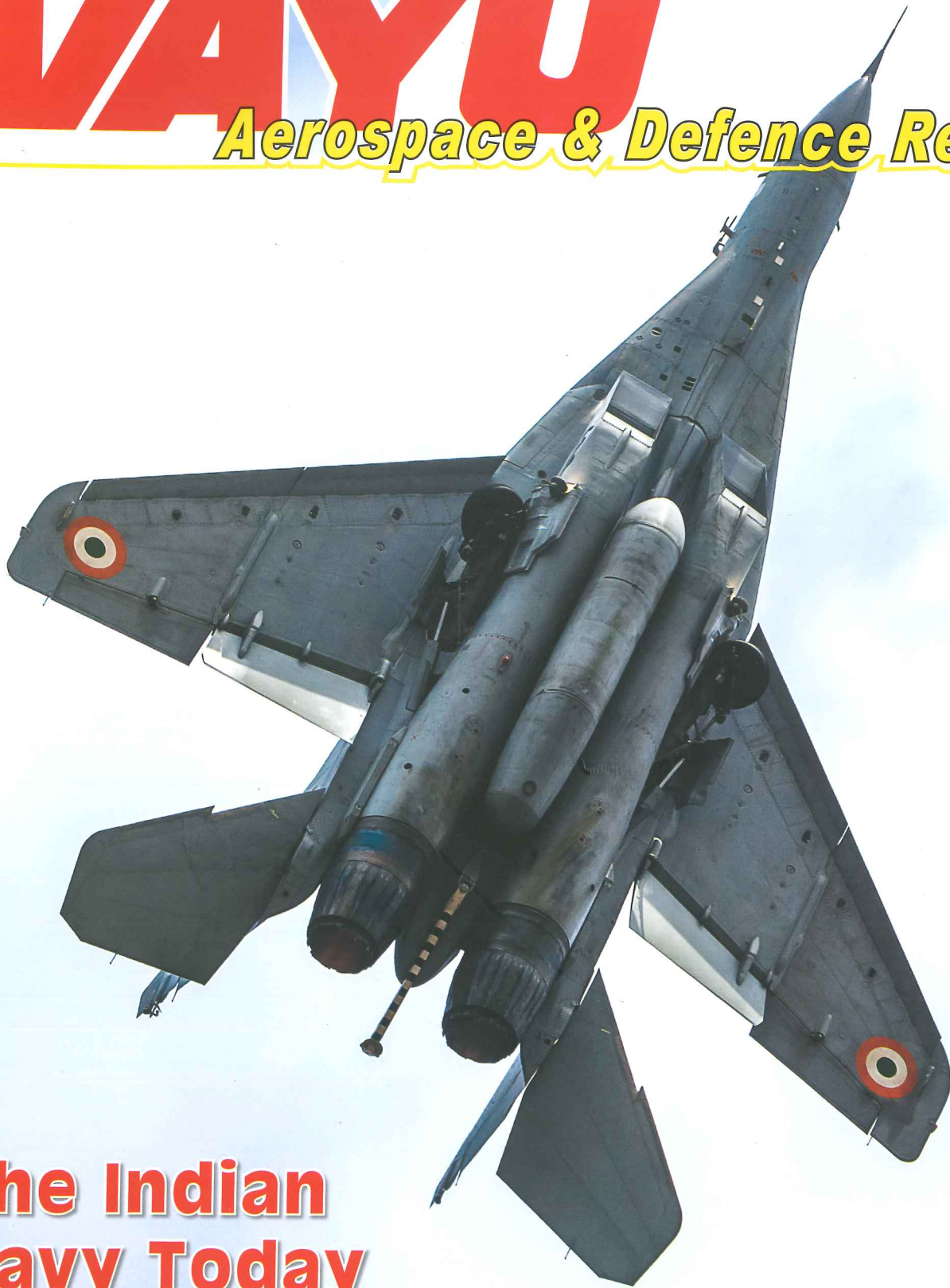


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Ukrainian Exercises



'Sea Breeze and South Wind 2016'

In July and August 2016, two military exercises, *Sea Breeze* and *South Wind* were simultaneously held in Ukraine. Both are annual exercises, the former involving the Air Force and Navy, and the latter the Air Force and Army.

