

## Aid to five countries

The Canadian International Development Agency has announced support totalling \$3.9 million to five countries.

The funds are being provided through the Canadian International Development Agency primarily to international agencies for assistance in Honduras, Chad, Sudan, Tonga and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

Canada will provide \$250 000 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to support its program of assistance to the Miskito Indians in Honduras. Some 8 500 Miskito who have fled Nicaragua are living in a refugee camp about 50 kilometres from the Honduras-Nicaragua border. The Canadian contribution will allow for aircraft to transport equipment to the region to maintain the road to the camp.

In addition, the Canadian government is providing \$500 000 to the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator for its program of relief assistance in Chad. The funds will be devoted to the transportation infrastructure required to ensure the delivery of food and medical supplies.

### Support to Sudan

Sudan will receive \$3 million from Canada for emergency balance-of-payments support. The funds are to be used to support the Sudanese economy which is suffering from a sharp decline in trade, a reduced flow of foreign exchange and a depletion of currency reserves resulting in balance-of-payments difficulties. In the past three years, Canada has provided Sudan with \$10.5 million in food aid.

A grant of \$100 000 to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in response to its appeal on behalf of victims of a cyclone that devastated Tonga has been announced by the Canadian government. The funds will be used by UNICEF to repair wells, culverts, roofs and pumps before the start of the rainy season so that a clean water supply can be accumulated for the long dry season that follows.

Finally, Canada will provide a \$50 000 grant for emergency relief to flood victims in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The grant is in response to an appeal for assistance by the League of Red Cross Societies and will help cover the cost of water purification units, medications, tents and blankets.

## New, faster hovercraft developed for the North



A model of the Aerobac, the all-terrain vehicle being produced by SNC and Bombardier.

Two Montreal companies, SNC Group and Bombardier Incorporated are developing a prototype off-road vehicle that combines the hovercraft principle with conventional track propulsion.

Feasibility studies for the vehicle — based on a concept of the federal Transportation Development Centre in Montreal — are well advanced and the group is aiming at construction of a prototype in 1984.

Plans call for the Aerobac AB-7 prototype to weigh 21 tonnes, including a seven-tonne payload, and be capable of travelling over rough trails and muskeg at 30 kilometres an hour. Conventional tracked vehicles travel at five or six kilometres an hour.

### Becomes amphibian

The craft could become an amphibian and cross lakes and streams at reduced speed. It is designed to minimize disturbance to the fragile northern environment.

The skirts of the vehicle are of a new design to ride over rough terrain and maintain air pressure and lift. The air cushion extends the full length of the craft, with two fans connected to the main diesel power plant by a multi-chain drive supplying air to the skirts through two longitudinal ducts.

The skirts are really a multi-cellular system designed to give lateral stability and to allow the vehicle to negotiate

obstacles such as rocks and tree stumps without damage and loss of pressure.

The tracks will employ standardized components already familiar in conventional off-road vehicles. The same engine supplies power to the air cushion fans and to the drive sprockets for the tracks.

Aerobac will be able to negotiate grades of about 30 per cent because of its track propulsion, said Pierre Alepin, manager of SNC's transportation department. Overland hovercraft prototypes have not been able to do this in the past.

The craft would be able to move at road speeds over cleared trails and over muskeg and permafrost areas. Contact is limited to a fraction of the vehicle's weight. It can carry about 30 people.

### Roads not required

While more expensive to operate than a conventional truck, it would not need a prepared gravel roadway.

Trails could be cleared in the northern environment for 10 per cent or less of the cost of making an acceptable gravel road.

The payload will weigh seven tonnes so that it can be used for transmission line construction, taking a cable reel weighing up to six tonnes.

Aerobac will first be tested under operating conditions in northwestern Quebec and later tried out over terrain in the North.