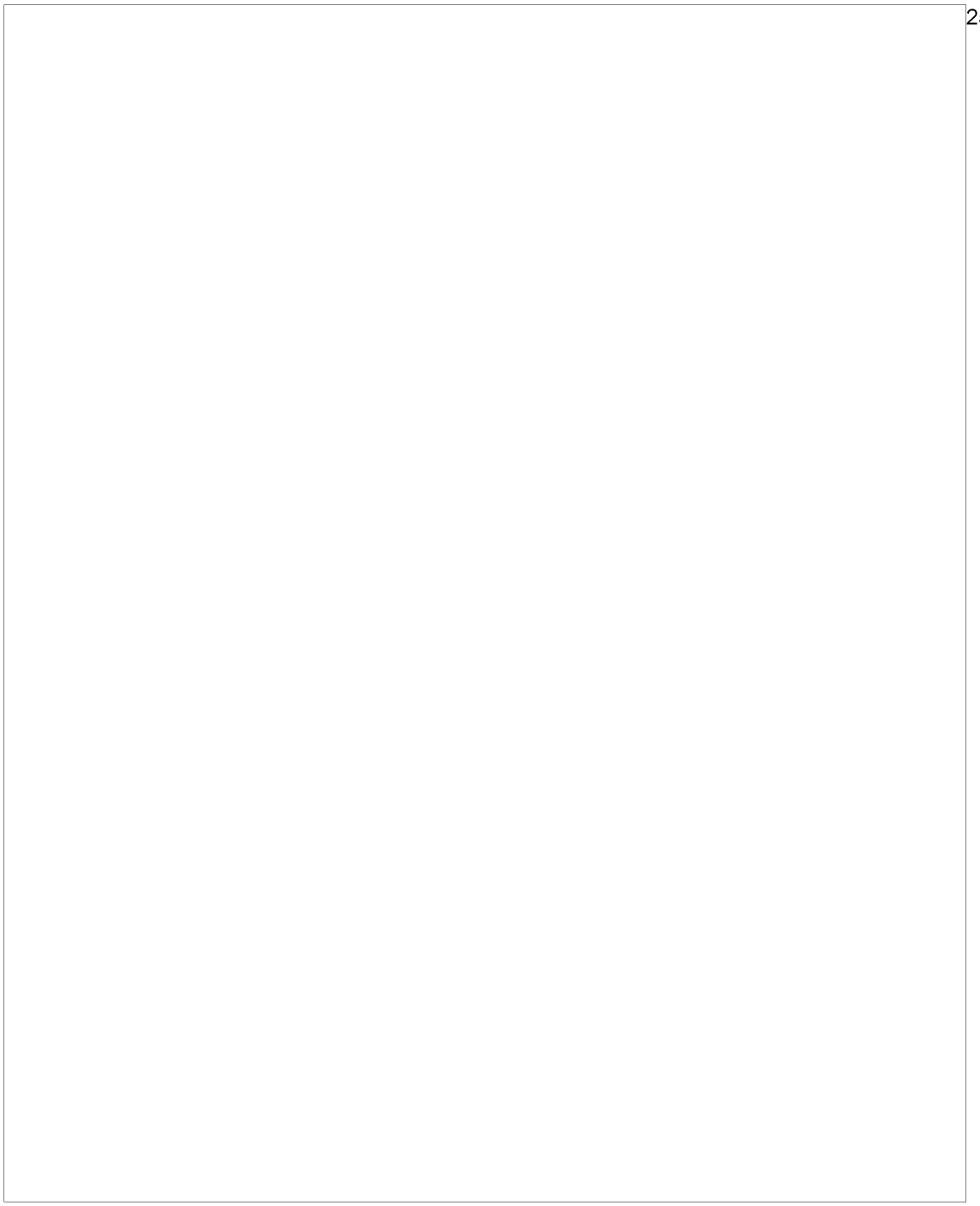


BADGER (Figure 15) is deployed to Akhtubinsk and is parked on a recently completed apron adjacent to the large five-bay hangar. Table 1

BISON

28. During this reporting period, BISON aircraft were temporarily deployed to Akhtubinsk. This was the first identification of BISON at the FTC since the early 1970s. From through 25X1
25X1
a BISON C was on the Area Airfield
main parking apron (Figure 10). From 25X1
through at least a BISON A was 25X1
on a handstand at the Area Airfield. No activity has been associated with either BISON, and the reason for their extended stays at Akhtubinsk is not known. (S/WN)

