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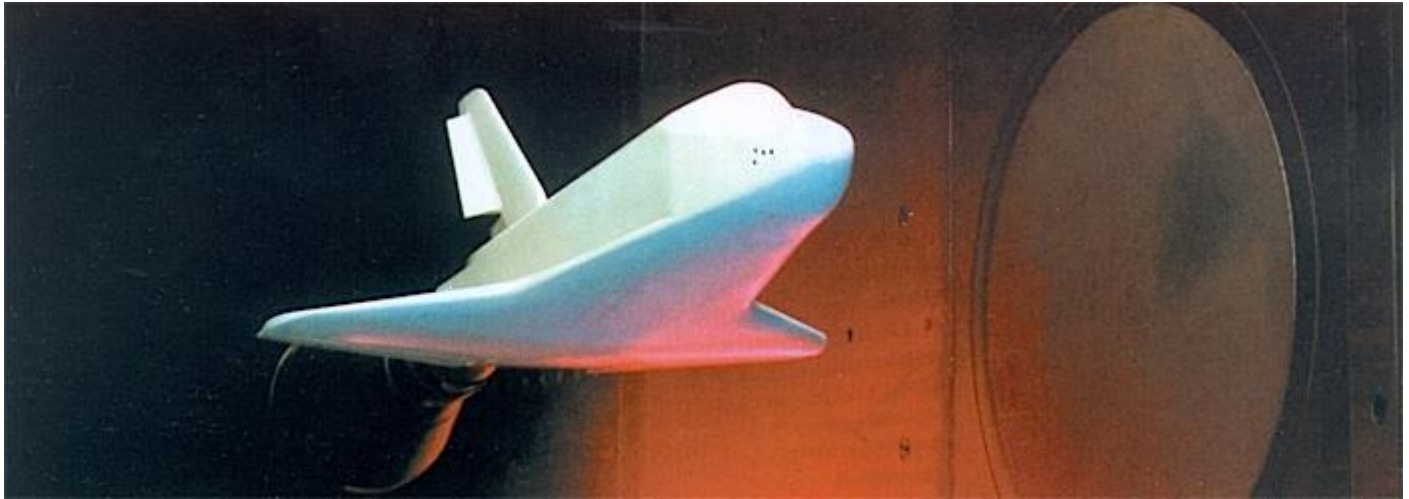