The 15th edition of *Sea Breeze* was held in the area of Odessa and Mykolaiv and the north-western part of the Black Sea. The United States of America and Ukraine co-hosted the air, land and maritime exercise, "designed to improve maritime safety, security and stability in the Black Sea." The main theme of this year's edition was conducting a multinational operation on security in a crisis region. Realistic training was carried out on air defence, anti-submarine warfare, damage control, search and rescue, and landing operations with air support. Some 4,000 troops from 16 countries participated.

The Air Division of the Ukrainian Navy had to relocate to Mykolaiv-Kulbakino after their base in Crimea was taken over by Russia. Now they share aprons and runways with the Air Force, the prime operator of this airbase. Fortunately, all aircraft and



Ukrainian An-30 staying low after take-off

helicopters were able to make the move, and after an initially difficult adjustment period, the Navy's Air Division is up and running again.

The Beriev Be-12 flying boats were waiting for new tyres and could not participate in this edition of *Sea Breeze*, but all locally-based Antonovs (including a venerable An-2) and multiple helicopters did. Their main task was SAR, for which

helicopters also operated from frigates. Ships from NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2 joined the second part of *Sea Breeze*, while Ukrainian frigate *Hetman Sahaidachny* hosted a Kamov Ka-27 helicopter for the duration of the exercise. Apart from SAR, transport of marines and special forces was carried out, along with anti-submarine training. For this last task, Mil Mi-14s flew daily from Mykolaiv. Colonel Igor Bedzai,

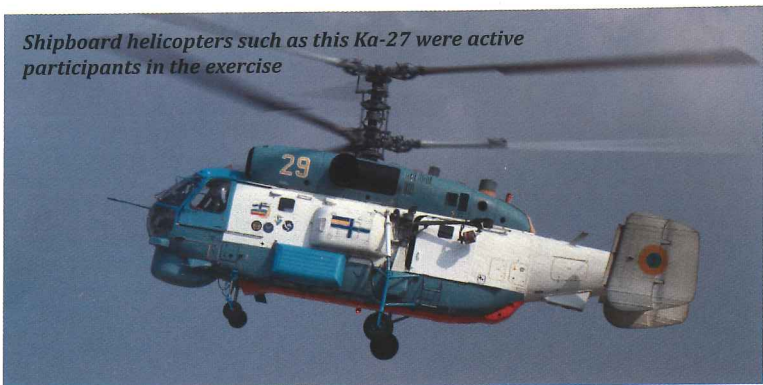
A Mi-24 takes off to relocate to a forward operating base



public after the outbreak of hostilities in the eastern part of Ukraine. Both aircraft, which are appropriately named 'Phoenix' and 'Lucky Man,' and sport modern 'digital' camouflage, flew daily missions during the exercises. This was done not only from Boryspil, but also from forward operating bases where they were deployed for a few days at a time.

Alongside *Sea Breeze*, a command and staff exercise, *South Wind*, was conducted throughout the territory of Ukraine. Its main goal was improving the activities of military control bodies and the interaction between operational and tactical groups during strategic actions. Included were live firing, airborne troop operations, joint long-distance air transport, air

Shipboard helicopters such as this Ka-27 were active participants in the exercise



One of the Mi-14 helicopters shows its dipping sonar, used to detect and track submarines

commander of the flying division, was "very satisfied" with the performance of his aircraft and helicopter crews. He is also looking forward to receiving new Mi-8MSB-V helicopters and An-148 cargo aircraft in the near future, which will improve Ukrainian naval aviation capabilities.

The 15th Transport Aviation brigade, based at Kiev-Boryspil, was heavily involved in both exercises. The unit's commander, Lt Col Alexander Gogol, gave details on the transportation of soldiers, paratroopers and cargo all over the country, as they have been doing on anti-terrorist missions since 2014. One of their An-30 aircraft was lost in action recently, but two An-26 cargo aircraft have been added to the fleet. Overhaul for these two aircraft, which had been in open storage for a decade, was funded by donations from the

defence, and others. All three flying regiments of the Ukrainian Army participated with Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters, operating from Kherson-Chornobaikva air base as well as multiple forward bases. The helicopters bore white stripes on their tailbooms, much like the invasion markings applied by allied forces for D-day in WWII, to distinguish them from their Russian counterparts while operating in the eastern part of the country.

*Text and photos:
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An-26 in 'digital camouflage' and fitted with bomb racks along the fuselage