Fighter, AAM, and TASM Development

25X1

FLANKER (SU-27)

29. The weapons test program of the FLANKER, which began during the previous reporting period, accelerated during 1983. The

25X1

FLANKER (formerly the RAM-K) is a Sukhoi-designed, twin-engined, advanced interceptor/air superiority fighter first identified at Ramenskoye in 1978. During 1983, at least three FLANKER A prototype and two FLANKER A Modified aircraft were participating in the test program at Akhtubinsk (Figures 16 and 17). During this period, sightings of possible new air-to-air missiles (AAMs) associated with the FLANKER were also made. FLANKER aircraft previously identified at Akhtubinsk were also observed at a Frontal Aviation base (Bereza Airfield in June 1983 and at a major Soviet Naval Aviation base (Saki Airfield during August 1983. (S/WN)

31. Since March 1983, a high level of FLANKER activity has been observed at Akhtubinsk. The following is a chronological listing of significant FLANKER-related sightings in 1983.

Three FLANKER As were on the northwest runup apron; one of the aircraft was equipped with two possible AA-X-10s. 25X1

Three FLANKER As were on the northwest runup apron; two of the aircraft were equipped with possible AA-X-10s (Figure 18).

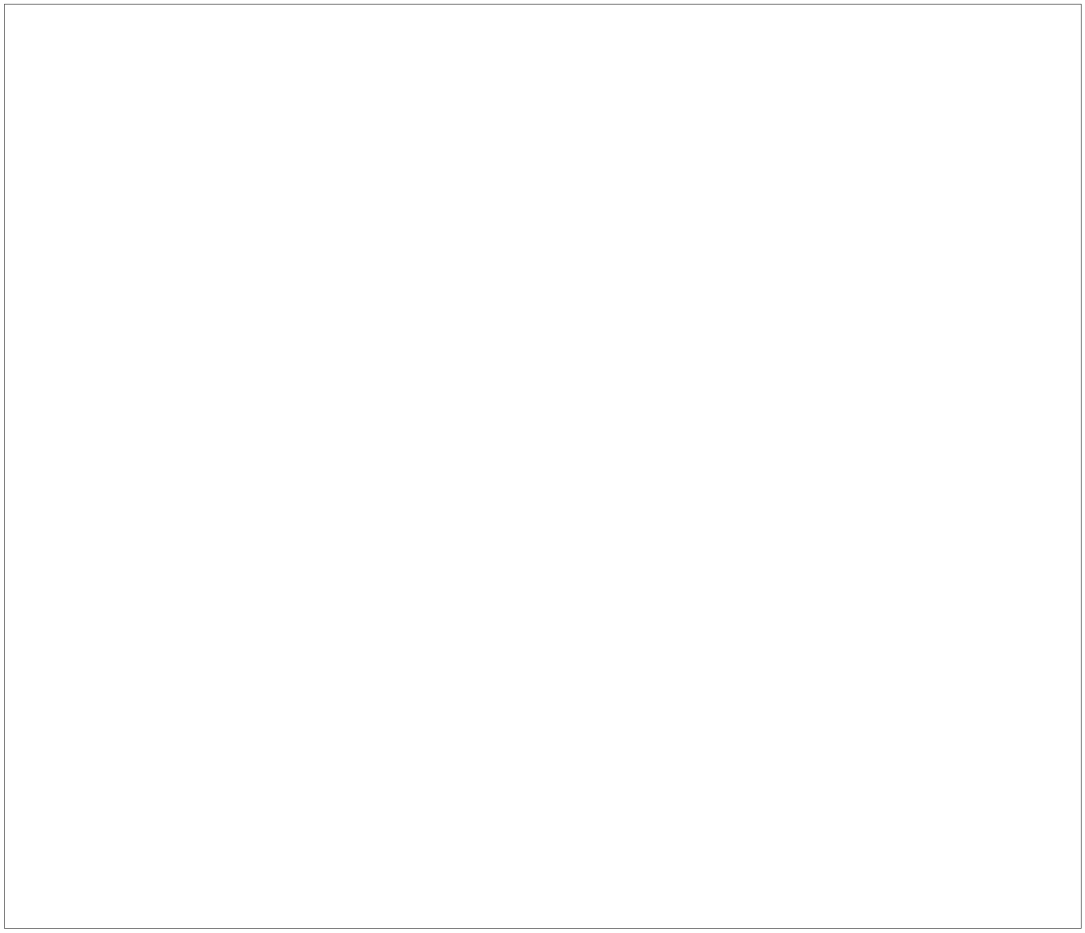
A FLANKER A Modified was on the northwest parking apron, apparently undergoing postflight activity (Figure 19). The nose radome of the aircraft was raised, allowing access to the radar/avionics. Unidentified activity was observed at the FLANKER's left wingtip fitment. 25X1 25X1

