



Sri Lankan SJT-1807 is a bit of a mystery bird believed to be a second hand example from China. (China Bay, 6 February 2011, Erwin van Dijkman)

Lanka was among the first to get the K-8. Along with other early adopters Zambia and Myanmar. Intended to replace the SF260s of 14 squadron at Anuradhapura they arrived in 2001 and were subsequently based at Trincomalee/China Bay with the 1st Flying Training Wing.

During the hostilities, an insurgent attack on Colombo-Katunayake 24 July 2001 destroyed three of the newly delivered aircraft. That is why three attrition replacements were obtained and handed over on 25 July 2005. Two more aircraft arrived later after yet another airframe was lost to the Tamil Tigers when they attacked Anuradhapura on 22 October 2007. These last two deliveries mystified us for a while. During a visit in 2011, it was clear that they were painted up with construction numbers in the same style as the rest. However, on their operations board the **L8** prefix was missing. That, combined with the known fact that they came second hand from China, would likely place them in the small pre-production batch *sans prefix*. However, they were in the later K-8 configuration, comparable to batch '03', the satnav bulge is clearly visible on the spine and they lack the thin spine antennae that SJT-1801 to 1803 do have. So we still think these came from the pre-production run but were brought up to the production standard of the time.

Re-serialing has long been a tactic to cloud the number of available assets and / or to please the taste of the incumbent air force commander. In 2012, the K-8s were re-serialled with their original serial number tied to the existing prefix so it seems. Two are completely out of sequence though, so maybe they acquired another two airframes? These ending in 12/13 seems to indicate a further delivery as, until now, eleven were delivered...

Units

1 Flying Training Wing Trincomalee/China Bay

Serial-batches

1st batch [6]	CTF740/741, 743-746	survivors to SJT-1801-1803
2nd batch [3]	CTF747-749	survivors to SJT-1805-1806
3rd batch [2]	SJT-1807-1808	

Note that serial CTF742 and SJT-1804 were not used as the individual numbers add up to thirteen, an unlucky number in Sri Lankan culture. It is also likely that they avoided re-using the crash victims' serials while issuing the latest serial range. The first three used to be quoted as **L8 320 02 19 to 21** but we believe this was erroneous.

Serials (old)

CTF740	reregistered	as SJT-1801	L8 320 02 19
CTF741	14sq	w/o 24jul01	L8 320 02 20
CTF743	14sq	w/o 24jul01	L8 320 02 21
CTF744	reregistered	as SJT-1802	L8 320 02 22
CTF745	14sq	w/o 24jul01	L8 320 02 23
CTF746	reregistered	as SJT-1803	L8 320 02 24
CTF747	14sq	w/o 22oct07	L8 320 03 14
SJT-1802	1FTW		L8 320 02 22 feb11
SJT-1803	1FTW		L8 320 02 24 feb11
SJT-1805	1FTW		L8 320 03 15 feb11
SJT-1806	1FTW		L8 320 03 16 feb11
SJT-1807	1FTW		320 2 05 / L8 320 02 05 feb11
SJT-1808	1FTW		320 2 06 / L8 320 02 06 feb11

Serials (new)

SJT-740	1FTW	ex SJT-1801	L8 320 02 19 mar12
SJT-744	1FTW	maybe ex SJT-1802?	mar12
SJT-746	1FTW	maybe ex SJT-1803?	mar12
SJT-748	1FTW	maybe ex SJT-1805?	mar12
SJT-749	1FTW	maybe ex SJT-1806?	mar12
SJT-1612	1FTW	maybe ex SJT-1807?	mar12
SJT-1613	1FTW	maybe ex SJT-1808?	mar12

Sudan

Sudan is under an UN arms embargo since at least 2004 because of their behaviour in Darfur. That Sudan does not comply with this, is known from the get go, to quote resolution 1591 from 2005: "the United Nations, Deplores strongly that the Government of Sudan and rebel forces and all other armed groups in Darfur have failed to comply fully with their commitments and the demands of the Council referred to in resolutions 1556 (2004), 1564 (2004), and 1574 (2004), condemns the continued violations of the 8 April 2004 N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement and the 9 November 2004 Abuja Protocols, including air strikes by the Government of Sudan in December 2004 and January 2005 and rebel attacks on Darfur villages in January 2005." Nonetheless, Sudan managed to acquire not only K-8s, but also A-5s, Su-25s, MiG-29s, and Mi-17s since 2004...

So far, the K-8s have not been used in Darfur, but training the pilots that drop the bombs there is obviously necessary with the influx of new aircraft. Obviously, there are neither press statements from China or Sudan on the details. We believe 24 were acquired in two groups of twelve, delivered by June 2006 and by December 2012. Although a five-ship delivery on 18 November 2014 is also mentioned. The first twelve are mostly white, whereas the second batch is camouflaged.