



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **UNAMSIL RUSSIAN AVIATION UNIT CONDUCTS LIVE FIRING EXERCISE**

*Freetown, Sierra Leone* – The Russian Aviation Unit of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) yesterday conducted a live firing exercise with four MI-24 helicopter gun ships at the Senehun range in Bo, southern Sierra Leone to demonstrate the capability of the UNAMSIL attack helicopter fleet.

The gun ships fired 80mm rockets and 30mm cannon rounds at three “jeep” bodies of 900m. The exercise was conducted in two strikes. In the first, rockets were hit on targets at a distance of 1800m at an altitude of 30-50m. The other entailed complex strikes both with rockets from a distance of 1800m and gun rounds from 1500, at an altitude of 30-50, were performed.

Following the firing, personnel from the Explosive Bomb Disposal of Pakistani Engineers and the Force Ammunition Technical Officers at UNAMSIL headquarters inspected the area to ascertain that there were no unexploded ordnance that could harm local residents.

High-level Russian pilots Lieutenant Colonel Osokin, Major Kulakov, Major Sokolov and Major Golyakov comprised the exercise crew. These officers have had combat experience and been awarded medals by their government.

UNAMSIL has a fleet of four MI-24 helicopters dedicated to peacekeeping in Sierra Leone. The MI-24 is a Russian designed helicopter capable of transporting up to eight troops and can be employed for direct air support, armed escort, air-to-air combat and as a tank killer. It is also capable of attaining speeds of up to 335km/h with a cruising speed of 295km/h and has a range of 450km and 950km with auxiliary fuel tanks. It can fire up to 4,500 rounds per minute of 30mm cannons and can also fire various rockets at a rate of 300 – 2,600 rounds per minute.

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