iJRASET
International Journal For Research in
Applied Science and Engineering Technology

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH
IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 13 Issue: IV Month of publication: April 2025

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2025.69234

International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 13 Issue IV Apr 2025- Available at www.ijraset.com

Radar vs. Stealth: A Critical Analysis of Evasion and Detection Technologies in Contemporary Warfare

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Abstract: The ongoing technological competition between stealth and radar systems represents one of the most innovative fields in modern military science. Stealth technology is designed to reduce an object's radar detectability and other surveillance systems, mostly by modifying radar cross-section (RCS) through architectural design, radar-absorbent materials (RAM), and electronic countermeasures.

Radar systems, on the other hand, are continuously evolving, developing complex techniques to detect and track stealth platforms. These technologies include low-frequency radar, bistatic and multistatic radar configurations, passive detection systems, as well as revolutionary techniques such as quantum radar. This paper presents a two-sided analysis: first, the mechanisms and effectiveness of stealth technologies; and second, evaluating radar innovations developed to counteract such benefits.

Through detailed technical descriptions, comparative studies, and practical case studies, we explore the dynamic relationship between evasion and detection.

Keywords: Stealth technology, Radar cross-section (RCS), Radar-absorbent materials (RAM), Low-frequency radar, Bistatic radar, Multi static radar, Passive radar, Quantum radar, Electronic countermeasures (ECM), Detection systems.

I. INTRODUCTION

Quantum radar (experimental but promising) Stealth and radar technologies have developed in tandem as competing technologies in warfare today.

Radar technologies, which sense objects in terms of electromagnetic waves, have long been the linchpin of defense operations. In contrast, stealth technologies have developed to counter an object's detectability, particularly to radar systems. Specifically, airplanes such as the F-117 Nighthawk and B-2 Spirit represent stealth design in the form of a combination of angular shape and RAM.

Despite such advancements, radar systems continue to be dynamic. Modern radar technologies employ different detection techniques, frequency bands, and configurations in order to enhance their stealth-countering ability. This research examines the dual nature of this technological competition, where the principles of radar, stealth concepts, detection countermeasures, and new advances such as quantum radar are examined.

II. RADAR FUNDAMENTALS

Working Principle :-Radar works through sending out electromagnetic pulses and detecting reflected waves by targets. Time delay, angle, and frequency shift (Doppler effect) are utilized to determine distance, velocity, and path of an object.

Radar Cross Section (RCS):- RCS is likely the most important detectability factor. Lower RCS returns less energy back to the radar and makes the object more difficult to detect. RCS is a function of:

Object shape

Material properties

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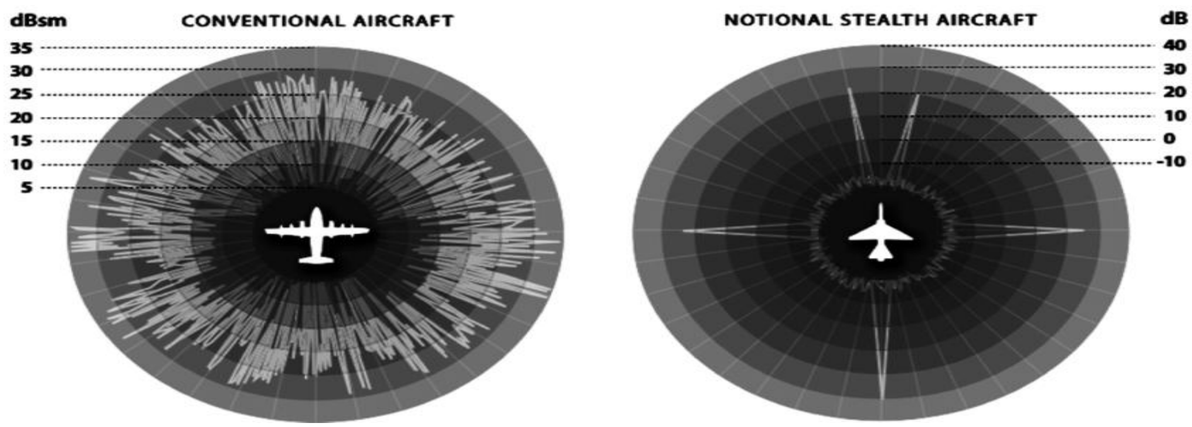
Radar frequency and polarization Observation angle



