

## TOYOTA LAND CRUISER MOBILITY PACKAGE DELIVERIES COMMENCE FOR OPERATION CORONA TROOPS

Article and photographs by: Captain Jacques de Vries

On 15 November 2017 the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Joint Operations Chief, Lieutenant General Barney Hlatshwayo, officiated over the handing over and demonstration of a consignment of new South African Army project 'Mobility Pack' vehicle systems to troops at the Pongola border in northern KwaZulu-Natal. "And this ladies and gentlemen, if I have to tell you it's long overdue, it took some time to get this vehicle produced, converted to the standards that were required but I am happy finally the time is come that we can roll out these vehicles." So said Gen Hlatshwayo during his introduction.

These specialised military border protection assets are now being rolled out in KwaZulu-Natal in culmination of a long process of research and development. This progression has involved close collaboration between diverse stakeholders. The Joint Operations Division has facilitated input by the SA Army's Logistics and Signal's Formations, as well as by the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS). The Council for Scientific and Industrial



Land Cruiser Troop Mobility Package convoy near Pongola.

Research (CSIR) and Armaments Corporation of South Africa (ARMSCOR) both contributed from the former's unit for Defence, Peace, Safety and Security (DPSS) and the latter's Gerotek internationally accredited environmental vehicle test facility. Members of the media were invited to see the vehicles put through their paces during the official handing over process.

### Improvise, Adapt, Overcome

Members of 1 SA Tank Regiment patrol in the Troop Package.



Members of the media and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) were carried in convoy by Land Cruiser Troop Packages from Pongola and transported to the demonstration area adjacent to the Pongola border post on the South Africa - Swaziland frontier. They were welcomed there by the Chief of Joint Operations

(CJOPS), Lieutenant General Barney Hlatshwayo, who minced no words when describing the road travelled to date and lessons learned. He referred to the previous vehicle and mobility package acquisitions, highlighting the modifications to Toyota Hilux 4x4 vehicles and unexpected consequences found along the way. Referring to the new Mobility Packages' predecessors, he mentioned that "we then adapted them; we put roll cages and so on, and that, those modifications took away the warranty." The General said at that this time around "... we were assured that if this is done scientifically with the involvement of the equipment manufacturer and they will carry the necessary warranties." To that end, thorough work had been done to ensure that the process of vehicle customisation maintained the integrity of the vehicle fleet's guarantees.



Joint Operations Chief, Lieutenant General Barney Hlatshwayo, introduces the new Land Cruiser Mobility Packages

### Optimal Mobility Conquers

Joint Operations Border Safeguarding Mobility Package Development - Mobility Packages Project Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Derick Moore provided a briefing focused on the development, roles and capabilities of the vehicles to be introduced. This underlined the process followed in coming to the roll out of the vehicles, from the needs based criteria identified by the SANDF to the go-no go norms that saw the selection of the vehicle and associated Mobility Packages. The adoption of the new vehicles will according to Colonel Moore "... enhance our effectiveness on the border and they will just make everyone's life so much easier"

Desired vital statistics were laid down in the original go-no-go criteria for the packages to be used with the base-line vehicle. A diesel 4x4 platform was desired with a ground clearance of 220mm, differential lock as standard, load carrying capacity of 1.05 tonnes and on board fuel supply range of 600km being essential. Purchase on the state tender system and maintainability by the vehicle manufacturer for at least three years from date of purchase in the various Operation CORONA mission areas was a must. Colonel Moore acknowledged that the Land Cruiser won on cost and technical performance, beating contenders in the form of the Mercedes Benz Sprinter Bus, Nissan Patrol, Ranger F250, Toyota Hilux, Mitsubishi Colt, Nissan Navara and the Isuzu 3I D. The Land Cruiser proved to be the most cost effective, and beat the aforementioned Toyota, Mitsubishi, Nissan and Isuzu contenders on load carrying capacity performance.



A Land Cruiser Troop Package along the SA –Swaziland frontier

Day and night operational evaluation took the vehicles, their drivers and troop passengers to the KwaZulu-Natal – Mozambican border area where the Land Cruisers were put through their paces in demanding sandy terrain, and also in the mountainous frontier with Lesotho. The vehicles were also tested in the muddy conditions of the Mpumalanga – Mozambican border. This programme produced daily inputs from users which allowed evaluators to reach ideal needs based conclusions for the respective troop, command-and-control, logistics and ambulance packages adopted. Throughout this process, consultation was retained with the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) - Toyota.

## Mobility Packages as Capacitation Boost

The Officer Commanding Joint Tactical Headquarters KwaZulu-Natal, Colonel Lucky Sangeni, spoke at the roll out on the vital role played by the Regulars and Reserves of the SANDF in securing the borders of the Republic of South Africa. He emphasised the role Operation CORONA personnel played in dominating the KZN international border areas with the intention to prevent illegal cross border movement and activities. The Colonel spoke of the crucial role of joint interdepartmental and interagency operations that endeavours to maintain South Africa's socio-economic stability and territorial integrity. Considering the challenges associated with achieving this goal, he intimated that "... we were not faced with an enemy, but with an adversarial situation. People are conducting cross border criminality.

