



Pakistan Moving into Sales of JF-17 Fighters

OE Watch Commentary: The JF-17 is a multi-role combat aircraft developed jointly by the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and China's Chengdu Aircraft Corporation. Its development and introduction provided Pakistan's air force with a multi-role fighter and an upgrade to its inventory. While sales of the JF-17 were not an initial goal, the accompanying excerpted article reports that the Nigerian Air Force is taking delivery of three JF-17 fighters from Pakistan later this year, and there are a few things worth noting.

The article from *Quwa*, an English-language website reporting on defense issues in Pakistan, reports that the Nigerian Air Force “will receive its three JF-17 Thunder multi-role fighters in November 2020.” The article mentions that the Nigerian government began saving money for the JF-17s a few years ago and how “Pakistan was waiting for payments before starting the production of the fighters.” The author of the article believes that the Nigerian government “will follow-up this contract with a follow-on order to fully replace its legacy F-7Ni and FT-7Ni fighters,” though he also notes how the Nigerian government “seems to be ordering aircraft once it has sufficient cash funds for an order on-hand (i.e., not through a line of credit or loan)” so it is unknown when another order would take place or how many fighters it would include.



JF-17 Thunder with the 8,126 m-high Nanga Parbat in the background.

Source: Asuspine via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistan_Air_Force_JF-17_Thunder_files_in_front_of_the_26,660_ft_high_Nanga_Parbat.jpg, GFDL 1.2

The author also points out that while the JF-17 is an upgrade to Nigeria's current inventory of fighters, the three JF-17s set to be delivered “are from the tail-end of the Block-II's production run” and that if there is an additional purchase of JF-17s, it “would likely involve one of the newer JF-17 variants,” either the JF-17Bs or JF-17 Block-IIIs. As Pakistan continues production of the JF-17B and Block-III variants, it will be worth watching if any sales come out of it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“By 2021, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) will be rolling-out JF-17Bs and JF-17 Block-IIIs.”

Source: Bilal Khan, “Nigeria Will Take Delivery of JF-17 Fighters in November 2020,” *Quwa*, 1 March 2020. <https://quwa.org/2020/03/01/nigeria-will-take-delivery-of-jf-17-fighters-in-november-2020/>

The Nigerian Air Force's (NAF) Chief of Air Staff (CAS) Air Marshal Sadiq Abubakar announced that the NAF will receive its three JF-17 Thunder multi-role fighters in November 2020...

Nigeria started budgeting funds for its JF-17 order in 2016...The three-year gap between the time Nigeria started budgeting funds and the ECC's approval suggests that Pakistan was waiting for payments before starting the production of the fighters.

It is likely that the NAF will follow-up this contract with a follow-on order to fully replace its legacy F-7Ni and FT-7Ni fighters. Nigeria seems to be ordering aircraft once it has sufficient cash funds for an order on-hand (i.e., not through a line of credit or loan).

However, these three initial JF-17s are from the tail-end of the Block-II's production run. By 2021, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) will be rolling-out JF-17Bs and JF-17 Block-IIIs. Thus, any follow-on purchase by the NAF would likely involve one of the newer JF-17 variants.

That said, the JF-17 Block-II represents a major capability jump for the NAF. In addition to beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles (BVRAAM), the Block-II is configured for precision-strike through satellite-guided and laser-guided bombs, the C-802 anti-ship missile, and the stand-off range Range Extension Kit (REK).

Through the JF-17, Nigeria possesses one of Sub-Sahara Africa's most well-equipped fighters (second only to, arguably, the South African Air Force's JAS-39C/D Gripen). Even a full squadron of 16-18 aircraft would amount to a significant force capability in the region, especially if it includes the Block-III...