



# MYANMAR WITNESS

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CENTRE for  
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## THE 77th ANNIVERSARY OF MYANMAR'S AIR FORCE (MAF) DAY

A Review Of MAF's Claimed New Acquisitions

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30 December 2024

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

On 15 December 2024, Myanmar marked the 77th anniversary of its Air Force Day which was celebrated at Meiktila's Shante Airbase, the official headquarters of the Myanmar Air Force (MAF). This event marked a return to the headquarters after 2023's temporary relocation to [Naypyidaw International Airport](#), along with the significantly reduced number of attendees, which Myanmar Witness attributed to security concerns.

The anniversary highlighted the MAF's commitment to strengthening its aerial capabilities amid the ongoing internal conflict, with newly commissioned aircraft and helicopters on display during the celebrations. Historically, the military has used this event to showcase its military capabilities and strength to both the international community and its internal audience. Foreign dignitaries have often attended as part of the ceremony. Additionally, the significance of the anniversary has increased following the military's coup in 2021, with the additional presentation of new equipment serving as a key factor of the military's messaging to both its supporters and opponents. Aircraft, in particular, play a vital role in SAC's operations and a critical component in the efforts to control Myanmar.

While Myanmar Witness exists to document potential human interferences rather than conflict dynamics, [the clear link between the MAF and such abuses](#) brings the documentation of their capability into scope. This report will delve into the newly claimed additions to the MAF service along with a brief overview of the other aircraft present at the ceremony. The images presented in this report have been extracted from state-run media channels and as Myanmar Witness intends to limit the spread and reach of regime-produced propaganda, links have been removed and are available upon request only.

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## 2 NEW CLAIMED ADDITIONS

This event featured several notable additions to the MAF's service, emphasising its ongoing modernisation and the strength of its fleet. Key highlights included the commissioning of a new batch of Chinese-made FTC-2000G advanced trainer/light multirole aircraft and the presentation of new Russian-made Mil Mi-17 medium utility/transport helicopters in at least two different variants and configurations (as can be seen in figure 1). These platforms have been consistently used by the MAF, with the former being employed more frequently, while the latter forms the backbone of its assault and small-scale supply capabilities. This report will also address other significant aircraft additions that were present at the ceremony.



Figure 1: Three Mi-17s, three FTC-2000Gs, one K-8 and one Y-8F-200W were showcased at MAF's 77th anniversary on 15 December 2024 at Shante Airbase in Meiktila. (source: MWD footage).

## 2.1 FTC-2000G ADVANCED TRAINER/LIGHT MULTIROLE AIRCRAFT

This year's ceremony featured the notable commissioning of a new collection of Chinese-made FTC-2000G advanced trainer/light multirole aircraft. Three of these aircraft were visible on the tarmac, bearing tail numbers 1407, 1411, and 1413 (figures 2, 3 and 4). The FTC-2000G has been increasingly employed by the MAF in combat sorties thus underscoring their importance to the MAF's operational capabilities.



Figure 2: MAF FTC-2000G with tail number 1407. (source: MWD footage).



Figure 3: MAF FTC-2000G with tail number 1411. (source: MRTV footage).



Figure 4: MAF FTC-2000G with tail number 1413. (source: MWD footage).

## 2.2 SAIC Y-8F-200W MEDIUM RANGE TACTICAL TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

Additionally, the event recorded another significant addition to MAF's aircraft: a Chinese-manufactured SAIC Y-8F-200W medium-range tactical transport aircraft. This was registered with a tail number starting with 59- different from the 58- prefix used by the other aircraft of the same model in MAF service (figure 5).

The Y-8F-200W is [confirmed](#) to have originated from the People's Republic of China (PRC). Myanmar Witness verified that a photograph was taken at Kunming Changshui International Airport, allegedly on 7 July 2024 (figure 6). Figure 6 shows a newly painted partially covered Y-8F-200W sample with MAF livery and a new tail number. This verification of the photo strengthens the notion that the Y-8F-200W is sourced from China, and the new tail number further suggests it is a newly commissioned aircraft for the MAF. This confirmation also supports the ongoing trend of the MAF modernising and expanding its services with newly acquired equipment, as highlighted during the anniversary celebrations.