Three partially covered FLANKER As (Figure 17) were on the apron in front of the five-bay hangar; the radome of one of the aircraft was raised.

A FLANKER A was taxiing from the northwest runup apron to the runway in preparation for a test flight. 25X1

A FLANKER A was in flight west of the FTC; the FLANKER was accompanied by a FLOGGER escort/chase aircraft.

A FLANKER A with possible AA-X-10s was on the northwest runup apron.



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Two FLANKER As and one FLANKER A Modified were present; the Modified was equipped with two possible AA-X-10s.

A FLANKER A with possible AA-X-10s was on the northwest runup apron.

A FLANKER A with possible AA-X-10s was on the northwest runup apron.

A FLANKER A with possible AA-X-10s was on the northwest runup apron.

A FLANKER A with a possible missile was on the northwest runup apron. The possible missile extended approximately forward of the leading edge of the wing. This aircraft was previously observed at Bereza Airfield in June.

Two FLANKER A prototypes and two FLANKER A Modifieds were on the northwest run-up apron (Figure 16). One of the FLANKER As was the aircraft with the possible missile seen on One of the FLANKER A Modifieds, painted in a unique two-tone paint scheme, had previously been identified at Bereza Airfield in June. The second FLANKER A Modified was painted in a high-contrast camouflage paint scheme; this aircraft was one of the two FLANKER A Modifieds identified at Saki Airfield in August.[13] 25X1

25X1

FULCRUM (MiG-29)

32. The weapons test program of the FULCRUM (MiG-29) continued throughout this reporting period. The FULCRUM is a small, twin-engined, air superiority fighter which may have a secondary ground attack function. Most of the weapons testing at Akhtubinsk has involved five FULCRUMs, four painted in a light-toned camouflage scheme and one with dark-toned camouflage scheme. On several occasions, weapons of various sizes have been observed on the FULCRUMs. (S/WN)

25X1

33. Like the FLANKER, the primary AAM associated with FULCRUM is the AA-X-10.[12] Imagery indicates that the FULCRUM can be equipped with at least three weapons stations per wing. Possible AA-X-10s, which extend forward of the leading edges of the wings, have been observed on the center and outboard stations (Figures 20 and 21). On several occasions, larger weapons have been observed on the FULCRUM's inboard stations. 25X1

25X1

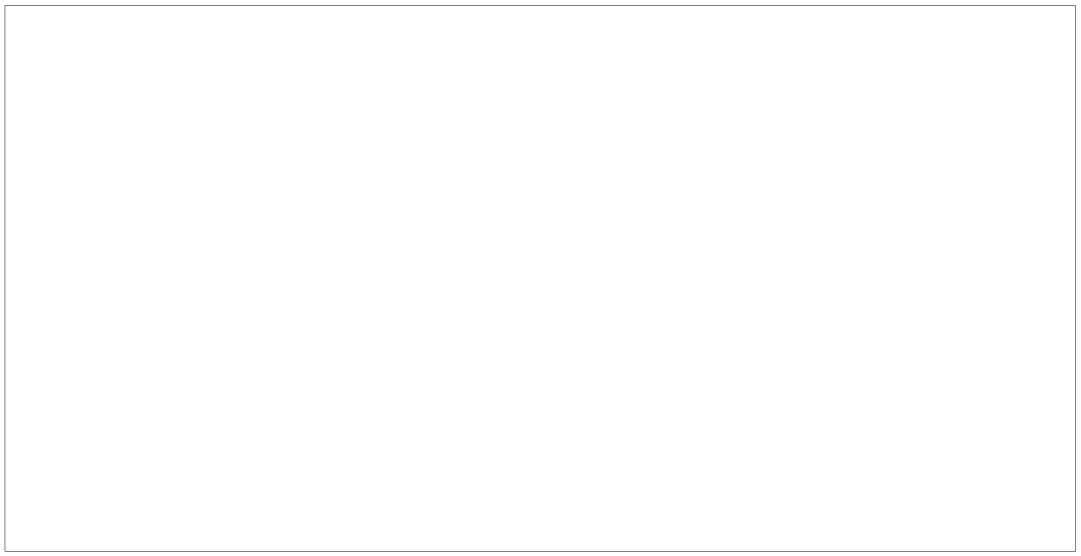
34. On a light-toned FULCRUM with a large missile in the port side inboard position was on the checkout apron across from the five-bay hangar (Figure 22). The large missile 25X1

