

Thunder at Le Bourget



View of the JF-17 with weapon options on display
(Photo: Vayu, from the Paris Airshow 2019)

Alan Warnes on return of the JF-17 to the Paris Air Show

Three Pakistan Air Force JF-17s were at this year's Paris Air Show, four years after the type first visited the event in 2015 – and a lot has happened to the programme since then.

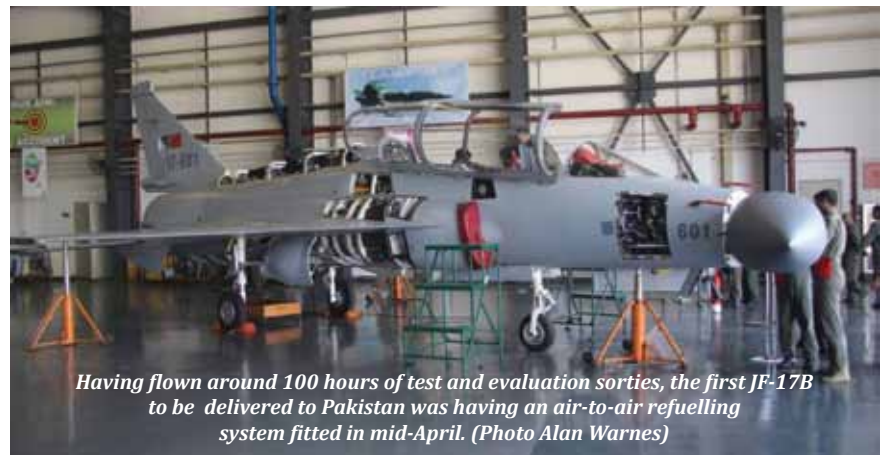
Right now the last three Block 2s are on the Aircraft Manufacturing Factory (AMF) final assembly line at Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) Kamra, which will eventually help to equip a seventh operational unit later this year. Meanwhile, the first JF-17 has undergone a major overhaul at PAC Kamra's Aircraft Repair Factory and there is a dual-seat JF-17B, (17-601), undergoing test and evaluation in Pakistan.

A decision from the PAF leadership on a new AESA radar for the Block 3 JF-17s is pending and is expected by November, followed by its first operational sortie early next year. Then, in deals that were signed in late-2017, AMF will assemble 50 Block

3 JF-17s and 26 JF-17Bs. In 2020, the Air Engineering Depot 102 at PAF Base Faisal will start overhauling the fighter's Klimov RD93 powerplant.

There is arguably a lot going on to occupy the minds of PAF leadership and

operationally the JF-17 is playing a major part in the defence of Pakistan's skies with six operational squadrons. During the PAF's recent confrontation with the Indian Air Force, known in Pakistan as *Operation Swift Retort*, PAF Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief



Having flown around 100 hours of test and evaluation sorties, the first JF-17B to be delivered to Pakistan was having an air-to-air refuelling system fitted in mid-April. (Photo Alan Warnes)