Train Leaving Dakar Railway Station for Bamako, Jul. 2012

With shorter transit routes, comparable prices, reliable roads and stable customs procedures, Dakar is quickly becoming an entry port of choice for land-locked countries in the Sahel region. In 2012, 23,000 MT were transferred from the Dakar port to Bamako, as compared with 1,800 MT in 2011, representing a 15-fold increase. In 2012, both rail and road were used for transport, against sole road transport in 2011.

Railway Overview

In 2003, the public railroad companies in Senegal and Mali were privatized, with a 25-year concession awarded to Transrail SA, responsible for the rehabilitation of the railroad. The company has focused on the transport of goods instead of passengers.

Transrail now operated along the former Dakar-Niamey railway from Dakar to Bamako (1,236 km), as well as a second line running north from Dakar to Nouakchott (Mauritania). There is no set schedule, with trains leaving Dakar roughly once per week, or as needed.

Company Specifics#

Currently WFP sub-contracts its transport needs from Dakar to the interior through two companies: DAMCO and MATRANS. While MATRANS travels exclusively by road, DAMCO uses a combination of road-rail for large consignments (above 2,000 mt), with rail consignments destined for Bamako (Mali).

In addition, Transrail, the company which manages the railroad, can be contracted directly for rail transport from Dakar to Bamako.

Large consignments can be shipped via “train vert,” (green train), a train retained for one consignment only and reserved 7 days in advance. The maximum tonnage for a train vert is 800 mt.

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For further information please refer to the Sahel Region Logistics Cluster Web page: http://www.logcluster.org/ops/Sahel_Crisis_2012
Capacity, Costs, Time-Frame

- Transrail has a total 150 wagons, with a capacity of approximately 40 mt each. For safety standards, each train should comprise 20-25 wagons maximum (total 800 mt per train)
- DAMCO has sent up to 5,000 mt in the past by train (100 trains within in a one-week time-frame)
- Rail cargo transport DKR-BMK: USD 63.99 per mt
- Dry season rail transport: 2-5 days; Rainy Season rail transport: 6-10 days
- Trains can make unscheduled stops in Kayes if requested in advance.

Advantages of Train vs. Road Transport

Though it depends on the season (the dry season is always better for both types of transport), the advantages of rail over road are the following:

- Trains can be loaded directly from the Dakar port
- Trains do not stop for customs along the way, and therefore are never detained for any reason; customs procedures are handles at departure and arrival only
- No commodities have been lost on trains to date.
- Cargo transport by road costs on average 20% more than cargo transport by rail (not including handling costs).

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