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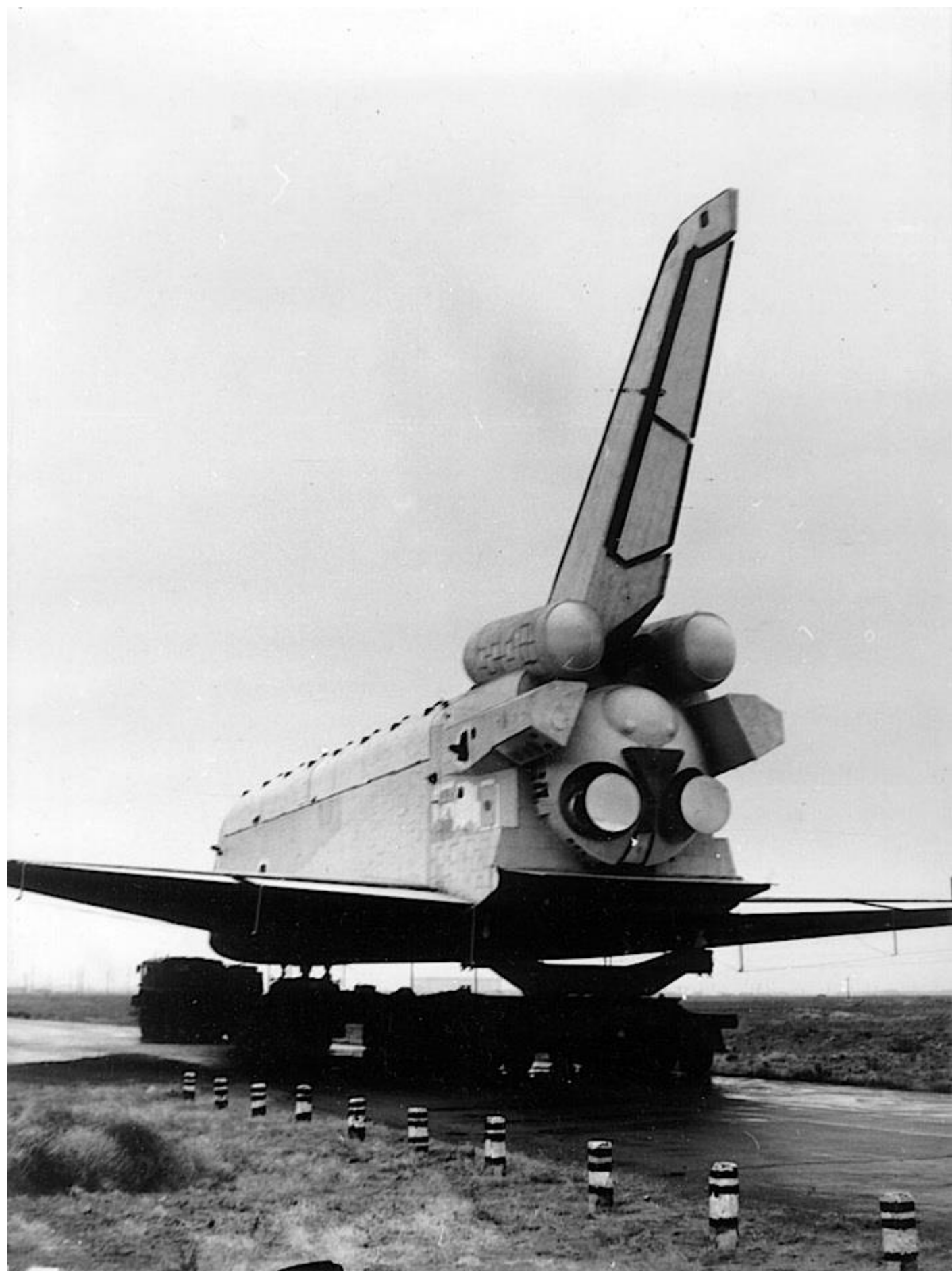
# What Happened To Russia's Space Shuttle Program?

