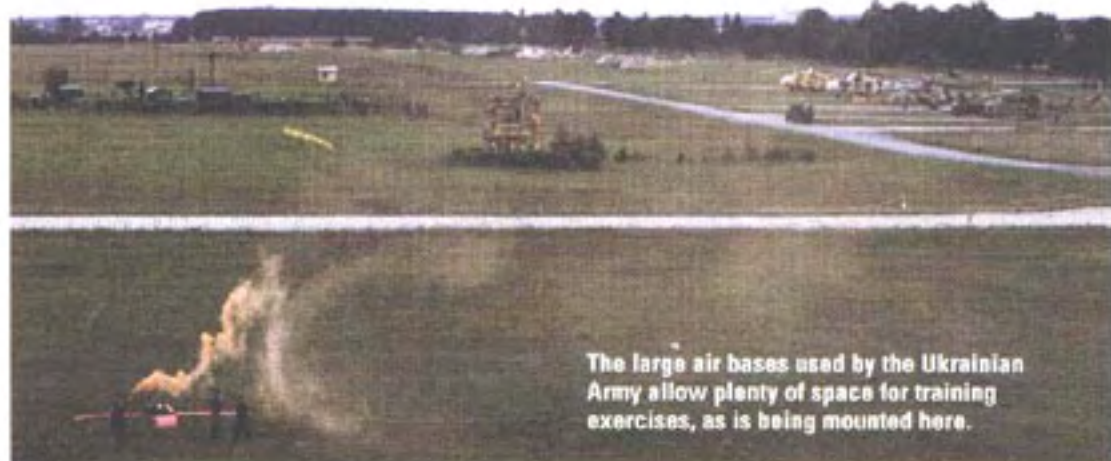




As well as their armed assault transport tasks, Ukrainian 'Hips' have a number of other important duties like paradropping (illustrated) and combat search and rescue. Other tasks include peacetime SAR, MEDEVAC and fire-fighting, while Army Aviation also operates a small number of the MI-9 command post version.



The large air bases used by the Ukrainian Army allow plenty of space for training exercises, as is being mounted here.

capital Freetown), the Army Aviation unit was commanded by Lt Col Taras Shlukharchuk and was made up of 110 servicemen.

Since its inception, the deployment successfully accomplished several medical evacuations, search and rescue operations and movements of personnel and cargo in about 13,500 flights and 6,000 hours. The Russians joined the Ukrainians on April 24, 2004, when four Russian Army Aviation Mi-24 'Hind' gunships arrived in Sierra Leone, together with 110 personnel.

On August 27, 2004 UNAMSIL force commander Maj Gen Sajjad Akram paid tribute to the members of the Ukrainian Army Aviation unit when they were conferred with the UN medal of honor for their outstanding performance since arriving in 2001. Following developments in neighboring Liberia, the UN's attention has gradually started to shift to the south. As a result, Ukraine's mission in Sierra Leone ended in October-November 2004 when many of the crews

and ground personnel moved to Liberia. They formed the 56th Independent Helicopter Unit there and contribute to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) a mission that is about to become the largest ever UN peace-keeping task. Ukraine contributes 320 personnel — the contingent is stationed at Roberts International Airport in the Liberian capital Monrovia and operates

12 helicopters numbering eight M-8s and four M-24s.

Another six Ukrainian Army helicopters are being prepared to take part in the United Nations Operation in the Ivory Coast (UNOCI), which started on April 4, 2004. Once ready these will be tasked with controlling the arms embargo and monitoring in relation to the commitments made under the existing peace process.

#### Leaner and meaner

For some time now, Ukraine's defense forces have been undergoing significant structural changes in order to optimize the strength of their forces in accordance to the current balance of power. At the same time, the services have had to transform part of their military mission to that of peacekeeping.

In this transformation process, Ukrainian Army Aviation has already become a leaner and meaner organization and one that is increasingly important in terms of being able to carry out these new tasks. That it has done so with great success has allowed the Ukrainian government to effectively engage and play the role it envisages for itself in the international community. □

below. Indicative of the Ukraine Army Aviation's drive to reduce the numbers of helicopters in its fleet to a manageable number, 55 Mi-24s and 21 Mi-8s are stored at Brody, awaiting scrapping.

