



South African airshows are often visited by Zimbabwean Karakorums. (2021C, Ysterplaat, 25 September 2010, Marc van Zon)

Serials

0402	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 58	may14
0507	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 57	nov12
0611	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 69	nov13
1303	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 63	nov13
1504	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 62	nov12
1602	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 65	nov12
1904	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 53	may14
2002	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 60	nov12
2210	Grupo 12	w/o 27nov12 L8W 320 02 67	nov12
2510	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 64	nov12
2702	Grupo 15	w/o 26jul13 L8W 320 02 61	nov12
2707	Grupo 12		may14
2712	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 66	nov13
2908	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 68	nov12
2912	Grupo 12		may14
5595	Grupo 12	w/o 21jul10	jan10
7774	SERMAAV (Grupo 12)		nov12
9998	Grupo 12	L8W 320 02 55	may14
...		L8W 320 02 59	photo
61862/KL	Grupo 15	L8W 320 03 15	apr16
61863	Grupo 12/15	L8W 320 03 19	mar16
61864/KL	Grupo 12/15	L8W 320 03 16	jul16
61865/AE	Grupo 15	L8W 320 03 17	apr16
61866/AE	Grupo 12	L8W 320 03 18	jul16
61867/AE	Grupo 15	L8W 320 03 22	may16
61868/KL	Grupo 15	L8W 320 03 20	jul16
61869/AE	Grupo 15	L8W 320 03 21	apr16
61960/KL	Grupo 12/15	L8W 320 03 23	mar16

Photos exist of construction number **L8W 320 02 59** on a pylon and the four gaps above could be filled by **L8W 320 02 52**, **02 56**, **02 54**, and **02 59**. Obviously, the gaps we filled in the second range marked in red, are no more than guesses. With new serials and two different codes, for basic jet training and light attack, and the smart new green/greyish colour scheme, they look the part.

Zambia

Although often overlooked because of the huge Egyptian deal, in fact the Zambians were the first customer to actually get their hands on the Sino-Pak design, just beating Myanmar to it. Initially eight were delivered to Mumbwa air base. They are currently operated by 43 squadron out of Mbala as far as we know.

Apparently Zambia pleased their Chinese partners, because they got to buy eight more that were delivered 21 March 2012. That would place them after the Tanzanians and before the second Sudanese order. Various sources differ on the number of aircraft delivered, with fourteen, fifteen, or even

twelve being reported. We must admit that an initial six or seven and an additional eight would much better fit the production run of the first K-8 batches. But in that case the total numbers do not add up entirely in that early production run and if the serials run in order, at least fifteen should exist!

Units

ZAF Mbala No.43 squadron Mbala

Serial-batches

1st batch (2000) AF-824-831 [8] c/ns **L8 320 01 01** to **L8 320 01 08**
2nd batch (2012) AF-832-839 [8] c/ns **L8 320 02 40** to **L8 320 02 47**

Confirmed serials & some construction numbers (1st batch)

AF824	43sq	L8 320 01 01	2013
AF825	43sq	L8 320 01 02	nov04
AF826	43sq	L8 320 01 03	nov04
AF827	43sq	L8 320 01 04	feb11
AF828	43sq	L8 320 01 05	jul11
AF829	43sq	L8 320 01 06	nov08
AF830	43sq	L8 320 01 07	photo
AF831?		L8 320 01 08	photo

Luckily, some construction numbers are known and they at least confirm their position at the beginning of the K-8 export production line.

Confirmed serials (2nd batch)

AF832	43sq		photo
AF833	43sq		photo
AF834	43sq		sep14
AF835	43sq		sep14
AF837	43sq		oct15
AF838	43sq		aug14

This second batch should consist of 'upgraded old K-8P aircraft'. That seems a bit strange, but you never know...

Unconfirmed serials

AF831	43sq	(1st batch)	2000
AF836	43sq	(2nd batch)	2012
AF839	43sq	(2nd batch)	2012

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's acquisition of the K-8 can be seen as a direct response on the British ban to supply spare parts and support for the BAe Hawk they already had in service for the basic jet training and light attack role. These arrived in two instalments, in 1982 and 1992. The ban was effectuated in 2000. When you are reading this article from the start it comes as no surprise that China is one of the 'go to' countries if Western Europe or the United States object to delivery of such material.