

Re: Canada's AVPGs in Darfur
Date: 14 March, 2008
From: Erin Fitzgerald

Canadian Forces operations in Sudan began in 2005 with the first deployments of UN Military Observers to serve with the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS, *Operation SAFARI*) and the shipment of 105 armoured vehicles general-purpose (AVGPs) to Senegal for use by three AU nations – Senegal, Rwanda, and Nigeria – contributing troops to the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS, *Operation AUGURAL*).¹

The CF's loan of AVGPs includes one hundred Grizzly and five Husky AVGPs to assist the AU in moving its troops quickly and safely.² The CF website describes the six-wheeled Grizzlies as "well suited for this mission and the specific terrain in Darfur as they can effectively transport and protect a section of soldiers."³ The Huskies, meanwhile, are able to transport maintenance crews and retrieve vehicles that may require repair while away from a home base.⁴

Before the vehicles arrived in the Sudan, the Canadian Forces established an Intermediate Staging Base and Training Centre (ISBTC) in Dakar, Senegal. The role of the ISBTC was to receive and prepare the vehicles and material for their journey into Sudan and provide training to AU soldiers via a train-the-trainer programme.⁵ According to the CF, training was successfully completed in late September 2005, with more than 150 AU soldiers from Senegal, Nigeria and Rwanda trained on operating the vehicles. The mission established the required maintenance facility to support the AVGP fleet.⁶

However, according to a report by Amnesty International, there have been some issues surrounding the training of AU personnel. Given the fact that many UNAMID personnel only have six-month contracts, by the time drivers are trained, they only have four months driving time before they leave.⁷ Thus, there is a dearth of experienced AVGP drivers.

¹ "Operation *AUGURAL*: African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS)." *Department of National Defence*. 2 August 2007. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/augural/index_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

² "Canadian Forces Operations in Sudan." *Department of National Defence*. 4 February 2008. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/sudan_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

³ "Canadian Forces Operations in Sudan." *Department of National Defence*. 4 February 2008. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/sudan_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

⁴ "Canadian Forces Operations in Sudan." *Department of National Defence*. 4 February 2008. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/sudan_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

⁵ "Operation *AUGURAL*: African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS)." *Department of National Defence*. 2 August 2007. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/augural/index_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

⁶ "Operation *AUGURAL*: African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS)." *Department of National Defence*. 2 August 2007. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/augural/index_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

⁷ "Sudan: UNAMID Update: Time for Effective Action." *Amnesty International*. 7 February 2008. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGAFR540072008> (Date of Access: 14 March 2008)

Nevertheless, Canada's contribution to peace in Sudan continues with the new hybrid UN–AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID, *Operation SATURN*).⁸ Thus, the loan of the AVGPs to Nigeria, Rwanda and Senegal will continue through their transition to UNAMID.⁹ At present, Task Force Darfur (the Canadian contingent in UNAMID) comprises seven personnel, including three logistics experts at UNAMID Headquarters and four soldiers training UNAMID troops to operate six-wheeled Grizzly and Husky AVGPs.¹⁰

According to the CF, the increased level of security to AMIS personnel that the AVGPs afford the AU has been successful as a deterrent force. However, in an interview with *Air Force Editor*, Air Force Logistics officer Major Ted Giles emphasized the airlift capacities of the helicopters as key to the success of the mission, noting that “the operation is extremely dependent on air to get out and investigate ceasefire violations, or other military operations that have to be investigated.”¹¹ As wheeled vehicles can only move so fast over the terrain in Darfur, the AVGPs have had only limited impact in the field. Members of the AU complained that the AVGPs were too slow and did not hold enough fuel to permit them to accompany convoys in Darfur.¹² This rendered them good for little more than static protection of IDP camps and AU group sites.¹³

Perhaps due to their slowness, some AVGPs have been damaged in battle. On 7 January, 2008, Khartoum's regular Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) attacked a convoy belonging to UNAMID.¹⁴ The convoy, comprised of over twenty cargo trucks and AVGPs, came under heavy fire near Tine. One truck was destroyed, an APC was damaged, and a driver was critically wounded.¹⁵ Perhaps due to the logistical difficulties encountered by AMIS in the use of the Grizzly AVGPs, UNAMID is seeking carriers from another source that are better suited to operations in Darfur.

⁸ “Operation *AUGURAL*: African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).” *Department of National Defence*. 2 August 2007. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/augural/index_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

⁹ “Operation *AUGURAL*: African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).” *Department of National Defence*. 2 August 2007. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/augural/index_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

¹⁰ “Operation *AUGURAL*: African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).” *Department of National Defence*. 2 August 2007. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/augural/index_e.asp (Date of access: 16 March 2007)

¹¹ Bridges, Holly. “Air Force logistics officer returns from war-torn Sudan.” *Air Force Editor*. 24 January 2007. http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/sudan/cip-pic/library/103_p%2010.pdf (Date of access: 16 March 2008)

¹² “To Save Darfur: Africa Report No. 105.” *International Crisis Group*. 17 March 2006. [http://protection.unsudanig.org/data/darfur/papers/ICG%20-%20To%20Save%20Darfur%20\(Mar06\).pdf](http://protection.unsudanig.org/data/darfur/papers/ICG%20-%20To%20Save%20Darfur%20(Mar06).pdf) (Date of Access: 14 March 2008)

¹³ “To Save Darfur: Africa Report No. 105.” *International Crisis Group*. 17 March 2006. [http://protection.unsudanig.org/data/darfur/papers/ICG%20-%20To%20Save%20Darfur%20\(Mar06\).pdf](http://protection.unsudanig.org/data/darfur/papers/ICG%20-%20To%20Save%20Darfur%20(Mar06).pdf) (Date of Access: 14 March 2008)

¹⁴ “Khartoum's Military Forces Deliberately Attack a UNAMID Convoy.” *Sudan Tribune*. 15 January 2008. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25579> (Date of Access: 14 March 2008)

¹⁵ “Khartoum's Military Forces Deliberately Attack a UNAMID Convoy.” *Sudan Tribune*. 15 January 2008. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25579> (Date of Access: 14 March 2008)