



### Escuadrón III - SA 315B Lama

Argentina purchased six Aerospaciale SA 315B Lamas in 1973, initially for service with VIII Brigada Aérea at Morón. On 15 August 1977 they were transferred to the Escuadrón Búsqueda, Rescate y Tareas Especiales within IV Brigada at El Plumerillo. The outstanding high-altitude performance of the type was ideal for mountain SAR tasks and for the Campañas de Límites (border campaign) missions. This was not, as the English translation might suggest, a conflict, but rather an effort between the two nations, which runs for most of its length along the Andean Cordillera. Working with Chilean Lamas, the helicopters from El Plumerillo were used to place cones along the border in the high Andes, a task which lasted from 1975 to 1997.

Today Escuadrón III (also known as Escuadrón Lama) has two for SAR work, one having been lost on 18 September 2001. The squadron also operates three DINFIA-built Cessna 182s and a Rockwell 500J Commander on liaison duties. The hard-working Lamas are in need of replacement, but few current helicopter types can match their high-altitude capability.



### Escuadrón IV - Sukhoi Su-29AR (opposite page)

In the mid-1990s the Fuerza Aérea Argentina took the decision to re-establish a national aerobatic team. The 'Cruz del Sur' (Southern Cross) team had been formed in 1961 at El Plumerillo to fly the F-86F-30 Sabre in the FAA's 50th anniversary year, but was disbanded in 1962. For its new team, the FAA evaluated the use of jet trainers, such as the Pampa or even Paris, but eventually decided to procure a high-performance modern aerobatic aircraft.

Accordingly, an order for eight two-seat Sukhoi Su-29ARs was placed in early 1997. In July FAA personnel travelled to Moscow to oversee the final assembly of the first two aircraft and to subsequently flight-test the finished product. The first two were then sea-freighted to Argentina, arriving at Buenos Aires on 9 October 1997. They were sent to the Area Material Río Cuarto facility for reassembly. On 12 November 1997 the first Su-29AR reached El Plumerillo.

On 2 February 1998 Escuadrón IV was created within Grupo 4 at El Plumerillo, resurrecting the 'Cruz del Sur' team. Aircraft were painted with the Southern Cross marking on the fin. A stunning display routine was devised, utilising much of the Su-29AR's +12/-10 g envelope and including new aerobatic manoeuvres such as the 'Viva Argentina', and the team has performed many times throughout South America. When not performing, Escuadrón IV is involved in display work-up and practice.

## Army Lamas

### Sección Aviación de Ejército de Montaña 8

This Comando de Aviación del Ejército CAE, Army aviation command unit was formed on 6 November 1990, and received its first SA 315B Lama from Campo de Mayo (the Army's principal helicopter base) on 9 April 1991. SAE 8 Lamas support Army units operating in the Andes and, like the FAA helicopters, are painted orange for high-visibility in the snowfields. The unit's Lamas were initially hangared alongside the Escuadrón III helicopters, but in late 1995 SAE 8 moved to its own facility at El Plumerillo. The section currently has two Lamas assigned, but only one is serviceable. The only other CAE Lama is operated by Sección Aviación de Ejército 6 at Neuquén.