Figure 5: Three additional – and previously unseen – Mi-17s take place behind the Y-8F-200W. (source: MRTV footage)



Figure 6: SAIC Y-8F-200W with tail number 5922 at Kunming Changshui International Airport on 7 July 2024. (source: JetPhotos).

### 2.3 MIL MI-17 MEDIUM UTILITY/TRANSPORT HELICOPTERS

Also present at the ceremony were three Mil Mi-17 helicopters, showcasing different variants and configurations. These helicopters displayed tail numbers 6625, 6623 and 6622 (in order from left to right as shown in figures 7 and 8). Tail number 6625 is a Mi-17-IV (recognisable by its glass cockpit), while tail numbers 6623 and 6622 are Mi-17MDs configured for VIP/passenger transport, recognisable by the rectangular windows and airliner-type seats. The interiors of 6622 were shown later in the ceremony, and photographed, confirming its passenger configuration. It's important to stress that these configurations are not unique but

represent two models, the Mi-17-1V and the Mi-17MDs, and various possible configurations within the MI-17 family (figures 9 and 10).



Figure 7: MAF Mi-17MDs in passenger configuration with tail numbers 6623 and 6622 (source: MWD footage).







Figure 8: [Top] image is MAF Mi-17-1V with tail numbers 6625 and [Bottom] image is close-up of tail number. (source: MWD footage).



Figure 9: MAF Mi-17MDs with tail numbers 6623 and 6622 with a view of their interiors and squared windows. (source: MRTV footage).





Figure 10: MAF Mi-17MD in passenger configuration with tail number 6622 with close-up of interiors and squared windows. (sources: MRTV footage, Myanmar Transparency News, Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services).

## 2.4 K-8 BASIC TRAINER JET

Finally, a single Hongdu K-8 basic trainer/light combat jet, bearing tail number 3941, was officially showcased as newly commissioned. However, Myanmar Witness believes this is not a new addition, as a K-8 with tail number 3942 had been observed [previously](#).

As shown in figure 11 (below), placed before the Y-8, a single K-8 basic trainer jet, bearing tail number 3941 was on display. Positioned next to the recently commissioned aircraft, equipped with a ladder to the cockpit, the way it was presented was potentially done to suggest that it was a new addition to the MAF service. However, as anticipated, Myanmar Witness had previously identified tail number [3942](#), not specifically 3941, which crashed in November 2023. This indicates that the K-8 with tail number 3941 must have been commissioned sometime before late 2023 and after December 2022, when tail number 3938 was commissioned into the MAF service. Additionally, three more K-8s, bearing tail numbers 3930, 3925 and 3926, all previously commissioned, were filmed in the background getting ready for the traditional flyby (figures 12 and 13).



Figure 11: MAF K-8 with tail number 3941. (source: MRTV footage).



Figure 12: MAF K-8 with tail number 3930, getting ready for flyby. (source: MRTV footage).





Figure 13: MAF K-8s, bearing tail numbers 3930, 3925 and 3926, getting ready for flyby. (source: MWD footage).

## 2.5 OBSERVATIONS ON PROVENANCE

The FTC-2000Gs, being a relatively new model with limited operators, are confirmed to have originated from their manufacturer, the Guizhou Aircraft Industry Corporation, which is part of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China. Earlier in this report, it was established that Myanmar Witness had verified the recent delivery of the Y-8F-200W from the PRC. Given the long production history of the Mi-17-series at Kazan Helicopters, a subsidiary of Russian Helicopter JSC, it is possible that these Mi-17s observed in Myanmar may be second-hand. Lastly, Myanmar Witness is aware that Myanmar has previously assembled K-8 trainer jets domestically, which complicates the verification of the true source of these aircraft.

In general, the mechanics of the event appeared somewhat unusual, with some of the newly commissioned models participating in the traditional flyby but only reappearing later and at a greater distance from the crowd and cameras. If intentional, this tactic may have been successful, as Myanmar Witness is currently unable to account for all the tail numbers showcased at the 15 December event.

