

Lion Cub to Vigorous Dragon



Metamorphoses of the Lavi into J-10

Perhaps the most intriguing of fighter aircraft development programmes in recent times is the ongoing story of the Chengdu J-10 which has excited much research and analyses by professional agencies and aviation aficionados alike. There have been persistent references to the Chinese having received help from the Israeli aircraft industry on early development of this Chinese multirole fighter, which programme was reportedly authorised by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s to match the contemporary MiG-29 and Su-27 of the then Soviet Union and the F-15 and F-16 which were mainstay of the USAF.

Such development work was assigned to Institute 611 at Chengdu with Song Wencong reportedly its Chief Designer, who had earlier worked on the J-7 III. In a typical Chinese approach, they reached out

to international institutions for assistance if not outright reverse engineering. The Russians were an obvious source, including the *Siberian Aeronautical Research Institute* (SibNIA) which later confirmed their



Artist's drawing of the Lavi