The Russian Shuttle Buran ("Snowstorm" in Russian) was authorized in 1976 in response to the United States Space Shuttle program. Construction of the shuttles began in 1980, with the first full-scale Aero-Buran rolling out in 1984. After only one test flight, the project was halted, although it was not officially canceled until 1993. It's fascinating to see how — after dominating much of the space race in the 1960's — the post-Communist Russia struggled to play "catch-up" with the Americans.

Wind tunnel studies of scale models of the orbiter

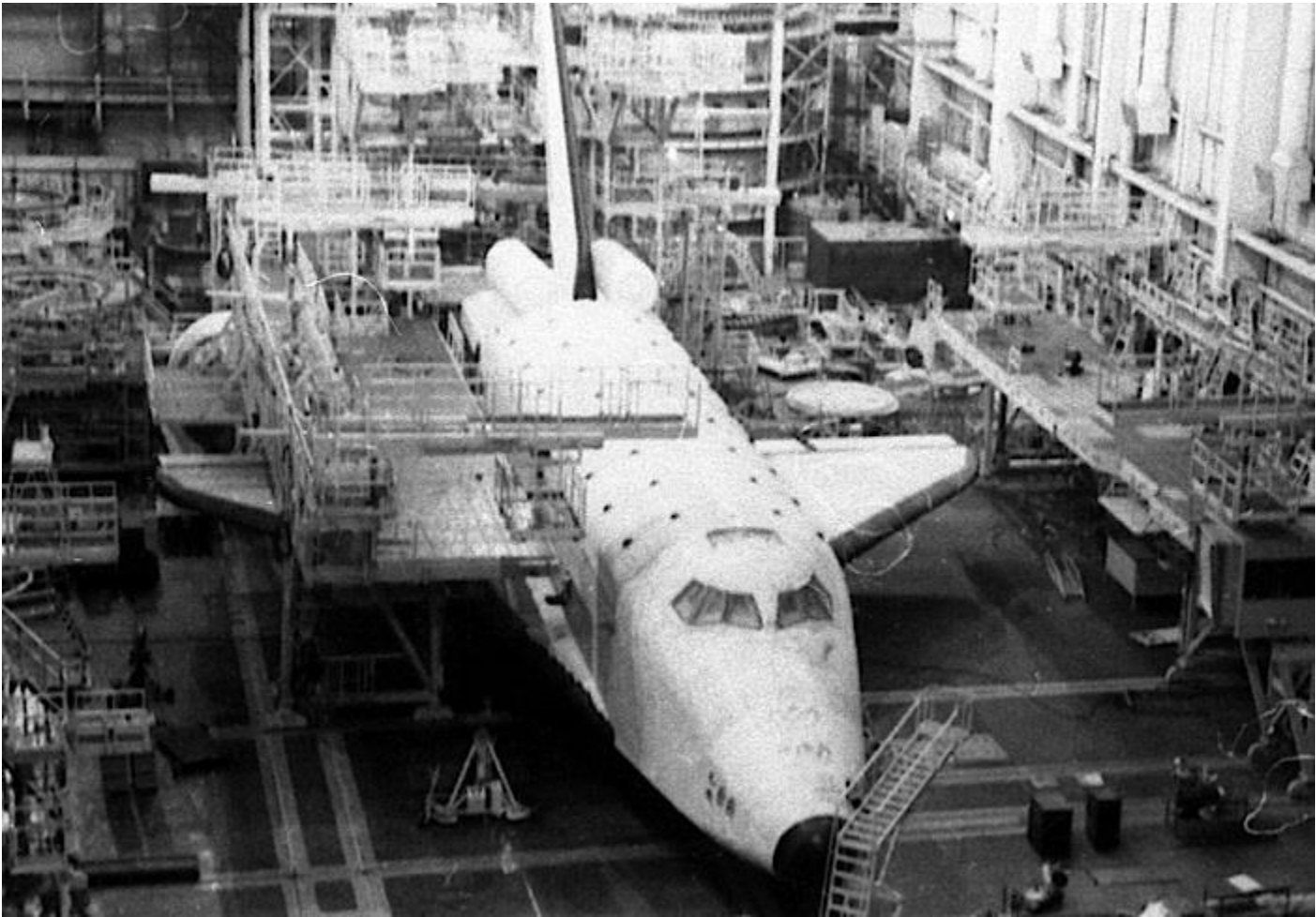


The full-size technological model of the orbiter (item 0.15, other designations OK-MT, OK, ML2, 7M, 11F35MT) used to refine launch operations





Tests of technological layout of OK-MT, on platform 254 (Baikonur Cosmodrome)