extended [redacted] forward of the leading edge of the wing and was approximately [redacted] in diameter. No control/lifting surfaces were discernible on this object. Although the missile observed on [redacted] could not be identified, its size is similar to the AS-11 tactical air-to-surface missiles (TASMs) first seen on a FOXBAT B at Akhtubinsk in 1979. The FULCRUM is considered to be a possible launch platform for the AS-11.[14] (S/WN) 25X1 25X1 25X1

35. On [redacted] a dark-toned FULCRUM with four missiles was on the checkout apron at Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield (Figure 21). Three of the missiles were possible AA-X-10s.[13] The fourth missile, mounted on the port side inboard station, was considerably larger than the possible AA-X-10s. This missile extended [redacted] ters forward of the leading edge of the wing, was approximately [redacted] in diameter, and appeared to have foreplanes, suggesting a conard configuration. Two objects of similar size were observed on the inboard stations of a FULCRUM on [redacted] (Figure 20). No control/lifting surfaces were discernible on these missiles. Although the larger missiles seen on the FULCRUMs in March and May have not been identified, their size suggests a possible TASM association. [redacted] 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

36. From [redacted] five dark-toned FULCRUMs were observed on the main flightline of Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield (Figure 23). These aircraft were in addition to the five FULCRUMs usually observed at Akhtubinsk and may have deployed to the FTC from Lukhovitsy Airframe Plant [redacted] where the 25X1 25X1

[redacted] 25X1



aircraft are assembled. Four of these FULCRUMs were subsequently identified at Kubinka Airfield where they may be involved in pilot conversion training. (S/WN)

FOXHOUND (MiG-31)

37. From a FOXHOUND (MiG-31) with large, wing-mounted missiles was observed at Akhtubinsk (Figure 24). The missiles extended forward of the leading edges of the wings and were in diameter. No control/lifting surfaces were observed on these missiles. The principal weapon associated with the FOXHOUND is the AA-9.[15] The FOXHOUND has been operational since 1981, and probable AA-9s have been observed with the operational aircraft. The missiles observed at Akhtubinsk in 1983 probably were also AA-9s. (S/WN)

FOXBAT B Air-Launched Weapons Test Platform

38. In 1979 and 1980, a FOXBAT B reconnaissance aircraft, configured to serve as an air-launched weapons test platform, was involved in the AS-11 developmental program at Akhtubinsk. From April through July 1982, this aircraft was observed with two large missiles mounted on underwing pylons (Figure 25). These missiles, which were larger than the previously identified AS-11s, extended forward of the leading edges of the wings and were in diameter. The configuration of the control/lifting surfaces of the missiles is not known. No correlation between the large missiles observed on the FOXBAT B and a known Soviet missile system has been made. (S/WN)

Airborne Warning and Control System Activity

39. The developmental program of the MAINSTAY AWACS (formerly CANDID AWACS) at Akhtubinsk continued to expand throughout the reporting period. Prior to October 1981, two MAINSTAYs had been deployed to the VAWARC to begin systems development. These aircraft were transferred to Akhtubinsk from Taganrog Airframe Plant, where they had been converted from standard CANDID transports into AWACS platforms.[16] By a third MAINSTAY, also from Taganrog, was deployed to the VAWARC and entered the test program (Figure 26). On a fourth MAINSTAY was observed at Akhtubinsk. However, this aircraft was the first preseries MAINSTAY produced at Tashkent Airframe Plant B Chkalov 84 (Figure 27) and not a converted CANDID from Taganrog. The new MAINSTAY, present at Tashkent from can be distinguished from the three original prototypes by its dark-toned wings and horizontal stabilizer. Testing of the MAINSTAYs is expected to continue at the VAWARC for several years. With preseries production of the aircraft underway at Tashkent, crew training in preparation for operational deployment could begin as early as 1984 or 1985. (S/WN)

