

## F-16 goes missing off the east coast

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An air force F-16A jet, number 6672, takes off from Hualien Air Base in Hualien County yesterday afternoon in a photograph taken by an aviation fan.

**Photo: CNA**

An air force F-16 jet went missing off the east coast of Taiwan last night, and search and recovery operations were ongoing as of press time, the Ministry of National Defense said.

The F-16 disappeared from radar screens at 6:07pm 9 nautical miles (17km) northeast of Hualien Air Base, two minutes after taking off from the base as part of a nighttime training exercise, the ministry said.

The F-16, serial number 6672, was piloted by Colonel Chiang Cheng-chih (蔣正之), it said.

A National Rescue Command Center statement said that a Black Hawk helicopter and Coast Guard Administration vessels had been dispatched to the area to locate the aircraft and its pilot.

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said that night searches are difficult, so she hoped that the public would keep Chiang in their prayers so that the search teams could bring back good news, Presidential Office spokesman Xavier Chang (張惇) quoted Tsai as saying.

Tsai earlier in the day attended a memorial ceremony to honor air force captain Chu Kuan-meng (瞿光蒙), who died on Oct. 29 when his F-5E jet crashed into the sea after taking off from Chihhang Air Base in Taitung County.

At the Chihhang base service, Tsai presented a citation to Chu's widow and thanked the 29-year-old pilot for his dedication and the sacrifices he made to protect the nation.

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Chu was posthumously promoted to lieutenant colonel and air force Commander Hsiung Hou-chi (洪錡琪) also presented him with the Order of Loyalty and Valor, which was received by his father.

During the service, four F-5 jets flew the missing comrade formation over the base to pay their respects to their fallen comrade.

Chu is to be interred at the air force Martyrs' Shrine in New Taipei City.

His F-5E crashed into the sea less than two minutes after taking off from the base at 7:29am on Oct. 29. Although he managed to eject from the plane, he died of his injuries at 9:27am.

The military's investigation into the crash is still ongoing.

Taiwan in 1992 procured a total of 150 F-16s from the US; the first batch was delivered in 1997.

Prior to last night's incident, there had been seven F-16 crashes during training missions.

Additional reporting by Yang Chun-hui

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