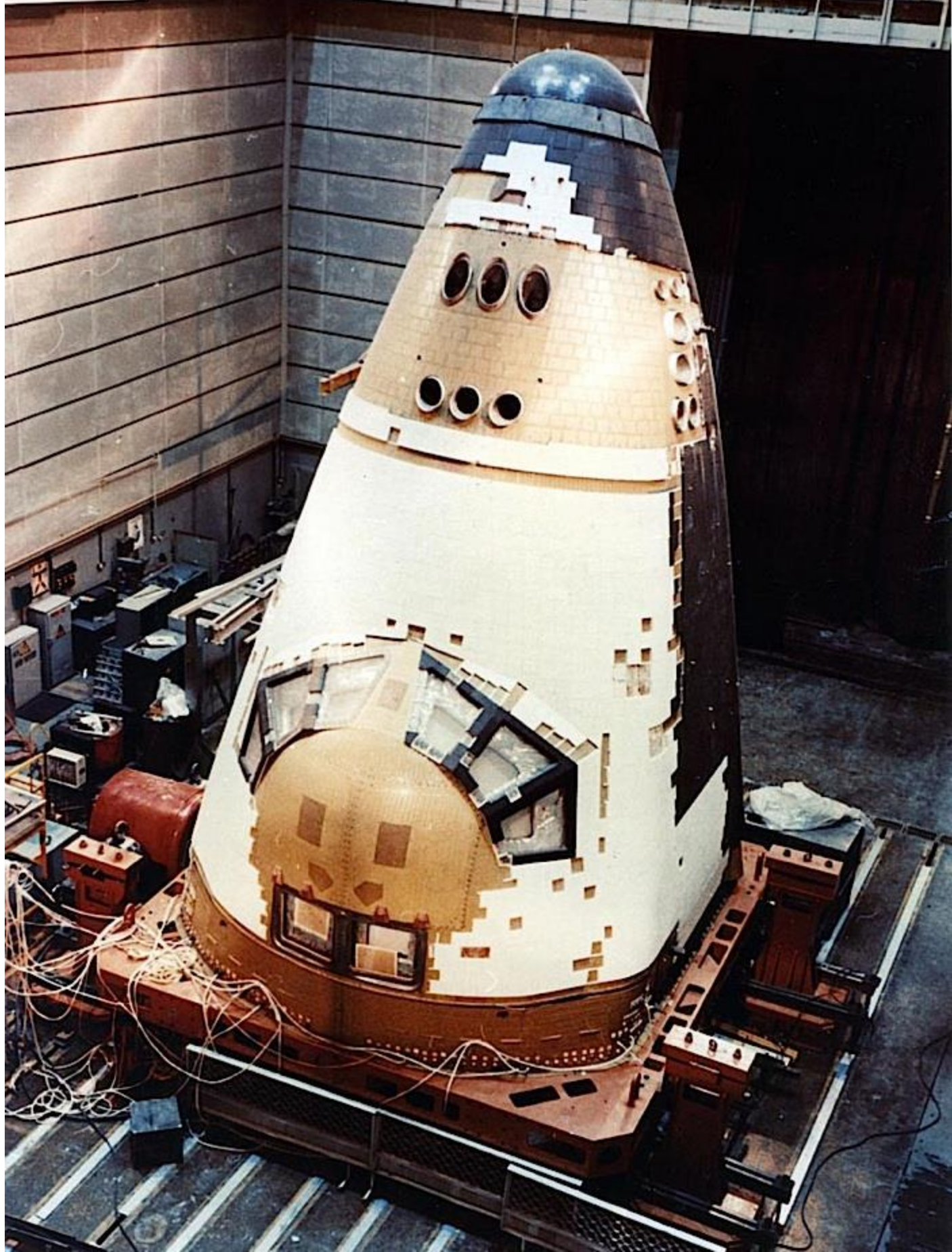




The nose of the fuselage undergoing