

Russia has presented Zimbabwe with a Mi-38 helicopter

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During the Russia-Africa Forum held in St. Petersburg on July 27-28, 2023, Zimbabwe's official resources [reported](#) that the Russian Helicopters company (according to other statements, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin) presented Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa with a Mi-38 helicopter, which is made in VIP configuration with a cabin on eight persons and will be used as a presidential board.



The Mi-38-2 helicopter presented to the President of Zimbabwe by the Russian side (factory number 26005, Russian registration number RA-14341, Zimbabwean registration number Z-LCT) in VIP configuration (c) TASS

This Mi-38-2 helicopter, already painted with a new color with the state symbols of Zimbabwe of this country and the Zimbabwean registration number Z-LCT, was presented at the exposition of the Russian Helicopters holding company, organized in St. Petersburg during the Russia -Africa forum. The helicopter transferred to Zimbabwe is the first serial and still the only civilian model of the Mi-38-2 helicopter built and was originally manufactured at the Kazan Helicopter Plant JSC (KVZ) of the Russian Helicopters Holding for operation by Russian Helicopter Systems (RVS), the customer was Gazprom-Leasing.

This aircraft with the registration number RA-14341 (factory number 26005) made its first flight to the KVZ at the end of 2019 and was transferred to the Russian Helicopter Systems company on February 26, 2020. However, little is known about the operation of the helicopter in the RVS, and its flights were very infrequent. It was reported that in 2020, the helicopter's flight time was 149 hours, and in 2021 - only 47 hours. It was claimed that the helicopter was actually intended for use as a personal salon of the Minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation Denis Manturov.

In August 2021, UEC-Klimov issued a decision to suspend flights of Mi-38 helicopters with TV7-117V engines due to the crash of a prototype Il-112B military transport aircraft with TV7-117C turboprop

engines of this family. As you can understand, the operation of the 26005 was not resumed after that, and it is unclear in what status this helicopter will fly to Zimbabwe. Prior to that, it was reported that in 2020, three serious failures of the TV7-117V engine occurred on Mi-38 helicopters in flight, and all three were due to the destruction of the shaft bearing, including once one of the helicopters made an emergency landing.

According to available information, an agreement on the gratuitous transfer to Zimbabwe of the Mi-38-2 helicopter with the factory number 26005 was reached back in September 2022 as an annex to the [contracts](#) concluded at that time for the purchase of 32 Ansat light helicopters and 28 newly built Mi-17 helicopters from Zimbabwe from Russian Helicopters JSC. Also, at the same time, one Ansat helicopter that was already in operation (Zimbabwean registration number ZW-001) was transferred to Zimbabwe free of charge.

The fusion of the only civilian Mi-38 aircraft built as a gift to Zimbabwe once again clearly demonstrates the status of a "suitcase without a handle" of this long-suffering helicopter program that has been going on for five decades. In total, to date, according to known data, four prototypes of the Mi-38 helicopter (from OP-1 to OP-4) and at least nine flight serial samples have been built at the KVZ. In 2019-2020, KVZ handed over [three Mi-38T](#) helicopters for the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (factory numbers 26001, 26002 and 26003, tail numbers "71", "72" and "73", respectively, - all three sides, according to known data, are used for testing), at the end of 2020 handed over [two helicopters](#) The Mi-38-4, built for the FSBI "Special Flight Detachment (SLO) "Russia" of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation (factory numbers 26004 and 26006, registration numbers RA-14340 and RA-14343), in February 2020, handed over the first and so far the only civilian serial helicopter Mi-38-2 with registration number RA-14341 (factory number 26005), which has now been transferred to Zimbabwe, and in 2021 a Mi-38-4 helicopter was [built](#) in a special design for the Federal Security Service (FSO) of the Russian Federation. In total, the FSO ordered, according to known data, three helicopters (factory numbers 26014, 26015 and 26016), but it is unclear whether the next two were built (apparently, 26015 was built) and whether at least one helicopter was delivered to this customer. There is also data on the construction and start of flight tests in 2021 at the plant of the Mi-38-4 helicopter with the factory number 26017 of unknown purpose - possibly as a prototype of some special modification.

In August 2020, during the Army 2020 International Military-Technical Forum, a [contract](#) was signed for the supply to the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation of two Mi-38 helicopters for VIP transportation in the salon configuration, the delivery of the first of them was planned in 2022. However, to date, there is no information about their manufacture.

In July 2021, at the MAKS-2021 air show, Russian Helicopters signed a contract with the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia for the supply of nine search and rescue Mi-38PS helicopters in Arctic execution, their delivery also did not begin. Prior to that, in September 2020, the then general director of Russian Helicopters, Andrei Boginsky, also stated regarding the Mi-38 that "we have a signed contract and received an advance from a foreign customer for three helicopters," there is also no information about the implementation of this contract.

In February 2022, the new CEO of Russian Helicopters, Nikolai Kolesov, [said](#) that the production plan for the KVZ for 2022 is 12 Mi-38 helicopters, and in total "there are firm contracts for 25 helicopters until 2024, including for foreign operators." But there is no information about the manufacture of at least one Mi-38 helicopter in 2022. For 2023, the new preliminary production plan for the KVZ was nine Mi-38s (apparently "moved" from the 2022 program), but there is also no data on any of their production.







