

Air force chief test flies F-5 fighter jet after deadly crash

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An F-5 fighter pilot yesterday signals a “thumbs-up” at Taitung Air Force Base.

Photo provided by Military News Agency via CNA

The air force yesterday conducted a test flight of one of its F-5 fighter jets, after completing major inspections of its fleet due to a deadly crash on Oct. 29, the Military News Agency said.

The test flight of an F-5F with the tail number 5261 started at 8:50am, and was copiloted by air force Commander Hsiung Hou-chi (洪侯奇), a report from the Military News Agency said.

The aircraft landed safely at Taitung Air Force Base after the 40-minute flight, the report said.

“I took part in the test flight to show the public that the F-5s are reliable and to demonstrate the will of our air force service members to defend our airspace,” Hsiung was quoted in the report as saying.

On Oct. 29, an F-5E, a single-seated variant of the F-5, crashed into the sea less than two minutes after taking off from Zhi-Hang Air Base.

Its pilot, Chu Kuan-meng (褚寬銘), ejected, but did not survive.

The air force had since suspended the operation of all its F-5s for inspections.

The report said that engine system, emergency escape system, fuel system and electronic instruments inspections, as well as corrosion protection tests, were performed on all F-5s.

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The October crash has raised doubts about deploying the aged F-5s, the earliest batch of which was manufactured in 1973 with the help of US-based Northrop Corp.

However, the air force has said several times that the usability of a plane depends on its condition and not its age, and that 26 countries around the world are still using F-5s.

“I believe the F-5s are safe to fly. That is why I was willing to join this test mission,” Hsiung was quoted as saying.

Despite this, Minister of National Defense Yen De-fa (嚴德發) has said that the air force would replace its F-5s with indigenous Advanced Jet Trainers within the next three years.

Meanwhile, the military’s investigation into the crash is still ongoing, partly because the wreckage of the ill-fated jet has yet to be recovered due to rough weather conditions, a military source said.

The Presidential Office has announced the posthumous promotion of Chu from captain to lieutenant colonel, effective from Oct. 29.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/11/15](#)