vibration tests

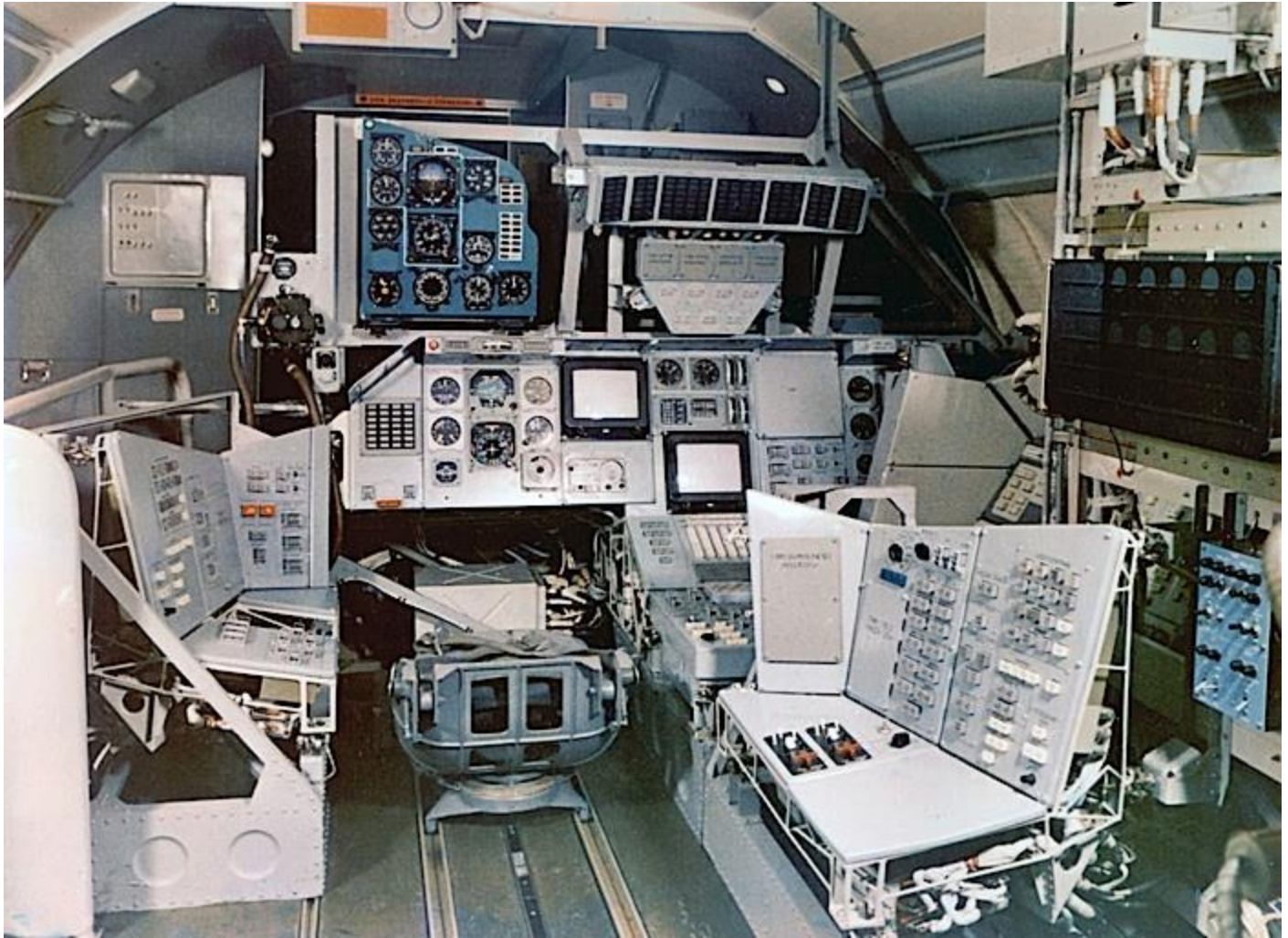