Soldiers are faced with criminal elements endeavouring to smuggle vehicles across the frontier that actively and overtly force their way at high speed through Army patrols. The Colonel



Officer Commanding of JTac HQ KZN - Col Lucky Sangeni

admits that these encounters often happen at short notice, and can involve the firing of shots and even the inadvertent engaging of own forces. Criminality in border areas creates a destabilising effect which the SANDF seeks to mitigate. Colonel Sangeni stressed the notion that if Operation CORONA troops are to neutralise their adversaries' intentions, they must be superior to them.

## Tactical Demonstration



The vehicles were put through their paces on the demonstration area under the watchful eye and commentary provided by Major Titus of B Company 1 SA Tank Regiment, the first operational commander to receive the new Mobility Packages.

The Toyota Land Cruiser family of Mobility Package packages being provided to Operation CORONA companies come in groups of twenty

nine. Eighteen of these are Troop Packs which carry operational troops in the course of the border patrol duties. Companies receive four Command-and-Control vehicles of which one is allocated to each platoon and one for the Company commander. Companies each receive three Logistics vehicles allocated to platoon sergeants. Four Ambulance variants are allotted of which one is attached to each platoon with one in reserve to provide overlapping medical coverage when needed.

The scenario presented at the roll out involved the interception of suspected criminal elements attempting to transport a stolen vehicle across the South Africa – Swaziland frontier. Demonstrations involved the initial contact between troops borne by Troop Packs and suspected vehicle smugglers, followed by Troop Pack, Logistics, Command-and-Control and Ambulance variants joining to provide reinforcements, recovery and medical support functions.



Troops deploy from a Troop Pack to apprehend suspected vehicle smugglers.

### Troop pack

The primary component of Operation CORONA border patrol companies is designed to carry five infantrymen on patrols, with the five-person sticks on two vehicles making up a section. One member is seated in the front of the vehicle while four are seated in the Troop Pack seats. It was designed with several key aspects in mind, namely an integral roll over protection capability as standard on all variants, a low center of gravity, as well as adjustable roll up canvas covers which protect occupants from inclement weather while affording all round visibility. A fifth so called 'jump seat' is provided for members of the South African Police Service (SAPS), rangers from South African National Parks (SANParks) or customs and excise officials from the South African Revenue Service (SARS) accompanying Operation CORONA troops on Joint, Inter-departmental, Inter-agency, Multi-national (JI2M) operations. In terms of communications, the vehicle commander is able to rely on an on-board communications suite

which includes a hand held radio and mobile phone. This suite allows for dismounted communications between the stick and platoon commander and also the vehicle. An on-board 20 litre Jerry Can provides a supplement to the water members carry, especially in hot and humid operational conditions.



Front view of a Land Cruiser Troop Pack variant.

## Logistics pack



The Logistics Pack Land Cruiser simulates the recovery of a disabled Troop Pack model.

The platoon sergeant's Logistics vehicle fulfils an operational replenishment role, with the ability of the load carrying platform to supplement patrolling troops' rations and water supply. The Logistics Package has 120 litres of water on board, and can provide thirty members with an additional four litres of water per day. In addition to the water replenishment role, the vehicle can top up Troop Packs or other Mobility Package variants with thirty litres of additional emergency diesel so as to continue with patrols or follow up operations. It must be emphasised that the Logistics Pack does not fulfil a fuel bowser role. It fulfils a tactical recovery function and can bear disabled Land Cruisers out of harm's way with tow straps or A-frames.

### Command-and-Control and Ambulance packs

The platoon commander's Command-and-Control Land Cruiser is able to accommodate four members, comprising the driver, commander and two signallers in the rear communications space. Company and platoon commanders are in turn able to execute operations on the move in an on-board independent power management system equipped mini operations room. The commander is able to make use of the integral Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio communications suite, map tables and computer amenities, that do not keep commanders bound exclusively to company headquarters. As with other versions in the Mobility Pack, communications equipment installed in the vehicle cabin and the Communications Pack have been mounted in such a manner that meet the approval of the OEM.

Last but not least, the ambulance variant of the Mobility Pack sees to the immediate medical needs of troops engaged in Operation CORONA



Ambulance (left) and Command-and-Control (right) in action.

activities. It is in terms of mobility able to keep pace with its troop pack, command-and-control and logistics counterparts, wherever a casualty evacuation (casevac) might be required. Two Operational Emergency Care Practitioners (OECs) are able to support a combination of one stretcher and two sitting patients, or two stretcher patients.

## Conclusion



While the first Land Cruiser Mobility Package consignment officially handed over to the SANDF was delivered to an area of operations currently

staffed by a Regular Force unit at Pongola in the next 29 vehicle batch is destined for Reserve Force troops at Macadamia in Mpumalanga.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Piet Paxton, Staff Officer, Operational Communication, SANDF Joint Operations Division, the next consignment of Mobility Package vehicles will be Reserve Force Company deployed. The Colonel added that “All 15 companies currently in operations for CORONA will eventually be issued with these vehicles.”

As per the sentiment shared by the Chief of Joint Operations, his subordinate Officer Commander in KwaZulu-Natal and the Mobility Package Project Officer, the new additions will prove of immense value to the troops on the ground who seek to fulfil the border safeguarding mandates. Colonel Sangeni thanked superiors in the SANDF and Department of Defence (DOD) for the new capacity at hand, stating that “... we are a little bit behind compared to the adversary and compared to the situation on the ground. Those are the major challenges but I can say that we are succeeding in overcoming the challenges.