



(REPUBLIQUE DU BENIN) **BENIN**

Flag: two equal horizontal bands of yellow (top) and red (bottom) with a vertical green band on the hoist side; green symbolizes hope and revival, yellow wealth, and red courage



Present day Benin was the site of Dahomey, a prominent West African kingdom that rose in the 15th century. The territory became a French Colony in 1872 and achieved independence on 1 August 1960, as the Republic of Benin. A succession of military governments ended in 1972 with the rise to power of Mathieu Kerekou and the establishment of a government based on Marxist-Leninist principles. A move to representative government began in 1989. Two years later, free elections ushered in former Prime Minister Nicephore Soglo as president, marking the first successful transfer of power in Africa from a dictatorship to a democracy. Kerekou was returned to power by elections held in 1996 and 2001, though some irregularities were alleged. Kerekou stepped down at the end of his second term in 2006 and was succeeded by Thomas Yayi Boni, a political outsider and independent. Yayi, who won a second five-year term in March 2011, has attempted to stem corruption and has strongly promoted accelerating Benin's economic growth.

Geography: Benin is located in Western Africa, bordering the Bight of Benin, between Nigeria and Togo. Area: total: 112,620 sq. km. *Area - comparative:* Slightly smaller than Pennsylvania. *Border countries:* Burkina Faso 306 km, Niger 266 km, Nigeria 773 km, Togo 644 km. *Coastline:* 121 km. *Maritime claims:* Territorial sea; 200 nm. Sandbanks create difficult access to a coast with no natural harbors, river mouths, or islands *Climate:* Tropical; hot, humid in south; semiarid in north. *Terrain:* Mostly flat to undulating plain; some hills and low mountains. *Natural hazards:* Hot, dry, dusty harmattan wind may affect north from December to March. *Environment - current issues:* Inadequate supplies of potable water; poaching threatens wildlife populations; deforestation; desertification.

Military Notes: Benin Armed Forces (Forces Armees Beninoises, FAB): Army (l'Arme de Terre), Benin Navy (Forces Navales Beninois, FNB), Benin Air Force (Force Aerienne du Benin, FAB) (2013). Benin has a small military better suited to Internal Security missions than intervention outside its own borders. The Benin military maintains close ties with France.

Panhard AML-90 of the Forces Armees Beninoises as of 2011. Evidently a small number of these cars, as well as instructors in their operation were supplied by the French military.



Panhard AML-90 Armored Car Benin Army circa 2011 (photo ECPArmee)