



## Report Indicates China Moving Toward Sixth-Generation Fighter

**OE Watch Commentary:** Recent Chinese press reports have been highlighting China's push to build a world-class air force over the next three decades. Part of that effort appears to be the possible development of a sixth-generation fighter jet. In November 2018, according to the accompanying excerpted article published in *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, Xu Anxiang, Deputy Commander of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), announced that China was implementing a three-stage plan that would transform his branch into a world-class air force. The article notes that the first step is to "cross the basic threshold for a strategic air force by 2020" by setting up a PLAAF forces system, command system, battle system, and support system with fourth-generation equipment as a backbone, and third-generation equipment as the main body. Step two is to establish basic strategic capabilities and have a more "complete, scientific, and rational" force system by 2035. Step three will see a PLAAF capable of supporting "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people and realize the Chinese Dream and Strong Military Dream" by 2050.

According to the same article, Xu introduced a flight demonstration for the J-20, China's fifth-generation stealth fighter, during the 12th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in Zhuhai. The J-20 is capable of carrying new model mid- and long-range missiles and short-range air-to-air missiles.

A more recent article, published by China's *Global Times*, announced that China was determined to keep up in the global race toward sixth-generation fighter jets, which it expects to have no later than 2035. According to the article, a sixth-generation fighter jet is expected to include the "ability to command drones, artificial intelligence and even higher stealth capability through aerodynamic design" and it could possess new technologies like "laser, adaptive engines, hypersonic weapons and swarm warfare" capabilities. The article hints that China could already have started in its research and development phase toward the next generation fighter as "China's tradition is to have one generation in service, a new one in development, and a next-generation under study," an expert was quoted as saying. "Now that the J-20 is already in service, the development for a new aircraft is also underway," he surmised. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*"A generation gap means the sixth-generation warplanes would easily top fifth-generation ones including the US' F-22 and China's J-20..."*

**Source:** "歼-20战机已具备初步作战能力 (New J-20 Fighter Jet on Display at Zhuhai Airshow)," *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, 13 November 2018. <http://mil.huanqiu.com/world/2018-11/13532521.html>

*Xu Anxiang (PLAAF Deputy Commander) pointed out that this J-20 fighter demonstration had two primary features: First, the J-20 fighter was displayed in formation at the exhibition, showing that the J-20 already possesses initial operating capabilities. Second, the J-20 opened its weapons bay and conducted its display while circling the sky above the airport, demonstrating that it is capable of carrying new model mid- and long-range missiles, as well as short-distance air-to-air missiles.*

*While answering questions of reporters, Xu Anxiang expressed that the Air Force will progressively realize its goal of building a world-class air force according to the "three steps to take" plan. The first step is to cross the basic threshold for a strategic air force by 2020, and to set up a PLAAF forces system, command system, battle system, and support system with 4th-generation equipment as the backbone, and 3rd-generation equipment forming the main body. The second step, from 2020 to 2035, is for the PLAAF to establish basic strategic air force capabilities, and for the force system to be more complete, scientific, and rational. The third step, from 2035 to the mid-century, is for the general objectives of the PLAAF to be the same as the country and national defense armed forces, to build a first-rate strategic air force, and thereby support the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people and realize the Chinese Dream and Strong Military Dream.*

**Source:** "China Eyes Building Next Generation Fighter Jets by 2035," *Global Times*, 11 February 2019. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1138454.shtml>

*China will not fall behind in the global race toward sixth-generation fighter jets and is expected to build its own next-generation fighter jets by 2035, said a leading Chinese fighter jet specialist.*

*Some new features of a sixth-generation fighter jet include the ability to command drones, artificial intelligence and even higher stealth capability through aerodynamic design, the periodical reported.*

*New technologies, such as laser, adaptive engines, hypersonic weapons and swarm warfare, might also be part on the new aircraft, Wang said, noting that China will choose some of these features and add others that best suit China's needs.*

*A generation gap means the sixth-generation warplanes would easily top fifth-generation ones including the US' F-22 and China's J-20, analysts said.*

*"China's tradition is to have one generation in service, a new one in development and a next-generation under study. Now that the J-20 is already in service, the development for a new aircraft is also underway," the expert forecast.*