

US looks for answers after hypersonic plane fails

August 12 2011

Pentagon scientists on Friday acknowledged they were puzzled by the [failed flight test of an experimental hypersonic plane](#) and said they were trying to understand what went wrong.

About nine minutes after separating from a rocket Thursday, researchers lost contact with the [unmanned aircraft](#), a prototype global bomber designed to travel at 20 times the speed of sound.

"More than nine minutes of data was collected before an anomaly caused loss of signal," the [Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency](#) (DARPA), the US military's research arm, said in a statement.

"Initial indications are that the aircraft impacted the Pacific Ocean along the planned [flight path](#)," it said.

The [Falcon Hypersonic Technology Vehicle](#) (HTV-2) is part of "Prompt Global Strike" -- a US military effort to develop bombers that can strike targets with conventional weapons anywhere on the planet within minutes.

Thursday's flight marked a second disappointment for the project. Researchers lost track of the aircraft minutes after it separated from a rocket in a test flight last year as well.

"Heres what we know," said Major Chris Schulz, program manager for the HTV-2.

"We know how to boost the aircraft to near space. We know how to insert the aircraft into atmospheric [hypersonic flight](#). We do not yet know how to achieve the desired control during the aerodynamic phase of flight," he said.

"Its vexing; Im confident there is a solution. We have to find it," the Air Force officer said.

"We'll learn, we'll try again. That's what it takes."

But DARPA said that trying to manage "high-Mach flight in the atmosphere is virtually uncharted territory."

The research agency said a team of experts would analyze flight data and address the main technical problems, which it described as aerodynamic, aerothermal, guidance, navigation and control.

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Citation: US looks for answers after hypersonic plane fails (2011, August 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-08-hypersonic-plane.html>

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