

## **Inside China: China to revamp pilot training**



### ***A Chinese People's Liberation Army Airforce's "Bayi Aerobatic Unit" J-10 fighter jet***

The Chinese People's Liberation Army air force is feeling the heat from higher command for failing to produce enough qualified pilots and for spending too much on pilot training.

Last week, a comprehensive combat pilot training program was announced to meet the challenges.

China is in overdrive to expand its air power. The air force is under intense pressure to address some of its shortfalls now that Gen. Xu Qiliang, a seasoned fighter pilot and one of the two vice chairmen of the all-powerful Central Military Commission, was promoted to be the first air force general to hold the post in the communist country's history.

China's combat pilot recruiting and training program traditionally is among the more elite military-run operations.

For several generations, prospective pilots have been recruited from high school under an esoteric process requiring extreme scrutiny of a candidate's loyalty to the Communist Party, a totally trouble-free family history, and perfect eyesight and physical fitness.

The process has been carried out with absolute seriousness: In China, becoming a combat pilot is considered the most glorious achievement for a prospective recruit. Rigid selection and training regimes greatly limit the prospective pilot pool, and the result has been a shortage of qualified pilots for

the rapidly expanding air force.

While their political and ideological correctness is overemphasized, many pilot trainees lack basic knowledge of modern science, or a broad understanding of aviation principles - a requirement for operating sophisticated jet and weapons technologies.

In the meantime, the cost of training pilots keeps skyrocketing as training cycles are extended.

"Air force training has become more diversified and complex," said a state-run Xinhua news agency report on the new training initiative.

All signs indicate the plan to revamp the pilot training program is far reaching.

"Reforms related to theoretical study, the pilot selection process, training subjects and methodology have taken place," Xinhua reported.

"We have made a lot of effort to develop and use flight simulators to shorten training and save costs," Gen. Xie Hong, deputy head of the air force training command was quoted as saying.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/nov/21/inside-china-china-to-revamp-pilot-training/>