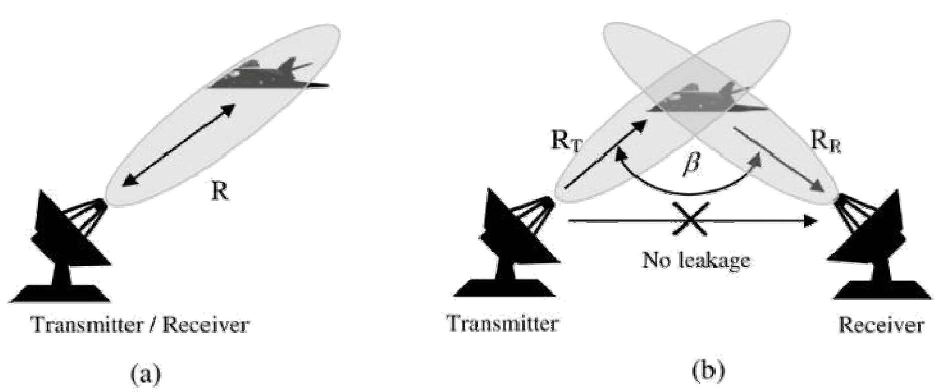
A. Radar Frequency Bands and Types

Various radar frequencies are used for different purposes. Stealth planes are usually designed to counter high-frequency bands such as X-band, but are more susceptible to low-frequency systems.

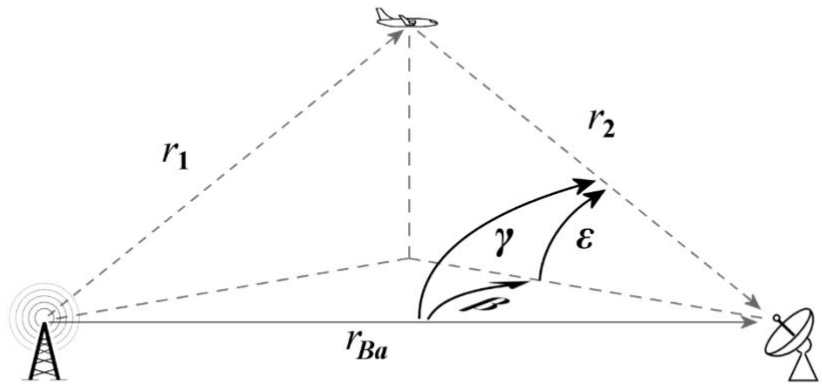
Band	Frequency (GHz)	Application
L	1–2	Long-range surveillance
X	8–12	Target acquisition
Ku	12–18	Imaging radar

B. Radar types include:

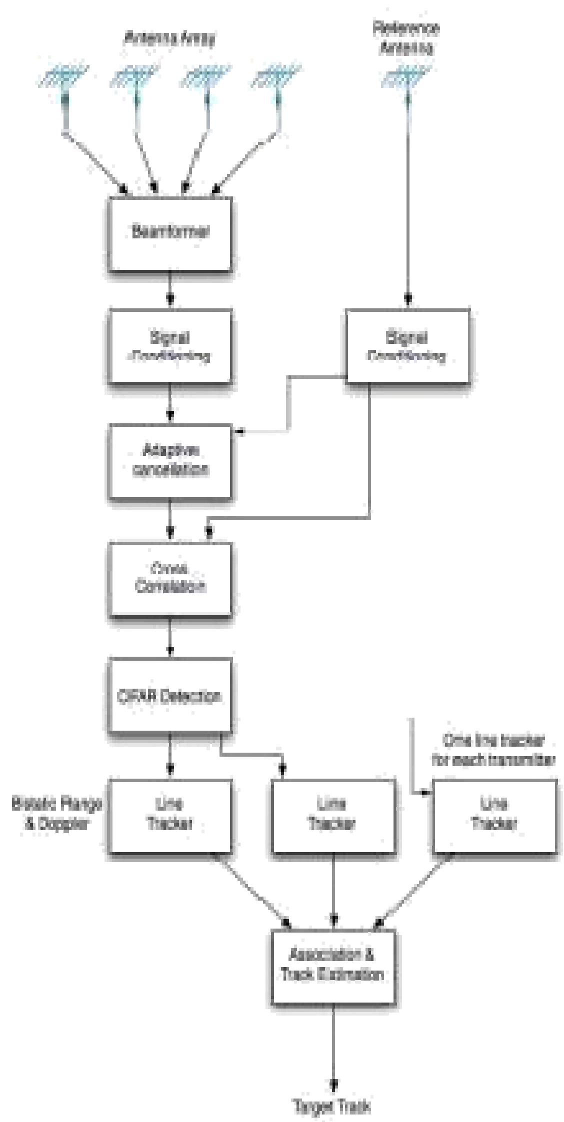
1) Monostatic (Same Location for Transmitter and reCeiver)



