

# Air Force to recruit female fighter pilots

The PLA Air Force will begin recruiting this year for a new generation of female pilots, the official PLA Daily reported on Wednesday.

Sources with the Air Force's pilot recruitment bureau quoted by the paper said 35 candidates will be selected from high school graduates in 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.

The recruits who pass years of stringent training will go on to become the People's Liberation Army planned 11th generation of female pilots.

Applicants need to have been born between Aug 31, 1997, and Aug 31, 2000, and be between 165 and 185 centimeters tall. Acceptable weight is between 85 and 120 percent of the Chinese people's standard weight, which varies in accordance with age and height. There are also vision requirements, according to the report.

The last time the Air Force recruited female pilots was in 2013. The most notable differences between this year's recruitment and the one in 2013 are that the height ceiling has been raised from 175 cm to 185 cm, and the area where candidates are being drawn from has expanded to 31 provincial-level regions instead of 20.

Wang Ya'nan, editor of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, told China Daily that the height restriction has been relaxed because Chinese women on average have gotten taller and the military does not want to narrow the field.

Applicants must take part in the national college entrance exam and their total scores must meet requirements set by local education authorities to qualify them for Air Force selection, which will start this month and end in July, PLA Daily said.

Fu Qianshao, an aircraft expert with the PLA Air Force, said the courses and training for female pilot candidates are the same as those for male candidates. They will learn from textbooks, take part in flight training on basic and advanced trainer aircraft and will graduate after at least six years at the Air Force Aviation University and flight academies.

China enrolled its first female pilots in 1951 and since then about 580 belonging to 10 generations have joined the Air Force. The first seven generations of female pilots flew only transport planes.

In the selection for the eighth generation in 2005, the Air Force began to open the post of fighter jet pilot to applicants and more than 200,000 female graduates from high schools around the country applied. A total of 35 were selected and sent to the PLA Air Force No 3 Flight Academy and 16 of them graduated and became fighter jet pilots.

The ninth generation of female pilots, also numbering 16, were taught to fly fighter jets, graduated in 2013 and also joined the Air Force's combat units.

The most recent generation, the 10th, including 40 women, joined the Air Force in 2013. By now, 13 have been disqualified in training while 27 completed their first solo flight in March, according to the Air Force.