One aircraft of particular interest was the Y-8F-200W, which stood out due to a notable discrepancy with its tail number. On the tarmac, placed along the red line, were three Mi-17s, three FTC-2000s, one K-8 and one Y-8 (figure 1). The white aircraft at the end of the row, shown in figure 1, is a Y-8F-200W, bearing tail number 5922. Typically, all Y-8 transport planes in the MAF service bear a tail number starting with 58-. For example, Myanmar Witness previously [highlighted](#) that the latest Y-8 commissioned into MAF service (on MAF's 75th anniversary on 15

December 2022) later crash-landed and bore the tail number 5821. The introduction of a y-8 tail number starting with '59-' is unusual, as it deviates from the usual pattern previously observed in the MAF service.

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### 3 THE FLYBY

During the ceremony, a flyby featured the participation of several aircraft models. During this display, the only aircraft that could be identified via its tail number was Mi-17-1V 6628. Additionally, the unique figure is visible on the pilot's dashboard. Since this tail number had not been spotted before, and because it follows the three tail numbers identified on the tarmac, Myanmar Witness assesses that this Mi-17 may have recently been introduced to MAF service (figure 14).

The following aircraft and helicopter were also seen and identified on the flyby and captured via footage:

- One Mi-17-1V bearing tail number 6628 was seen taking off for the flyby, accompanied by another Mi-17-1V and two Myanmar Navy Eurocopters AS365 N2 helicopters (figure 15);
- One Bell 206, one EC/H120 and two H-125s (figure 16);
- One ATR 72 and two Beechcraft 1900s (figure 17);
- Three K-8 trainer jets – 3930, 3925 and 3926 (figure 18);
- Two F-7s and two MiG-29s (figure 19);
- Three FTC-2000Gs (figure 20);
- One Grob-120 accompanied by one MiG-29 and one Su-30 (figure 21).



Figure 14: MAF Mi-17-1V bearing tail number 6626 during take-off (sources: MRTV footage and MWD footage employed by BBC Burmese).





Figure 15: Mi-17-1V tail number 6628 accompanied by another Mi-17-1V and two Myanmar Navy Eurocopter AS365 N2 helicopters. (source: MWD footage).



Figure 16: One Bell 206, one EC/H120 and two H-125s. (source: MWD footage).



Figure 17: One ATR 72 and two Beechcraft 1900s. (source: MWD footage).



Figure 18: Three K-8 trainer jets, previously spotted on the tarmac: 3930, 3925 and 3926 before the flyby (source: MWD footage).



Figure 19: Two F-7s and two MiG-29s (the one in the background is of the UB, two-seater trainer variant). (source: MWD footage).



Figure 20: Three FTC-2000Gs. (source: MWD footage).



Figure 21: One Grob-120 accompanied by one MiG and one Su-30. (source: MWD footage).

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## 4 FEET ON THE GROUND

### 4.1 MI-17 HELICOPTERS

A total of six Mi-17s were visible on the tarmac during the ceremony. Three Mi-17s, bearing tail numbers 6622, 6623, and 6625 were on display along the red line, as shown in figures 1, 7 and 8. Meanwhile, three others were stationed by the hangar, including 6626, which was first observed internally before the flyby (figure 22). Additionally, behind and beside the Y-8F-200W, it is also possible to spot one FTC-200G that does not belong to the original group lined up along the red line (figure 23). For these reasons, and the fact that tail number 6621 has been in service with the MAF since at least [2014](#), Myanmar Witness assesses that the remaining two Mi-17s, near the hangar, are highly likely tail number 6624 and either the newly commissioned 6627 or a previously commissioned Mi-17 with a non-visible tail number. Notably, the Mi-17 stationed next to 6626, placed further away from the hangar, is identified as a Mi-17-1V (figure 23). This assessment highlights the Mi-17 series as a critical component in the MAF service, while also suggesting how it enhances its operational capacity.



