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### China's Navy Begins Fielding Newly Manufactured J-15 Carrier-Capable Fighters

The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has likely received a new batch of J-15 carrier-based fighters. [Recent video footage](#) released on "Military Express" (军事快播) shows a J-15 with a tail number of "31" and another with either "33" or "35". All previously known J-15 tail numbers fell within the "10" or "20" series, suggesting aircraft featuring a "30" series tail number are likely new aircraft.



Initial reports from late February 2020 suggested that Shenyang Aircraft Company resumed production of the J-15 after a three-year hiatus. The initial first two batches of J-15 fighters consisted of approximately 24 aircraft. Although this number is adequate to equip PLAN's single known operational J-15 regiment and support new pilot transition training, the PLAN's commissioning of its second aircraft carrier in December 2019 likely exacerbated the need for more aircraft.

The video footage suggests that the PLAN's Naval Aviation University Carrier Testing and Training Base (海军航空大学某舰载试训基地) is operating the new J-15 fighters. Given that the PLAN used the first two batches of J-15 fighters flexibly in both operational and training units, it is possible that the PLAN will use this third batch and any subsequent batches of J-15 fighters in a similar manner. However, assuming the PLAN wishes to be able to embark a full complement of J-15 fighters on both of its aircraft carriers, these new J-15 fighters likely belong to a newly established fighter regiment.

Regardless of what unit or units received these new J-15 fighters, the implication remains that the PLAN is finally moving towards achieving a fully operational aircraft carrier force. CASI previously assessed in late-2019 that "carrier-capable aircraft production remains the short pole in the tent" for the PLAN's aircraft carrier force. This no longer appears to be the case.

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