



CHINA'S FIRST FEMALE PILOT OF J-10 FIGHTER JET DIES IN FLYING ACCIDENT

News / Personalities



The first Chinese woman to fly a -J-10 fighter was remembered fondly on Sunday as a “golden peacock” after her death on Saturday in an air training accident.

Yu Xu, 30, died when her double-seater J-10 crashed in Hebei province. Her co-pilot ejected in time.

Yu’s classmates described her death as a “shock”, with some observers calling for higher training standards for aerobatics pilots.

Yu, born in Chengdu, -Sichuan province, was one of the 35 women recruited as trainee pilots in July 2005.

Only 16 of the female intake – including Yu – went on to graduate four years later to become the country’s first women fighter jet pilots. Yu was also one of four women Chinese pilots who could fly the third generation of the fighter jet, according to mainland media reports.

Her death occurred less than a fortnight after she took part in Airshow China in Zhuhai, flying a double-seater J-10 as part of her aerobatic team’s performance.

“I hope to give the audience a good performance,” China National Radio quoted her as saying before the show. “In terms of safety, in our training we’re always reminded to put safety first.”

Together with another 15 -female pilots, Yu also appeared in CCTV’s Spring Festival Gala in 2010, months after their debut in a military parade in October 2009 to mark the 60th anniversary of the people’s republic.

She earned her nickname by performing a peacock dance at the People’s Liberation Army’s aviation school in 2005.

According to mainland media reports, Yu said she never felt any regrets about becoming a pilot.

“Sometimes I’m envious of people the same age, but that is only a momentary feeling. I have chosen a different way of life, a different occupation, and I have different pursuits [in life] ... I don’t feel regret choosing to fly,” CNR quoted her as saying.

Yu also dreamed of being an astronaut, the report said.

Shanghai-based military analyst Ni Lexiong said there had been several accidents involving J-10s but the causes were not made public. Ni said there needed to be fewer accidents but they were also “a price that has to be paid” for modernisation of the Chinese military.

There has been a string of J-10 accidents over the past few years, the most recent on September 28, when an aircraft crashed near Yangcun air base in Tianjin reportedly after hitting a bird. In May, another J-10 crashed in Taizhou , Zhejiang.

Three J-10 crashes were reported last year – one each in Shenyang, Huzhou and Taizhou.

In November 2014, a J-10B fighter jet crashed in suburban Chengdu, injuring at least seven people on the ground.

Macau-based military observer Antony Wong Dong said the threshold for entering the aerobatics team should be higher.

China only required about 1,000 flying hours to become a -pilot, compared with 1,500 hours in developed nations.

“The morale of the aerobatics team will be hit. There has not been an incident like this for the team for a long time,” Wong said.

“If such accident happened in the air show in Zhuhai, it would be a disaster because more casualties would be likely.”



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