



Democratic Republic of Congo

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A couple of weeks ago I arrived to Goma, DRC to begin the process of upgrading the security comms for the Inter Agency Community in connection to the current emergency here in Eastern DRC. Due to the harsh situation here, the process of receiving and shipping equipment across the neighbouring borders of DRC and Rwanda has turned out to be a great challenge that keeps us busy over 3 continents... Last week, we finally received the first shipment of equipment from FITTEST, which had been sitting in Kigali, Rwanda waiting for a handful of government agencies to allow the package to leave Rwanda borders. Two happy truckers met up at the border and after our clearing agent had collected an impressive number of stamps on the DRC side, we finally headed towards the office.

Due to my close to nonexistent French language skills, I was under the impression that our agent would be escorting the truck back to the office, so I decided, accompanied by our WFP driver, to head off to prepare for receiving the goods. After arriving to the warehouses, we were soon surprised to be joined by our agent, who then asked us where the truck had gone. A search party was quickly gathered, and the truck was found sitting downtown. The drivers were having a bit of a discussion with the police that were doing some collection for a very good cause in a true Christmas spirit.

The issue was soon resolved, and we headed back to the office to finally cut the seal, and start unloading. The customs officer that had joined us broke the seal, and soon realized that entering and checking the truck would be both time consuming and hard labour for him, so he gave us a thumbs up and was on his way. He also suggested a little something to keep the Christmas spirit up, but since he had to borrow our tools to be able to break the seal, we did not really feel that spirited.

To our surprise we found that the shipment in many ways looked like it had been transported in a moving tumble drier. Boxes had been flown from left to right and the V-Sat dish had been packed under a pallet of half a ton of electrical cables. I asked the truck drivers if they were happy with what they were delivering, and how they felt about those arrows on certain boxes that were supposed to point to the sky, but now were pointing to the horizon or towards the ground. They were happy, and I felt no need to spoil their day with a course in "How to load a truck without it looking like someone had a party inside and forgot to clean up".

In any case, now the sub office here in Goma can claim to be the holder of the most expensive work available, even though it is pretty dented...

Oscar