



above: The NBC-configured Mi-24R has a number of unique features. The most obvious are the out-rigger excavators, which extend to recover soil samples as seen in action here. Below the port forward fuselage is a 'sniffer' air sampling unit, while the cabin has NBC protection.

left, top to bottom: Ukraine's 'Hip' fleet includes many first-generation Mi-8Ts, such as this 'Hip-C'; the Mi-24R is also operated in this lighter color scheme; another 'rarity' in service with the Ukrainian Army is the Mi-24K, the battlefield reconnaissance and artillery fire correction version; the 7th Brigade operates some three Mi-24VPs. This was the final 'Hind' production version, and only 25 were built. The VP has a Gsh-23L twin-barreled cannon.

Helicopter Squadron served the UN mission in eastern Slovenia (JNTAES); it was replaced on April 10, 1996 by the 8th Independent Helicopter Squadron that stayed until January 1996.

As a major contributor of military and civilian personnel to UN peacekeeping duties, Ukraine takes many precautions to ensure the security and safety of its personnel. Consequently, before being sent on such missions, personnel and equipment need to be adapted to the often very different conditions they will find. All participants have to take special courses, those for helicopter crews normally beginning three months in advance. The syllabus includes additional training for the crews and physiological preparation.

UN requirements dictate that helicopter commanders need a minimum of 1,000 hours flying time while the co-pilot

needs to have flown at least 100 hours. Further criteria are laid down in an agreement between the UN and Ukraine. The UN also checks and tests the crews 'in theater'. Specific modifications to the helicopters are carried out to meet the UN's standards; these include the fitting of a transponder, additional radios and GPS. All this is done at brigade depot level. Most of the Ukrainian Army 'Hips' assigned to UN missions also have nose weather radar fitted and an additional external fuel tank attached to the port side.

### Out to Africa

The aim of the UN mission to Sierra Leone was to implement the Lomé Peace Agreement and to assist in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan. The Peacemaking contingent of the Ukrainian armed forces in Sierra Leone started its work in December 2000, its contribution consisting of the 4th Independent Repair Battalion and the 20th Independent Helicopters Unit from Army Aviation. This detachment operates alongside a Pakistani Army helicopter unit.

Beginning on March 12, 2001, four Ukrainian Army Mi-8 'Hips' carried out various tasks for the UN Mission to Sierra Leone after being flown out aboard Antonov An-124s. Due to the difficult conditions in Africa, for safety reasons the helicopters are replaced once every year and are always transported by the giant Antonov airlifters. Based at Hastings airport (20km southeast of the

was deployed to the region and continues to make a significant contribution to the NATO-led peacekeeping operation.

Prior to being involved with NATO's activities in the Balkans, the Ukrainian Army was a part of the UN's operations there. From 1992-95, Ukraine took part in UNPROFOR (the United Nations Protection Force) in the former Yugoslavia, sending two battalions (the 60th and 240th Special Battalions) tasked with conveying cargo with relief goods, stopping combat actions and patrolling the zones of responsibility. The 15th Independent Helicopter Squadron provided rotary-wing support in the form of three Mi-8s and two Mi-24s until the Ukrainian UNPROFOR peacekeeping units returned home between September-December 1995. Later, from March 29, 1996, the 17th Independent



All but two of the Mi-26 'Halos' in Ukrainian Army service are flown by the 7th Independent Brigade.