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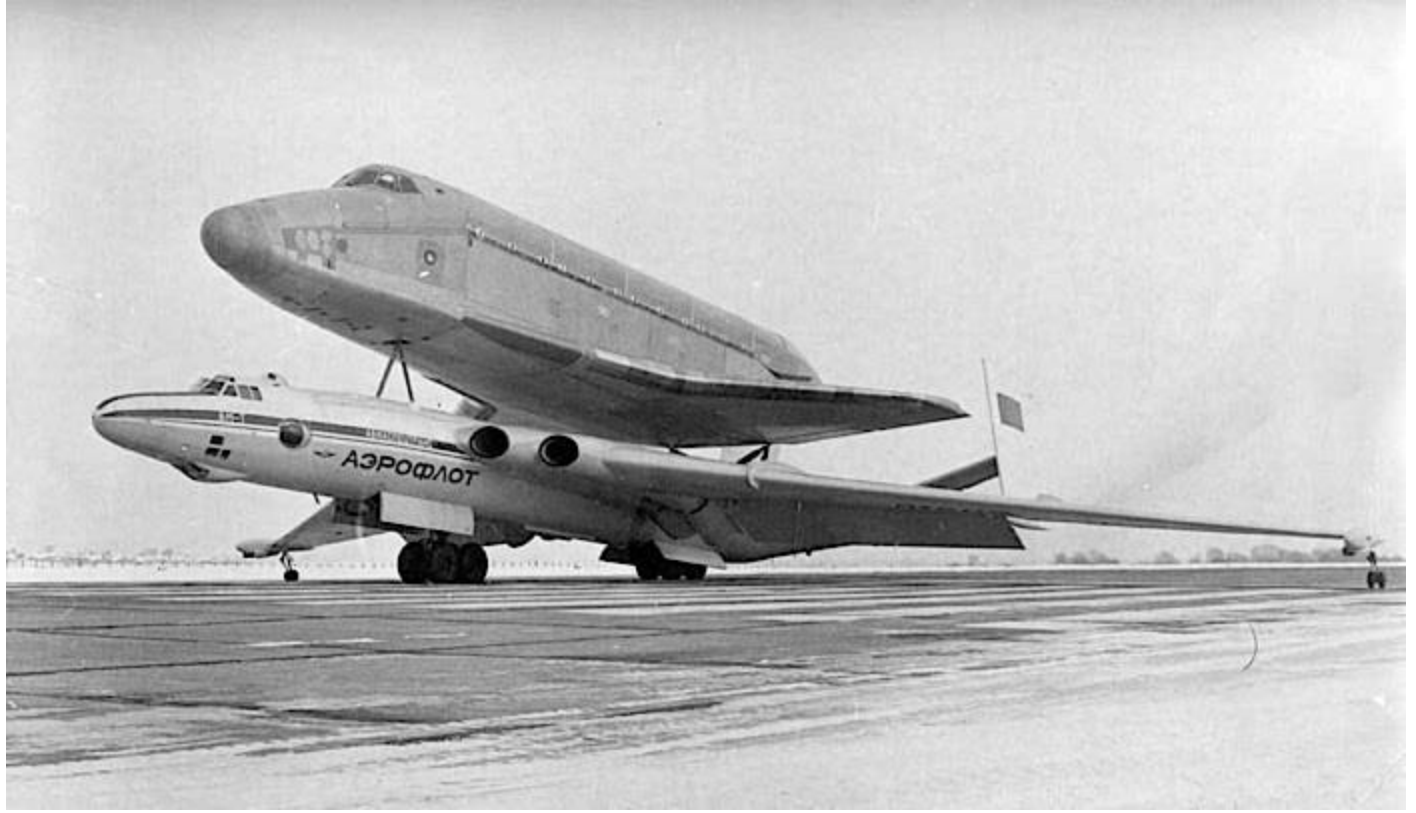