2) Bistatic/Multistatic (spatially separated)



3) Passive radar (uses external signal sources)



III. STEALTH TECHNOLOGY

Stealth technology, or low-observable technology, aims to reduce the detectability of an aircraft by various types of sensors—most importantly, radar systems. It accomplishes this by an interdisciplinary solution that combines geometric shape, novel materials, and electronic countermeasures. The next section addresses the main technical characteristics of stealth design.

A. Structural Shaping

One of the basics of stealth design is the application of structural shapes, which manipulates radar wave reflection with geometric arrangements. Ordinary aircraft surfaces reflect radar energy back towards its source and can be targeted with ease. Stealth vehicles, on the other hand, are built using:

Radar-absorbing surfaces that curve radar waves away from the radar receiving apparatus.

Using combined forms that eliminate sharp points and corners, thereby minimizing scattering.

For example:

- The F-117 Nighthawk employs angular panels that were designed using early computational methods to deflect radar waves away from the source.
- The B-2 Spirit possesses smooth, rounded shapes that scatter radar waves over a broad frequency range, resulting in broadband stealth.
- These geometric shapes significantly reduce the radar cross-section (RCS), particularly in monostatic radar systems with the receiver and transmitter at the same point.

B. Radar-Absorbent Materials (RAM)

RAM refers to special coatings that are made to absorb incoming radar energy instead of reflecting it. They work by transforming electromagnetic energy into heat energy through dielectric or magnetic losses

Important RAM types are:

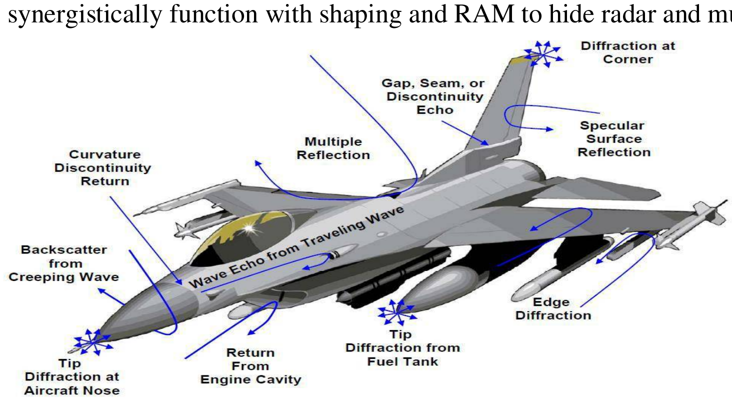
- Carbon-based coatings show effectiveness in absorbing high-frequency radar energy.
- Iron ball coatings – employ ferromagnetic particles to capture radar waves.
- Magnetic ferrites operate in predetermined frequency bands in an effort to minimize backscatter.

They are frequency-selective and are generally formulated for X-band radar (8– 12 GHz), which is commonly used in target acquisition and fire-control systems. Certain RAMs are integrated in multi-layer composites for structural as well as radar absorption purposes.

C. Internal Features

To counteract radar reflection from outside sources, stealth planes are constructed with internalized systems such as:

- Internal missile and bomb bays rather than external hardpoints that add to RCS.
- Flush-mounted control surfaces and cockpit canopies to minimize step reflections.
- Engine intakes are protected by S-shaped intakes designed to prevent line-of-sight observation of the radar-reflective turbine blades.
- Exhaust shielding and heat dissipation systems to minimize infrared (IR) signatures, protecting against IR-guided missiles and sensors.
- These internal mechanisms synergistically function with shaping and RAM to hide radar and multispectral signatures.



D. Electronic Countermeasures (ECM)

Passive stealth methods are designed to reduce the chances of detection, while active electronic countermeasures are used to counter or deceive enemy tracking and radar systems.

Common ECM techniques include:

- Noise jamming: Sends wide-spectrum signals to cover up the target's echo.
- Digital Radio Frequency Memory (DRFM) spoofing: Records and replays radar pulses with changed delay or phase to create false targets or deceive tracking algorithms.
- Towed decoys are miniature devices trailed behind an aircraft that replicate its radar signature and thereby confuse radar-guided missiles.

