
United States Buys Russian Helos for Iraq

By

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In a rare case of the U.S. Government buying military or dual-use equipment from Russia, the Pentagon awarded an \$80.6 million contract to Aeronautical Radio, Incorporated (ARINC), an Annapolis, Maryland company, to buy and deliver 22 Russian Mi-17CT helicopters North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) codename “Hip-H” for the Iraqi government, according to a March 27 [2009] DOD contract announcement.

Russian Helicopters, the government-controlled holding uniting Russia’s helicopter-makers, said in a March 31 [2009] statement that its Ulan-Ude aviation plant had signed a contract with the United Arab Emirates-based Airfreight Aviation to service and repair 22 Mi-17s for Iraq.

The Pentagon contract provides \$2.4 million to buy each Mi-17CT, which a Russian Helicopters source said was the most anyone has ever paid for Mi-17s.

The rest of the nearly \$22 million will go to modify the aircraft to customer requirements.

The Pentagon’s contract sets an estimated completion date of August 31, 2010.

The Mi-17 is the most popular of all helicopters that Russia sells abroad, with more than 11,000 produced and exported to eighty countries.

The Mi-17 can carry 32 passengers or four tons of cargo. Its six hard-points can carry bombs, rockets, and gun pods weighing up to up to 1,500 kilograms total.

Russian and Western media have occasionally reported possible purchases of Mi-17s and other Russian military and dual-use equipment by the Americans for the Iraqi Army over the past several years. In September 2007, the Russian Foreign Ministry officially denied any arms deliveries to Iraq.