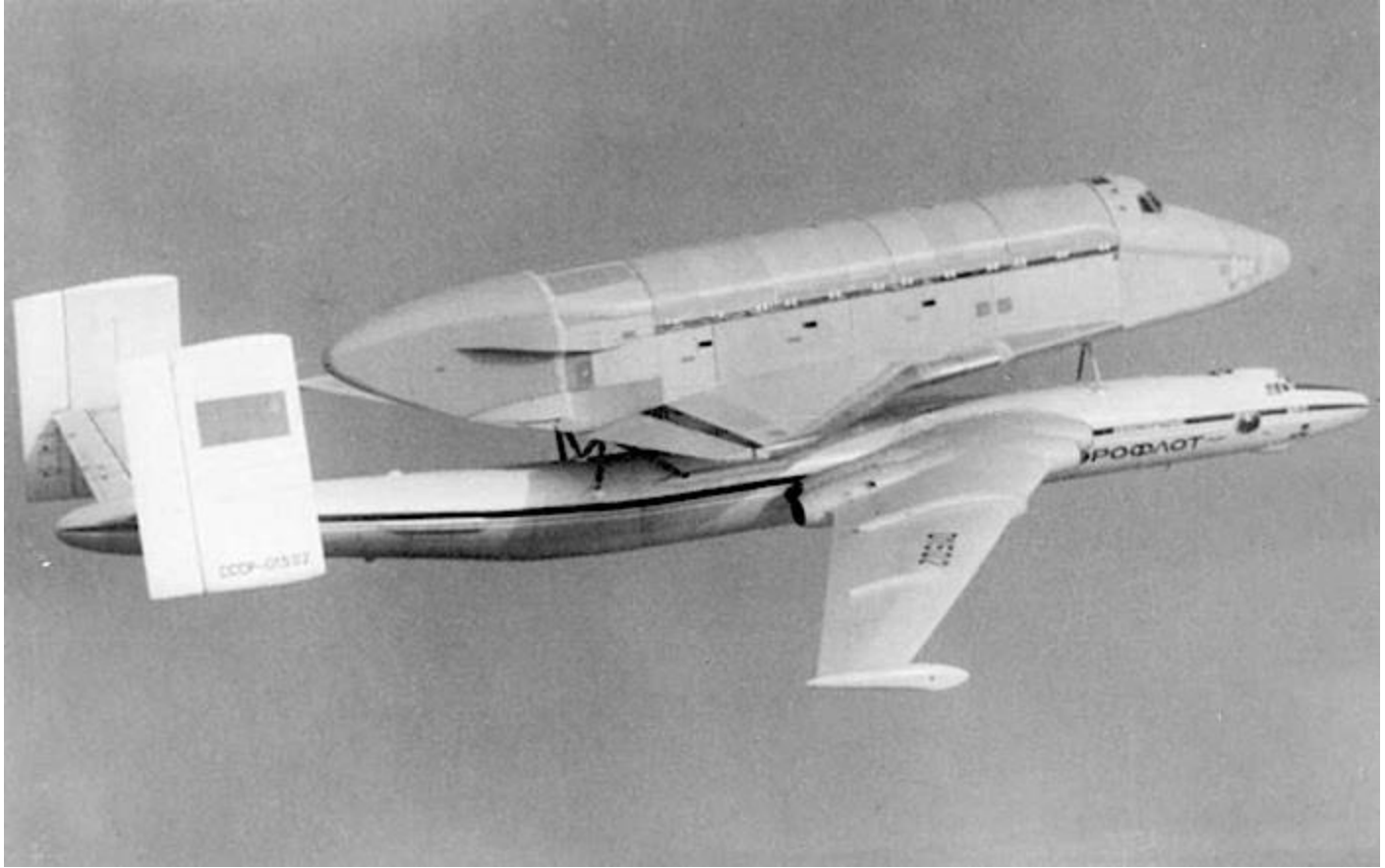
The cabin interior



Testing of air transportation on plane carrier VM-T Atlant, using a full-size and -weight model of the shuttle







Transportation of "Buran" (at the time of this photograph, it was named "Baikal", which is shielded by the wing) via road transport unit (TA) to launch-pad fire control tests



Buran (still showing its original name "Baikal"),  
in its enclosed maintenance facility



Joint testing of Buran and rocket booster "Energia" in  
the assembly and test facility at Baikonur Cosmodrome



Reusable rocket-space system for the Energia-Buran vehicle at adjusting unit







Beginning of the reusable rocket-space system "Energia-Buran" vehicle installation unit in the Launch Complex



The "Energia-Buran" vehicle in the Launch Complex, being raised to a vertical (launch) position.



The "Energia-Buran" vehicle in full vertical launch position.



Prelaunch preparations





One day before the first attempt to launch – October 28, 1988



The historic launch of Buran – Baikonur Cosmodrome, 15 November 1988, 06.00.00 DMW



The first seconds of flight!



Artist's rendition of what would have been a subsequent Buran mission: docking with the "Mir" orbital complex.



Buran lands on a runway at Baikonur, 15 November 1988.  
Amazingly, only five heat-shielding tiles were lost during the flight.



"Buran" being mounted on an AN-225 "Mriya"



AN-225 "Mriya" and "Buran" during the first test flights at Baikonur, prior to the flight at Le Bourget air show, May 1989.



AN-225 "Mriya" with "Buran" during the exhibition and demonstration flights at Le Bourget air show.







Frightening photos of the roof collapse at Baikonur on 13 May 2002, which destroyed the Buran shuttle and Energia booster assembly contained within.



The governmental commission investigating the causes of the collapse of the roof reported determined the exact cause of the accident. However, by order of committee chairman Ilya Klebanov, that reason was kept secret. To this day, no one outside the Russian government knows what destroyed the shuttle.

### **What Happened To Russia's Space Shuttle Program?**

by [photofind](#)



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crake

1 month ago

Amazing. I had no idea the Russians built a rival to NASA’s Shuttle. I would’ve loved to have seen it launch. All that time and effort to build the thing only to have it destroyed by a ‘collapsed roof...’

hmmm..



