

DJIBOUTI



Background: The French Territory of the Afars and the Issas became Djibouti in 1977. Hassan Gouled Aptidon installed an authoritarian one-party state and proceeded to serve as president until 1999. Unrest among the Afars minority during the 1990s led to a civil war that ended in 2001 following the conclusion of a peace accord between Afar rebels and the Issa-dominated government. In 1999, Djibouti's first multi-party presidential elections resulted in the election of Ismail Omar Guelleh; he was re-elected to a second and final term in 2005. Djibouti occupies a strategic geographic location at the mouth of the Red Sea and serves as an important transshipment location for goods entering and leaving the east African highlands. The present leadership favors close ties to France, which maintains a significant military presence in the country, but is also developing stronger ties with the US. Djibouti hosts the only US military base in sub-Saharan Africa and is a front-line state in the global war on terrorism.

Geography Djibouti: Location, Eastern Africa, bordering the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, between Eritrea and Somalia. Area: total: 23,000 sq. km. Area - comparative: slightly smaller than Massachusetts. Land boundaries: total: 516 km. Border countries: Eritrea 109 km, Ethiopia 349 km, Somalia 58 km. Coastline: 314 km. Climate: desert; torrid, dry. Terrain: coastal plain and plateau separated by central mountains. Natural resources: geothermal areas, gold, clay, granite, limestone, marble, salt, diatomite, gypsum, pumice, and petroleum. Natural hazards: earthquakes, droughts, occasional cyclonic disturbances from the Indian Ocean bring heavy rains and flash floods. Environment - current issues: inadequate supplies of potable water; limited arable land; desertification and endangered species. Geography - note: strategic location near world's busiest shipping lanes and close to Arabian oil-fields; terminus of rail traffic into Ethiopia; mostly wasteland, Lac Assal (Lake Assal) is the lowest point in Africa. (CIA Factbook 2006)

Military Notes: Under French military protection until 1977, Djibouti has a small military for internal security.

198X Car, Armd, 4x4. Panhard AML-90.

199X Veh, Recce. Panhard VBL.

2001 Carr, Pers, Armd, 4x4, Casspir Mk 3.



Above: Casspir Mk 3 as delivered to Djibouti from South Africa. (Photo: Vickers OMC)

Remarks: Vickers OMC of South Africa delivered nine refurbished Casspir APCs to the Djibouti.

bouti Army in 2001 (see South Africa for vehicle details).