

## Force protection for an intergovernmental organization

Maintain awareness of dynamic environments



Portion of the convoy in an overnight formation

West Africa | 06:40 Local

Governments and businesses around the world act first with fast, focused and flexible space-based intelligence from BlackSky On-demand. During a period of conflict within a country in West Africa, an intergovernmental organization needed to raise their situational awareness of a precarious evacuation of a base of operations. By enlisting BlackSky On-demand imagery delivered at industry-leading speed, operations teams monitored a kilometers-long convoy of hundreds of people and vehicles until they safely arrived at their destination.

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The high cadence and revisit of BlackSky On-demand imagery provided unprecedented situational awareness.

- *Operational support leader, intergovernmental organization*

**Requirement:** An intergovernmental organization needed to fill critical information gaps in an airspace denied and limited connectivity environment to safeguard the lives of nearly 850 personnel during a potentially deadly evacuation of an operations center in West Africa. Successfully tracking the evacuation required immediate insights through real-time, high-resolution imagery.

**Challenge:** After 10 years of operations in a West African country maintaining security and delivering humanitarian assistance, the country's government and the intergovernmental organization decided to terminate their diplomatic program. As part of the closure of operations,

administrators and personnel began withdrawing from 12 bases across the country. The intergovernmental organization's operational support team remotely aided the withdrawal.

For the intergovernmental organization, this program had presented great dangers, with more than 300 personnel killed since operations began. During the first base evacuations of the withdrawal period, the risk persisted. Local anti-government factions began attacking personnel, causing injuries and damaging vehicles with explosives. To make matters worse, rations, water and fuel ran low due to denied requests for supply transport.

Because of the dangers, the intergovernmental organization's operational support team sought every possible safeguard for the next base being evacuated. Unfortunately, flight and travel permits were denied, and nearly 850 personnel were forced to travel by road in a kilometers-long convoy of almost 150 vehicles. The convoy's leaders could periodically relay location details to their headquarters, but communications were limited in frequency and value. The intergovernmental organization also was not permitted to fly aircraft to counter threats from armed groups.

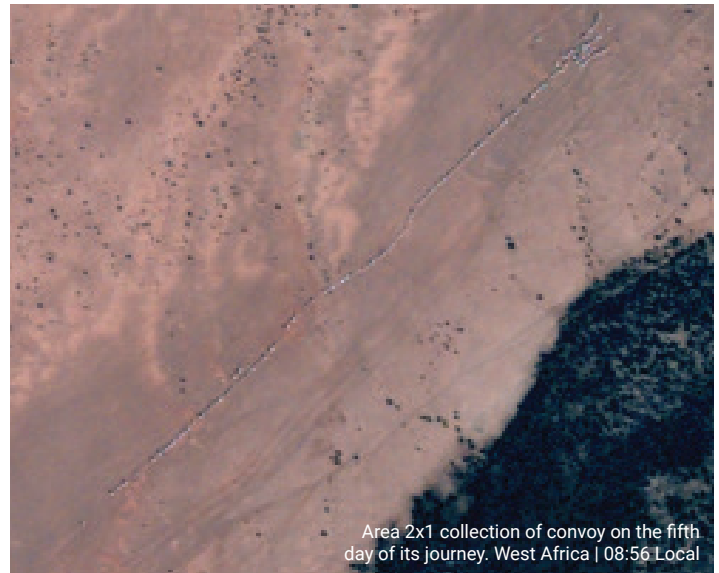
With airspace denied and communications constrained, the operational support team needed a space-based solution to remotely check on the safety of evacuating personnel and evaluate potential threats along the route to their safe destination.

**Solution:** To help safeguard personnel evacuating the base, the intergovernmental organization's operational support team chose BlackSky On-demand, which helps organizations maintain persistent awareness of dynamic environments. The operational support team used On-demand's timely intelligence to track the convoy on its unpredictable eight-day journey.

On-demand helps organizations act first by providing intelligence at industry-leading speed, with tasking and collection-to-delivery timelines of under 90 minutes on average. With On-demand, organizations can task anywhere in the world at a variety of priority levels and access all BlackSky's imagery and analytic products.

Working from the most recent location reports from convoy leaders, the operational support team used BlackSky Spectra® to evaluate collection feasibility and task multiple types of imagery of the convoy's predicted position. To increase their chances of observing the convoy in motion, the operational support team tasked area 2x1 imagery products for greater coverage. The operational support team utilized multi-frame products to collect burst imagery of the travel route and the destination. Lastly, whenever feasible, the operational support team also tasked twilight collections to observe the convoy at its nightly stopover points.

Life-threatening hazards and multiple safety incidents drove the need for fast and accurate intelligence. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were mined throughout the route and posed a significant threat to life, because most vehicles had no armor. Unfortunately, six IEDs exploded along the route, injuring nearly 40



personnel and damaging seven vehicles. Two helicopter flights evacuated seriously injured personnel and resupplied the convoy with water, food and vehicle spare parts. Convoy teams had also prepared for armed opposition but didn't encounter it. To track these dangers and effectively support evacuees, support teams couldn't afford to wait days for updates.

BlackSky's frequent revisit capability ensured fresh imagery came quickly, helping operational support personnel verify the position and condition of the intergovernmental organization's vehicles as they carefully proceeded from the base to their safe destination. The operational support team leveraged BlackSky to remotely track active vehicles, confirm when the convoy had missed its schedule and inspect nearby areas for potential hostile combatants. The operational support team personnel also used BlackSky imagery to communicate internally about the status of the evacuation and keep leadership up to date on mission status.

Finally, after eight days of hazardous travel, the evacuating team reached their safe destination, reporting no fatalities and limited serious injuries. The intergovernmental organization then continued their successful withdrawal from the West African country by closing remaining bases and handing over sites and equipment to local leaders. Thanks to the valuable space-based intelligence provided by BlackSky, the intergovernmental organization's operational support team plans to continue using its On-demand subscription for similar support missions in the future.

Details of the operations are compiled from a variety of sources, which are available upon request.

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Contact BlackSky to gain unprecedented situational awareness with space-based intelligence.