Edouard

1 month ago

Very interesting pictures, there is also this website with a lot of informations about [Buran](#).



frank

4 weeks ago

I guess being copied is the greatest form of flattery. Isn’t it interesting that Buran was a carbon copy of the USA’s Orbiter vehicle, except without the 3 main engines that Orbiter uses at launch. Somebody must have left the Orbiter drawings on their desk one dark night.



Donald Mallick

4 weeks ago

Very interesting; The only story that I had heard years ago, was: The Russian Shuttle was flown unmanned and automatic. The story was they encountered a near loss during the auto land maneuver and gave up on the program and never flew again. At the time, the story sounded a little

“light”. In other words, that was a problem that could have been worked out.

This is the first that I have seen the story of the “fallen roof”; but stranger things have happened. It did indeed, look like a clone of our shuttle.

5.



Izuki Nomura

4 weeks ago

I always find it amusing to read some comment that the other guys design must have been stolen. I guess it never dawns on the commentator that the physical world drives the design rather than arbitrary solutions.

6.



John Lindorfer

4 weeks ago

On the other hand, Russia still has an energetic manned space program, and after two more Shuttle flights, we won't have any at all!

7.



John Emmick

4 weeks ago

It is obvious the roof collapsed as a result of something else happening.... There is one picture that shows the complete nose portion of the External Tank missing.... I would not be surprised that some sort of Pneumatic Pressure Test was being conducted on the External Tank, and the Tank was subjected to an over pressure condition, and the Tank exploded.... It only requires a couple PSI over pressure from the Normal Operating Pressure and the Tank ruptured.... Over Pressure of a Pressure Vessel the size of their External Tank would be more than enough pressure to lift the roof off their Facility.....

In the early days of the Apollo program we were conducting a Pneumatic Pressure Test of a filament wound titanium Tank... The tank was about 24 inches in dia. We were approaching the Normal Operating Pressure when the tank exploded... That small tank had sufficient volume to lift the roof off the building and set it back down... I can see what force would be behind their External Tank if it were to explode... The building is still there off one of the roads behind the O&C building at KSC.....

8.



Craig Finch

3 weeks ago

Sorry, there's no conspiracy or cover-up about the roof collapse at Baikonur Cosmodrome. The collapse happened almost ten years after the Buran program was canceled. According to Wikipedia, Buran was sitting on a mock-up of the Energiya booster when it was crushed. The cause of the collapse was a lack of maintenance. Let's hope we don't see the same thing happen to the VAB.

[http://www.russianspaceweb.com/baikonur\\_energiya\\_112.html](http://www.russianspaceweb.com/baikonur_energiya_112.html)

Craig



9.



Ron D'Amico

2 weeks ago

What ever the outcome happened to be, it was a total revelation to grasp the reality that they did indeed fly their orbiter unmanned. One element runs through my mind,,that being they foresaw the cost factors required to support their "shuttle flights" on a regular basis. As we "Wind down" our shuttle flight schedules to a complete stop, what a sobering thought knowing they still have the vehicle to transport Cosmonauts and our Astronauts to the ISS.!

10.



Chuck

2 weeks ago

Still don't know why that program was cancelled. We always saw their vehicle on posters of "world space travel vehicles". I think they figured out that they just couldn't make it happen with any margin at all – or maybe they just ran out of money. The shuttle concept ended up being way too complicated, and should have been replaced a long time ago. However, if I were an American astronaut being scheduled for a mission to the International Space Station on a Russian vehicle, I would either quit or make sure "my things are in order".

11.



TeeCee

1 week ago

The name is Bond...James Bond.

12.



Randy Sellet

1 week ago

The Russians stole tons of blueprints from the U.S., approximately a tractor-trailer load. That's a fact.

The main problem with copying something this complex is that the engineers don't really know what they've built ! So for every bit of troubleshooting and modifications, they have to try to understand the underlying physics, mechanical, chemical, and aerospace engineering knowledge and engineering. Since this wasn't the case, it becomes all retro-engineered, or engineering in a backward direction from a known good design.

That's what they deserve for building a copy, not a home grown product.

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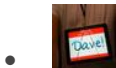
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