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## Venezuela to get Russian aircraft

**Venezuela will replace its fleet of US fighter jets with Russian aircraft, President Hugo Chavez has said.**

Mr Chavez said Venezuela would receive 24 Sukhoi fighters later this year, with the option of buying more advanced models if oil finances allow.

The US recently banned arms sales to Venezuela, cutting off any chance of servicing existing F-16 fighter jets.

But Venezuela has since turned to Russia, receiving three helicopters and 100,000 Kalashnikov rifles.

"First we are going to buy 24 Sukhoi S-30s and we are going to leave open the possibility of a future acquisition," Mr Chavez said in the country's capital, Caracas.

He spoke at a military ceremony where he received and posed with a Kalashnikov rifle.

### Military build-up

Mr Chavez, who has publicly spoken of the need to upgrade Venezuela's military capabilities in the event of a US invasion, lavished praise on the Sukhoi fighters.

"An F-16 launches a missile, maximum distance: 60km (40 miles). Do you all know from what distance the Sukhoi S-30 can launch? 200km," Mr Chavez said.

"That's to say, an aircraft carrier that stops in the Caribbean. They [the US] like to stop aircraft carriers in the Caribbean to invade."

Mr Chavez has insisted that Venezuela has no plans to use its military technology offensively.

The BBC's Greg Morsbach, in Caracas, says those who know Venezuela's president and his long career as an army officer are not surprised about his interest in military technology.

Washington has dismissed Mr Chavez's talks of a US invasion.

Mr Chavez's critics accuse him of turning Venezuela into a militaristic society



Hugo Chavez has often said the US plans to invade Venezuela

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