

The Point



The Lockheed X-7—a supersonic and hypersonic ramjet engine test bed—used a parachute recovery system, usually landing nose first in the New Mexico desert sand, so it could be used again. A large crane rolled up and yanked the vehicle out of the sand. Aircraft such as the B-50 or the B-29, as shown above, air launched the X-7 from a wing mounted system. The vehicle had a high-speed drag chute to slow it down and a main chute for landing. Lockheed created the X-7 for the Air Force to develop a ramjet for an anti-aircraft missile. The first full-scale X-7 flight took place April 26, 1951. By the time the program ended in July 1960, it had evolved into a much broader effort, yielding information on aerodynamics, thermodynamics, fuel, and materials performance at high speeds.