These ECM systems are usually managed by an electronic warfare suite that intercepts incoming radar signals and chooses the correct countermeasures in real time. Merging passive and active techniques provides wide survivability across the electromagnetic spectrum.

IV. STEALTH DETECTION RADAR TECHNOLOGIES

With more advanced stealth platforms, radar systems have reacted by establishing new detection methodologies. These detection methodologies employ radar geometries, frequencies, and unconventional signal sources to reveal targets designed to remain invisible to traditional detection. Some of the most important radar technologies to improve stealth detection capabilities are described in this chapter.

A. Low-Frequency Radar

Low-frequency radars, especially in Very High Frequency (VHF) and Ultra High Frequency (UHF) frequency ranges (30 MHz to 1 GHz), are more efficient in the identification of stealth targets than high-frequency systems (e.g., X-band). Why it works: Stealth shaping and RAM are primarily designed for high-frequency radar. Longer VHF/UHF wavelengths are larger than or equal to the target's physical dimensions, leading to resonant scattering rather than specular reflection. Detection is thus higher.

Limitations:

- Lower resolution (i.e., lower accuracy of tracking)
- Heavy antennas, needing large ground installations
- Vulnerability to external noise and chaos

Despite this, other systems such as Russia's Nebo-M and China's JY-27A have established the usefulness of low-frequency radar in early warning systems.

B. Bistatic and Multistatic Radar Systems

Multistatic radar uses the transmitters and receivers separated spatially, contrary to the relatively conventional monostatic radar using colocated transmitter and receiver elements. Bistatic radar represents a special instance of this approach with one transmitter and one spatially displaced receiver.

Stealth vulnerability: Most stealth aircraft are designed to minimize RCS from the front. Multistatic configurations provide observation from multiple directions, thereby increasing the chances of observing high-RCS reflections.

Applications:

- Ground-based air defense systems with multiple sensor components
- Cooperative detection networks between various military platforms (e.g., ships, UAVs, and ground stations)

This method also enhances survivability as it allows passive receivers to preserve their cover.

C. Passive Radar

Passive radar employs non-cooperative opportunity illuminators, including civilian broadcast signals like FM radio, digital TV, and cellular signals, to detect aircraft by analyzing reflected energy.

Advantages:

- Very hard for stealth planes to counter or predict all conceivable light sources
- Hard for enemies to interfere with, as the radar system does not emit its own signals.
- Stealth operation without any electromagnetic emissions

Passive radar systems are best utilized in urban defense scenarios where civilian transmissions are high-density, providing stealth-resistant monitoring without requiring special transmitters.

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D. Quantum Radar

Quantum radar is a fresh idea that utilizes quantum entanglement and quantum illumination methods to detect objects in noisy or cluttered backgrounds.

Operational process: Entangled pairs of photons are generated, with one photon sent towards a target and the other retained in the radar system. Entanglement provides for a more precise discrimination of the backscattered signal from background noise compared to traditional techniques.

Conceptual Benefits:

- Increased resistance to interference.
- Improved performance in low signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) conditions

Capability to identify stealth targets using ECM Quantum radar exists in experimental stages currently, and active research by institutions like DARPA and Chinese military research units continues, yet has great promise for future stealth-counter technology.

E. Case Study

The F-117 Shoot-Down Incident in 1999On March 27, 1999, during NATO intervention in the Kosovo War (Operation Allied Force), a U.S. first-generation stealth fighter F-117 Nighthawk (probably the first operational stealth fighter) was lost to a surface-to-air missile case operated by the Yugoslav Air Defense Forces. The SAM system was Soviet-built, an S-125 Neva (SA-3 Goa) anti-aircraft missile.5.1 Background and Tactical Context The F-117 had successfully penetrated high-threat environments without being shot down. It relied exclusively on a stealthy RCS and first-rate mission planning. In this event, there were a number of bad tactical decisions and changes in radar use that enabled the F-117 to be seen: Predictable flight trajectories: The U.S. made their stealth missions routinely using a repetitive ingress and egress corridors and limiting exposure which allowed intended targets to identify aircraft location. Low-frequency radars: The Yugoslav forces employed radar operating at a VHF, like 140MHZ, (which operates at longer wavelengths) which did not interface with the design of the platform in terms of stealth shaping and RAM. The low-frequency processor may not precisely track a F-117; it would be a cue for the radars that had missile batteries attached to them.Multistatic: While not employing formal multistatic radar operation, the use of multiple geographically separated radar/ sensors and human observation provided Yugoslav forces the ability to track and orient on the F-117s movements and control missile fire.

