

Beyond Zhuhai 2018



China's Mountain Eagles and Falcons

The almost frenetic pace of Chinese 'next gen' fighter developments continue to dominate the headlines, and thus Chinese 'next gen' lead in fighter trainers (LIFT) get second billing. This article, with extracts from China aviation analysts, reviews developments beyond the Sino-Pak K-8 Karakoram which is being supplanted by various new types, including the JL-9/FTC-2000 Mountain Eagle and the Hongdu L-15 Falcon.

The FTC-2000G is latest *avatar* of a well-established family that started off as the Guizhou JL-9 *Mountain Eagle*, unabashedly based on the venerable MiG-21 and its Chinese clone, the F-7. Development of the JL-9 began in 2001 as an advanced lead-in fighter trainer (LIFT) based on the earlier JJ-7/FT-7 design and later the JJ-9. Essentially, the JL-9 incorporates a new forward fuselage, the erstwhile nose intake replaced by a solid nose accommodating an X-band pulse-Doppler fire-control radar, with the engine intakes now relocated on the fuselage sides. The stepped tandem cockpit section is a new design, with a single-piece windshield giving improved forward and downward vision when compared with the original item. The aircraft has a double-delta wing without leading edge flaps, has a modern avionics suite and the cockpit includes a head up display (HUD) as also a multi-function display (MFD).



The prototype JL-9 made its first flight on 13 December 2003 with the test aircraft flight evaluated during 2004-2005. Following some fine-tuning, the modified JL-9 flew for the first time on 23 August

2006, featuring a new control augmentation system (CAS) for enhanced stability and an improved cockpit environment control system. Series production JL-9s were first delivered to the PLAAF in 2007 and