



The U-2 spy plane, the high-flying aircraft that was often at the heart of cold war suspense, is enjoying an encore. Four years ago, the Pentagon was ready to start retiring the plane, which took its first test flight in 1955. But Congress blocked that, saying the plane was still useful.

And so it is. Because of updates in the use of its powerful sensors, it has become the most sought-after spy craft in a very different war in Afghanistan. As it shifts from hunting for nuclear missiles to detecting roadside bombs, it is outshining even the unmanned drones in gathering a rich array of intelligence used to fight the Taliban.

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Just asking...**