

Pakistan Air Force jet crash kills woman pilot

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Lahore: A female pilot of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) was killed today when a trainer fighter jet crashed in Punjab province, becoming the first woman fighter pilot to be killed in air crash in the country.

The Chinese made plane went down near Kundian after flying on a routine mission from Mianwali airbase in Punjab province, seriously injuring the two pilots.

According to a PAF official statement, a FT-7PG flown by Squadron Leader Saqib Abbasi and co-pilot Flying Officer Marium Mukhtar was on a routine operational training mission when it encountered an in-flight emergency during the final stages of the mission.

"Both pilots handled the emergency with professionalism and courage and tried to save the aircraft till the last minute, ensuring safety of property and the civilian population on the ground," said the statement.

It said both the pilots ejected from the aircraft and sustained injuries. They were shifted to a nearby military hospital, where Mukhtar succumbed to her injuries and while the condition of Abbasi is stated to be critical.

Flying Officer Marium was among over two-dozen women pilots who joined the PAF during the last decade or so.

She is the first female fighter pilot to be killed in such crash in Pakistan. Pakistan has over 300 women in the air force compared to around 100 five years ago.

A growing number of women have joined Pakistan's defence forces in recent years as attitudes towards women change.

There are reportedly over 4,000 women in Pakistan's armed forces, largely confined to desk jobs and medical work.

No loss to life or property was reported on the ground.

The immediate cause of crash was not known and PAF has instituted an official probe to the reason of the mishap.

- PTI