F. Technical Analysis

The S-125 system designed in the 1960s had rudimentary semi-active radar homing capabilities and at the time was not considered a serious threat. However, its ability to strike an enemy platform in this case showed that Many legacy systems can present a risk to modern stealth platforms when applied situationally Stealth does not imply invisibility; this is especially true when a radar system evolves unimposed or adaptively The wreckage of the aircraft was recovered completely in part by Serbian forces and some of the parts were shared to Russia and China contemporaneously, with allegations of reverse engineering not long after.5.3. Implications for Air Power Today This incident led to a number of tactical strategic and technological implications on a more broad scale: Highlighting a need for EW [electronic warfare] support even in stealth missions Accelerated interest in multistatic and passive radar systems globally Molding the way one plans for a stealth mission - emphasizing intelligence and adaptability with varying routes presenting greater situational awareness Overall, this case is a glaring example of the arms race between stealth survivability and radar ability to adapt.

Stealth F-117 Nighthwak

V. FUTURE OUTLOOK

Stealth and radar technologies are constantly evolving in a high-stakes technological arms race and the way forward is through integrated, adaptable and intelligent systems. The trends emerging suggest that AI, sophisticated materials and multi-sensor approaches will support both offensive (stealth) and defensive (radar) capabilities.6.1 Artificial Intelligence in Radar. The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) into radars can seriously improve the ability to detect threats in particular low-observable threats. Signal Recognition: AI-enabled radars will be able to learn which patterns are subtle or low-observable, and discriminate between true targets and background "clutter" like rain or decoys. Adaptive Filtering: When the machine is exposed to cluttered environments (urban terrain, weather, etc.) it will be able to adapt and improve detection reliability. Autonomous Cueing: AI can utilize the detection indication of a radar system to facilitate threat prioritization and cue higher resolution sensors to investigate suspicious detections.These systems are being integrated into next-generation radars, including the Advanced Digital AESA systems employed by the US military and DARPA's COMPASS program**.**

A. Metamaterials and Active Stealth

The future of stealth technology may lie with metamaterials—engineered materials with properties that do not naturally exist and are designed to manipulate electromagnetic waves.

- Wave Bending: Metamaterials can bend radar waves around an object to create a potential cloaking effect.
- Broadband Absorption: Experimental designs classically have been aimed at multi-frequency absorption to overcome today's RAM capabilities.

Simultaneously, active stealth (or "adaptive signature management") involves real-time emission of a signal to cancel out the radar returns from the aircraft. These systems are technically complex and have not fully matured, but active cancellation systems have theoretical potential to reduce detectability even to agile radar platforms.

B. Integrated Defense Networks

No single sensor modality can ensure detection of stealthy platforms. Therefore, air defense architectures of the future will use integrated multispectral data from: Radar systems (monostatic, bistatic, and passive) Infrared search and track (IRST) systems Acoustic and seismic sensors Visual and optical sensor that are networked together through live data fusion networks that leverage edge computing and AI for cross-domain awareness. Examples of this include NATO’s Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) and China’s layered air defense ecosystem. The transition toward sensor fusion, data-centric warfare represents the next paradigm for engaging stealthy systems.

VI. CONCLUSION

The continuous battle between stealth and radar detection is one of the most important characters of new concepts in defense innovation. Stealth technology seeks to minimize visibility by using shaping, radar-absorbent material, and electronic countermeasures across the electromagnetic spectrum.

As radar developers, with some collaboration from the partner developers, develop more capable systems that use low frequency, multistatic configurations, passive configurations, and quantum. This paper presented the concepts and mechanisms each side of the equation apply to maintain their edge, revealing that the battlefield does not go one way. Valid patterns of incidents, for example, the shooting down of an F-117 in 1999 remind us of the changing nature of unfolding conflict, that can produce sudden disparity in stealth advantage in contested spaces. Looking forward, advancements in artificial intelligence, metamaterials, and integrated sensors will have a major impact on how the next generation of stealth platforms and detection architectures will be defined, but in the end both offensive and defensive considerations will be crucial in shaping the character of future air superiority and integrated air and missile defence systems.

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