25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

Naval Aircraft

40. Naval aircraft, primarily associated with maritime reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare (ASW), continued to be observed at Akhtubinsk during this reporting period. The reason for the presence of these aircraft at the VAWARC, noted in the previous report,[1] is not known. (S/WN)

25X1 25X1

BEAR F Variant 3 and Variant 6

41. From 1983, a BEAR F Variant 3 (Figure 28) was at the Area Airfield. A BEAR F Variant 6 was also present from The BEAR F Variant 6 is the current production model of the TU-142 ASW aircraft; Variant 3 was the previous production model. No weapons or weapons-related activity was associated with either of the BEAR F aircraft. (S/WN)

25X1 25X1

HELIX B

42. A camouflage-painted HELIX B amphibious assault/fire support helicopter was in the helicopter parking area at Akhtubinsk/Vladimirovka Airfield on (Figure 29).

25X1

This helicopter, previously observed at the Soviet Naval Aviation helicopter research and development base at Primorskiy Heliport 25X1 was equipped with fuselage-mounted outriggers. The outriggers were probably installed to accommodate external stores. The HELIX B was possibly involved in air-launched weapons testing. A HELIX B was last observed at the VAWARC in October 1978. (S/WN)

Additional Activity

Modified CANDID B, 25X1

43. From 25X1 a modified CANDID B, 25X1 was at the Area Airfield (Figure 30). Modifications to the aircraft include extended gear housings and large wingtip pods. The modified CANDID has been parked on a hardstand along the parallel taxiway. During July 1983, a blast deflector was erected at the rear of the hardstand, and a temporary operations support area, consisting of six small support buildings, was erected south of the hardstand. (S/WN)

44. Modified CANDID B 25X1 was first identified at Ramenskoye in March 1983. The aircraft was subsequently observed at Novosibirsk Scientific Institute of Aviation SIBNIA 25X1. The intended function of Modified CANDID B 25X1 is not known. (S/WN)

Modified COOT, 25X1

45. A modified COOT, 25X1 was parked on the main apron at the Area Airfield on 25X1 (Figure 31). The modification consisted of a large, ogive-shaped nose extension, approximately 25X1 Modified COOT 25X1 which was first identified in 1967, is usually observed at Pushkin Avionics Experimental Facility Leninets 25X1. This aircraft has also occasionally been seen at Ramenskoye. The elongated nose on modified COOT 25X1 may house a missile seeker, although the exact program the aircraft is associated with is not known.[17] (S/WN)

HARKE (MI-10)

46. From 25X1 a HARKE (MI-10) heavy lift helicopter was repeatedly observed at the Area Airfield. In addition, an unidentified cylindrical object, approximately 14 meters long and 3 meters in diameter, was also present. The cylindrical object was observed both adjacent to (Figure 32) and mounted underneath (Figure 33) the HARKE. The function of the cylindrical object and the reason for its presence at Akhtubinsk are not known. (S/WN)

DR-X-4 (ADV-4) Probable Battlefield Reconnaissance Drone

47. A DR-X-4 (formerly ADV-4) TEL was observed at the ASM/AAM Support Complex during the reporting period (Figure 34). The TEL was parked in a separately secured portion of the complex from 25X1 (S/WN)

25X1

25X1

48. The DR-X-4 is a small cruise vehicle; testing of the DR-X-4 began at Kapustin Yar Complex D in 1978. The vehicle is probably intended to be used as a highly mobile, short-range battlefield reconnaissance drone.[8] During the summer and fall of 1982, one of the two DR-X-4 TELs usually observed at Kapustin Yar was deployed to Akhtubinsk Ordnance Test Area 2 Turgay for advanced testing. The TEL at the ASM/AAM Support Complex in 1983 was probably the vehicle observed at Turgay during 1982. In July 1983, the DR-X-4 TEL observed in the ASM/AAM Support Complex was returned to Kapustin Yar. (S/WN)

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REFERENCES

IMAGERY

All applicable satellite imagery acquired from the information cutoff date, was used in the preparation of this report. (S/WN) 25X1

MAPS OR CHARTS

DMA. US Air Target Chart, Series 200, Sheet 0235-22, scale 1:200,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

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REQUIREMENT

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