



Egyptian K-8 visiting Malta airshow, enabling a construction number check. (LRCS200080, 6322, Lsqg, 26 September 2014, Arnold ten Pas)

China

After many years of license producing Soviet designs, the Chinese were looking to advance their indigenous aircraft industry. With more modern aircraft being acquired, the jet training would have to be stepped up too from the ancient JJ2 and JJ5 dual seat versions of the MIG-15 and MIG-17. Mind you, the Chinese did not acquire the L-39. That is why the cooperation with Pakistan was sought, as detailed above. We know four K-8 prototypes existed, one of which was used as static test airframe. These were followed by fifteen so-called "small batch production" aircraft. Six of those went to Pakistan, six others to China for further testing and development. Precious little detail is known about the production of the main PLAAF subtype, the JL8. By October 2010 there should have been 190 built and currently a number of 'over 200' is sometimes quoted. Also, we have only six confirmed tie-ups with construction numbers. Lastly, the restructuring of the PLAAF and subsequent reserialling of training unit's aircraft does not help to paint a complete picture either.

Units

Manufacturing and maintenance

329 factory	Hongdu Aircraft Corp (HAC)	Nanchang/Jiang Xi
Changfeng Aircraft & Engine Overhaul Factory 5706		Dalian/Sanshipu
Factory 5721		Shijiazhuang

People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF)

Aviation University Flight	1st Training Regiment 443a	Dalangshan
Instructor Training Base	3rd Training Regiment 447x	Yancheng
	4th Training Regiment 448a	Bengbu
Hartin Flying Academy	3rd Training Brigade 143a	Kaiyuan/Tieling
	4th Training Brigade 144a	Jinzhou/Kaolingzi
	5th Training Brigade 145a	Liaoyang
	Red Falcon demoteam xx	Jinzhou/Kaolingzi
Shijiazhuang Flying Ac.	1st Training Brigade 241a	Shijiazhuang
	2nd Training Brigade 242a	Yongji
	3rd Training Brigade 243a	Xushui/Dingping
	4th Training Brigade 244a	Tangguantun
Xi'an Flying Academy	2nd Training Brigade 342x	Zhangye/SE
	3rd Training Brigade 343x	Wuwei
	4th Training Brigade 344x	Nami

People's Liberation Army Naval Air Force (PLANAF)

Naval Aviation Academy	1st Air Regiment	844x	Jiyan
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2nd Air Regiment	826ix	Changzhi/Wangou
3rd Air Regiment	836ix	Xingcheng

In September 1998 the first unit to replace the JJ5 with the K-8 was the 13th Flying Academy at Bengbu. In 2012 this unit was rebranded the 4th Training Regiment of the Aviation University as can be seen above. We think that a typical Academy consists of around 40 aircraft, the ones with four brigades will have around 50. During the latest reorganization all training units got rid of their 5-digit serials and received a 4-digit serial instead. For a code, they use the two digits marked as 'x' in the unit rundown to help identify individual aircraft quickly during everyday flight operations.

The pre-production run consisted of fifteen aircraft, believed without a '0' in their batch number, so 320 a bb, with 'a' being batch and 'bb' the sequence number. After this run, the quantity of aircraft in each production block/batch is unconfirmed. We know that the first 30 were equipped with the AI-25TLK. This can be one or two batches. As can be read in the introduction of this article, it took a while before JL8 production based around the WS-11 engine started. It is uncertain if later batches were 24 or more aircraft. With 200+ aircraft delivered and the 6th batch already operational in 2011, we suspect there are eight or nine batches by now.

All known construction numbers, little as they are, do not exceed the 20-mark with their sequence number. So, we stick with 24 for the time being. As you can see, the Chinese production JL8s use the more familiar Nanchang construction number layout aa 320 bb, Nanchang being Factory 520.

Confirmed tie-ups & construction numbers (prototypes)

KB-001	MAMC	01 nov90	001	2003
KB-002	MAMC	static test article	002	
KB-003	MAMC	01 oct91	003	
KB-004	MAMC	to 1001	004	sep03

Confirmed tie-ups & construction numbers (small production batch)

1001	MAMC	01 dec94	320 1 01	dec96
JL8-201	MAMC		320 2 01	jan03
JL8-202	MAMC		320 2 02	jan03
KBV-203	CFTE	0FTSA	320 2 03	2003
2057	to Sri Lanka	as SJT-1807	320 2 05	jan06