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(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

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RUSSIAN AVIATION UNIT CONDUCTS LIVE FIRING TRAINING EXERCISE

Freetown – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, accompanied by the Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Daniel Opande, his deputy, Maj. Gen. Martin L. Agwai, and other senior military officers today traveled to the village of Senehun in Yoni, Kenema District, to witness a military training exercise organized by the Russian Aviation Unit serving with the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

The exercise, whose aim was to demonstrate the combat readiness and capabilities of the MI-24 Hind Helicopter, was conducted in three phases. The first phase showed rocket launching in a diving fire at a height of 800m at 20 degrees.

In the second phase, two-helicopter gunships performed rocket launching after a climbing rolling turn at a height of 300m and speed of 200–220kms per hour. In the last phase, a pair of helicopter gunships launched rockets after climbing up to 150m high, while firing at the target from a distance of 2000, 1800 and 1600m.

The exercise was rounded up with the MI-24 single helicopter pilot maneuvers showing pedal turns, climbing rolling turns and 180-degree steep turns at 280km per hour. The Russian Aviation Unit joined UNAMSIL in August 2000 and has been operational since then. Under the command of Col. Valery Saburov, the Unit has been responsible for armed escort of ground convoys, air reconnaissance, as well as providing security cover for UNAMSIL operations.