Figure 22: Two MAF Mi-17-Vs, the first bearing tail number 6626. (sources: MWD footage and Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services).



Figure 23: the blades of three Mi-17s are visible in the previously unoccupied space behind the Y-8F-200W and front of the hangar. (source: MWD).

A Mi-17-1V with tail number 6624 was previously identified by Myanmar Witness as participating in a government-sponsored reforestation campaign in September 2024 (figure 24). This identification suggests that tail numbers 6626 and 6625 are not recent additions to the MAF fleet as initially thought. Therefore, the fact that Mi-17-1V was already observed in September 2024, despite being newly visible during the ceremony in December 2024 raises questions about whether these aircraft were truly newly commissioned.





Figure 24: MAF Mi-17-1V bearing tail number 6624 showcased at a government campaign in September 2024. (source: Ministry of Interior - Information and Public Relations Department).

## 4.2 FTC-2000G AIRCRAFT

Similarly to the Mi-17 helicopters, the division of the batch of FTC-2000G aircraft presented at the MAF's 77th-anniversary event in two groups appears to be a unique and deliberate strategy. Positioned along the red line were three FTC-2000Gs with tail numbers 1407, 1411, and 1413 (figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). Later, Three others were spotted near the hangar: tail numbers 1412, and 1410 and one additional aircraft, likely either 1408 or 1409 (figure 25). These aircraft near the hangar appeared following the flyby, suggesting they were positioned there after the christening ceremony.

Myanmar Witness had previously verified that tail number 1406 was commissioned on [15 December 2022](#). The tail numbers of newly introduced FTC-2000Gs at the MAF ceremony range from 1407 to 1412, implying a total of seven aircraft. Yet, only six were visible on the tarmac, raising questions about the whereabouts of the seven aircraft. This type of presentation highlights the peculiarities of the event and raises further questions about the actual number of newly commissioned FTC-2000Gs.



Figure 25: MAF FTC-2000Gs bearing tail numbers 1412, 1410 and a third one too far away to be readable, are lined one behind the other in the previously unoccupied behind the Y-8F-200W. (sources: MWD footage and Myanmar Transparency News).



### 4.3 SUKHOI SU-35 MODEL

Lastly, it is important to note the Sukhoi Su-35 model, which was displayed during the SAC chairman Min Aung Hlaing's visit to the MAF flight school premises (figure 26). While its presence at the ceremony could suggest a potential gift from a previous visit to Russia, it may also indicate future plans for MAF acquisitions. However, there is currently no concrete information that helps confirm any plans to integrate the Su-35 into the MAF service.



Figure 26: model of Sukhoi Su-35 aircraft displayed during the event for the 77th anniversary of the establishment of the MAF, within the flight school's premises. (source: MWD footage).

## 5 CONCLUSION

The 77th anniversary of Myanmar's Air Force Day, held at Shante Airbase in Meiktila on 15 December 2024, showcased newly commissioned as well as previously-observed aircraft. The commissioning of new samples of the FTC-2000Gs and the Mi-17 helicopters and putting them on display highlights the MAF's reliance on such platforms and their logistical capabilities. Overall, the continued presence of manufactured aircraft from China and Russia does highlight the ongoing cooperation between Myanmar's SAC and its foreign backers.

The SAC employed unusual tactics while displaying their aircraft during this event, marking a clear departure from past editions, where new aircraft would typically be displayed on the tarmac and older models participated in the flyby. This shift may have been an attempt to confuse foreign analysts or local observers, while still exploiting the ceremony's potential for propaganda regarding the size and

composition of its aircraft fleet. The re-commissioning of an old K-8 trainer and the introduction of a new tail number pattern for the Y-8 transport appears to be a part of this strategy.

The ceremony's presentation also made tracking and confirming some aircraft details difficult for Myanmar Witness. Therefore, moving forward, closer monitoring will be required in order to gain a clearer understanding of the MAF's air capabilities and potential future acquisitions.

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## 6 ABBREVIATIONS

MAF - Myanmar Air Force

PRC - People's Republic of China

SAC - State Administration Council