
Host-Country Praise for U.S.-Provided Materiel

[The following is a reprint of a message from the United States Liaison Office, Djibouti (200435Z Apr 89), reflecting government praise for the performance of U.S.-furnished equipment during recent severe flooding in Djibouti.]

In the course of a routine periodic Military Assistance Program (MAP) coordination meeting, General Ali Mehidal Waiss, Commander, Djiboutian National Army, lavished high praise on U.S. MAP-provided materiel. He asked that we relay his satisfaction to U.S. Central Command and other concerned agencies.

During the six-day period ending 9 April, Djibouti received an unprecedented twenty inches of rainfall. This caused flooding that forced over half of Djibouti City's population from their homes (at least temporarily). During the two worst days, April 7 and 8, the city was nearly paralyzed, and was cut off from the interior of the country due to the Oued Ambouli River overflowing its banks, making the one road which crosses it--a level crossing, not a bridge--impassable to all vehicles except for the U.S.-provided five-ton cargo trucks (M813 series) and five-ton dump trucks (M929 series). The cargo trucks (quantity: fifteen) had been delivered in March of last year, and the dump trucks (quantity: ten) in May of 1986.

General Waiss reported with enthusiasm that no other vehicles, including those of the French military, had been able to negotiate the Oued Ambouli, and that it was the U.S. cargo and dump trucks which kept the city from being completely cut off. General Waiss's Chief of Cabinet/Aide de Camp also reported that he had personally seen to the rescue of a squad of French soldiers who were stranded in the increasing flood waters of the Oued on the night of April 7. Reportedly, he saw them stranded while he was going the other way across the Oued. Because he was in an M813 cargo truck, he was able to go for help, returned with the U.S.-provided M920 tractor truck (normally used to pull the trailer which transports the Djiboutian Army's tracked Caterpillar®™ engineer equipment) and pulled the French Army truck and squad to safety.

Even now, in the flood recovery period, the U.S.-provided trucks are continuing to be heavily used to carry relief supplies and food from their reception point at the airport to various locations in and around the city. The Djiboutian soldiers driving the trucks also have enthusiastic praise for the performance of the U.S.-origin equipment. Recent visits to Camp Chiek Osman, garrison site for the Djiboutian Army Engineer Company (in which all of the subject trucks are assigned) have found many trucks dispatched on various relief-related missions, and others standing by to go to the airport to collect incoming relief supplies.

Additionally, the U.S.-provided engineer equipment is currently being used to assist clean-up operations, and will be used throughout the long recovery period to assist in repairing the many damaged roads. During the rainfall, engineer equipment was used in a damage-control role to assist drainage.

Finally, the Djiboutians have also used U.S. MAP-provided tents in a disaster-relief role. In November, 1985, the U.S. delivered ten "General Purpose, Large" tents, and in 1986, an additional forty medium frame tents were delivered to the Djiboutian National Army. Some of these tents are now on loan to the Ministry of the Interior to provide temporary shelter for some of those still unable to return to their homes.

Although the Djiboutian National Army has often previously used U.S.-provided MAP materiel in a civic action/humanitarian capacity, never before has it been used so heavily and so successfully in that role.