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FOREST PROTECTION LIMITED
ASSISTS AFRICA WITH LOCUST PLAGUE

FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA – One of Forest Protection Limited’s technologically advanced AT-802 aircraft has touched down in Nouakchott, Mauritania as part of a Canadian consortium to aid Western Africa in a humanitarian effort to help control the regions desert locust outbreak.

In modern times, desert locusts (commonly called grasshoppers) have swarmed over dozens of countries from Senegal in West Africa to as far east as India. Their range can extend over some 29 million square kilometers, impacting up to 60 countries. This is more than 20% of the land surface of the planet. During plagues the desert locust has the potential to damage the livelihood of a tenth of the world’s population.

The last plague was from 1986 to 1989. One of the largest swarm clouds in the twentieth century covered some 1000 square kilometers and contained some 40 billion locusts. It was estimated that the swarm consumed vegetation equivalent to the food needs of about 200 million people and cost more than US\$ 300 million to control. Since the mid 1980s the number of people in the insect’s range has doubled.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations warned in May 2004 that much of North and West Africa is under serious threat of a growing plague of desert locusts. Most impacted countries are impoverished. Yet, affected countries in the Sahelian region of Africa have spent more than US\$ 17 million on locust control since October 2003. Most of that money has come from national budgets, basically exhausting those sources.

The FAO has called on the international community for US\$ 100 million to support affected countries. As of September 27, 2004 donors have promised US\$ 55 million to FAO’s locust emergency interventions. However, only US\$ 17.6 million has been received. FAO has contributed US\$ 5 million out of its own program. Canada has contributed US\$ 5 million to the Regional Office for Africa (Mali, Mauritania, Chad, Niger, Senegal). Funds will be used for pesticides, aerial spraying operations, logistics and equipment, personnel, and training.

Forest Protection Limited’s AT-802 aircraft departed from the Fredericton airport on October 14 and arrived in Mauritania on October 16 by way of Gander NL and the Azores archipelago. SNC-Lavalin International Inc. had contracted with the FAO for the

supply of two AT-802s and ground crew for locust control in Western Africa for a 1 month period. The other consortium members include Société de protection des forêts contre les insectes et maladies (SOPFIM) and GMSA Aviation. Forest Protection Limited and a Saskatchewan company are each supplying one AT-802.

- 30 -

Forest Protection Limited is a Transport Canada licensed aerial operator with facilities at the Fredericton and Miramichi airports in New Brunswick, Canada. They own and operate aircraft used for fire management, pest management and aerial surveys. Incorporated in 1952, Forest Protection Limited is a private company, with its shareholders being the Province of New Brunswick and New Brunswick's forest industry companies.

FAO Web links:

http://www.fao.org/index_en.htm

<http://www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/Locuhome.htm>

<http://www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/donor/fapp151004.htm>

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