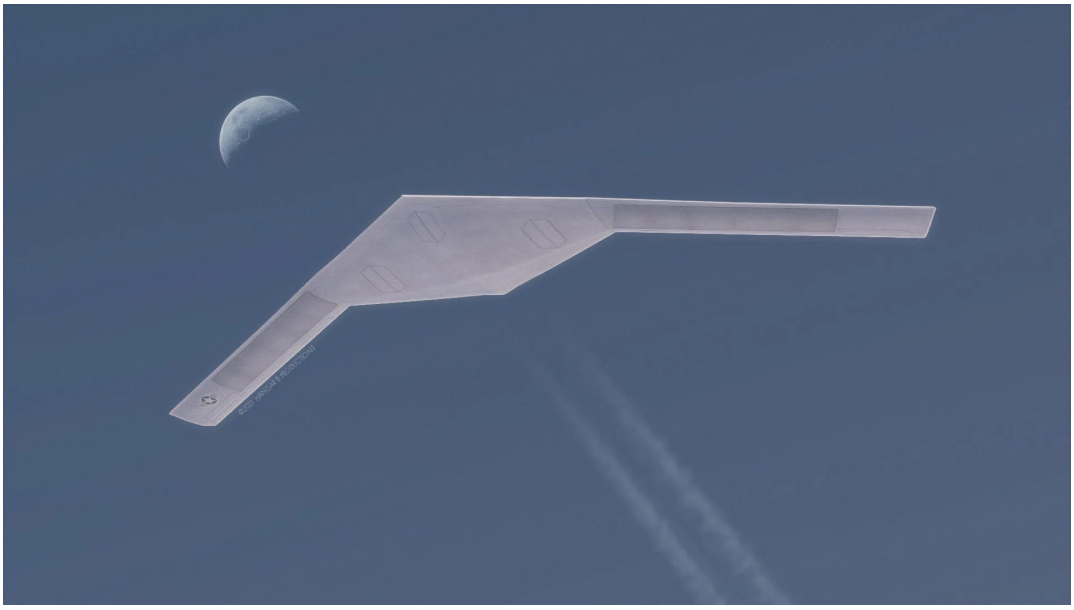

RQ-180: a Ghost in the Skies of Tehran

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As the winds of war continue to blow over the Middle East under **Operation Epic Fury**, a silent and invisible protagonist seems to have taken control of the aerial chessboard. It does not have a confirmed official designation, nor does the Pentagon admit its operational existence, but for experts, it is now the worst-kept secret of the U.S. aviation: the **RQ-180**, nicknamed the **"Lady of Larissa"**.

This stealth drone is not only a marvel of modern technology but the culmination of an obsession born over thirty years ago, during the final stages of the Cold War.

From Russia with Fear: The Quartz Project

The roots of the RQ-180 lie in a classified program from the 1980s called **Quartz** (*Advanced Airborne Reconnaissance System*). At the time, the Reagan administration was plagued by an apparently unsolvable tactical problem: how to locate and track Soviet mobile ballistic missiles within the vast territory of the USSR?

Quartz was supposed to be the solution: an unmanned aircraft capable of penetrating the densest air defenses and remaining in orbit over the target for hours, transmitting real-time data. However, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the exorbitant costs (about a billion dollars per unit), the project was officially shelved. But, as often happens in the world of *Black Projects*, ideas never really die: they evolve.

> *"If one of these had crashed in enemy territory, it was so classified that we would have had to bomb the remains to ensure no technology fell into Russian hands."*
>
> *— Former U.S. Defense Official*

RQ-180: a Ghost in the Skies of Tehran:

The "Lady of Larissa": A Revealing Apparition

The aircraft made headlines after a sighting at the **Larissa Air Base in Greece**. Initially mistaken for a B-2 bomber or an Israeli RA-01 drone, the aircraft reportedly made an emergency landing due to a technical failure.

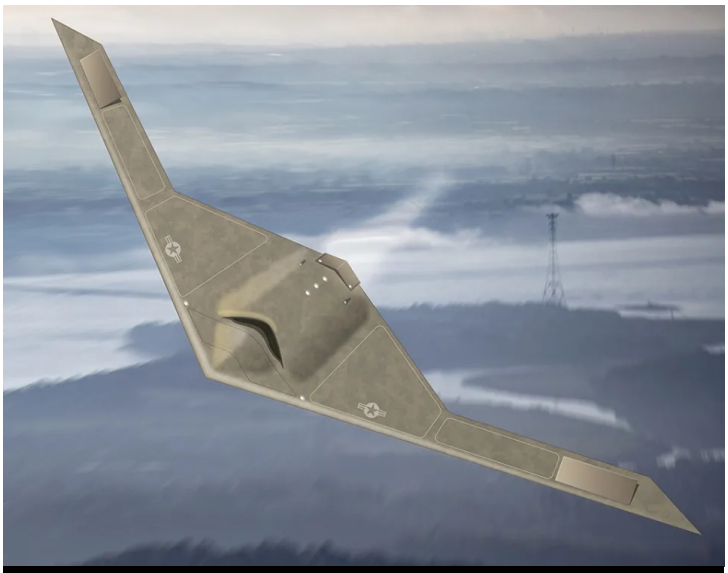
Although authorities have maintained the utmost secrecy, the geographical location of the Greek base — a strategic hub for operations in the Eastern Mediterranean and towards Iran — suggests that the drone is the main asset for monitoring long-range threats.

Technical Specifications and Mission in Iran

The RQ-180 is designed to operate where others fail. Unlike the MQ-9 Reaper, which requires airspace dominance, the RQ-180 is a **VLO (Very Low Observable)** high-altitude aircraft.

Feature	Description
Design	Flying wing (similar to the B-21 Raider)
Sensors	Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and SIGINT
Endurance	Over 24 hours of continuous flight
Role	Mobile launcher hunting and persistent surveillance

Today, the target is no longer the Russian steppe, but the Iranian desert. Tehran is showing unexpected resilience, reactivating underground bases and quickly moving its drone and ballistic missile launchers. The RQ-180 is the only tool capable of "stationing" over these sensitive areas without being detected by S-300 or S-400 systems, providing exact coordinates for Operation Epic Fury attacks.



RQ-180: a Ghost in the Skies of Tehran:

A Calculated Risk?

The deployment of such an advanced and secret platform is not without dangers. If an RQ-180 were shot down or captured by Iran, the technological damage would be incalculable, far exceeding the RQ-170 Sentinel incident in 2011.

However, with the Iranian missile threat persisting despite bombings, the Pentagon seems to have decided that the risk is worth it. The "ghost" of the Cold War has returned to fly, and this time it has Iran in its sights.

News link: https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/guerra/ruolo-misterioso-drone-rq-180-iran-progetto-guerra-fredda-2648145.html