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FEATURES BEYOND A SINGLE SOVEREIGNTY:
ANTARCTIC FEATURES

Programs of the United States
Board of Geographic Names
on Names in Antarctica

Submitted by the United States of America **/

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**/ Prepared by Dr. Richard R. Randall, Executive Secretary, U.S.
Board on Geographic Names

Programs of the United States Board on Geographic Names on Names in Antarctica

Summary. The US has had programs to select names of features in Antarctica since 1941 for cartographic products. With the recreation of the US Board on Geographic Names in 1947, it was found useful to continue those efforts through the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names. This body has worked effectively to provide names for features in this area to support a variety of purposes, including the production of maps.

Work since the 5th UN Conference. Since the 5th UN Conference on Geographical Names in 1987, the US has continued active in programs on Antarctic Names. Through the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (ACAN) of the US Board on Geographic Names, the US has approved some 500 names additional names based on research and exploration carried out by US organizations or as a result of names approved by other nations and adopted by the US. These names, along with some 12,000 names approved earlier plus 3000 variant or unapproved names, have been published in a gazetteer in 1988. This publication gives basic information about names, including latitude and longitude. The 1988 item is an interim publication because an expanded version with text describing background on discovery will be published in the near future. The new edition will be similar to the gazetteer published in 1981. In addition to approved names, the gazetteer also carries "variant" names, which are known to be in some use but which may be misspelled or otherwise represent a different name. BGN approved names and any variant names are listed alphabetically, with the latter cross-reference to the former.

International Collaboration. The US continues to collaborate with other nations active in naming Antarctic features. At present, ACAN's most active collaborator is the British Antarctic Place Names Committee which provided about 20 percent of names approved by ACUF since 1987. Naming in Antarctica, as in other places subject to exploration by several national research teams, can reveal variations in nomenclature. For example, one nation can name a feature but never record it officially. Years later another nation can give a different name; additionally, a second nation may modify the the original name by translation. It is possible that a third nation will find only the translated name and approve it. ACUF attempts to record all such names. It will approve one, according to its principles and policies, but list others as variants. As interest in Antarctica grows, there is evidence that other nations are producing gazetteers.

A Principal Goal. The basic ACAN goal is to provide names that its English-language users understand. To carry out this policy, ACAN applies policies that may seem to vary and which actually may be flexible to fit a variety of circumstances. Since the US does not recognize territorial sovereignty in Antarctica, ACAN naming policies do not need to abide by so-called national rules. A summary of ACAN rules is:

Specific terms generally are retained as originally spelled.

The original name is retained if it has international usage.

Substitution of an English generic for a foreign generic term when it is part of the name, or the addition of a definite article if the local language is not readily understood. Examples: Rundvika is Rund Bay and Trillingnutane is Trilling Peaks.

Translation of a specific, a generic, or both to English.

Examples: Segel-Fels becomes Sail Rock, Segundo Mojon becomes Second Milestone, and Dronning Maud Land becomes Queen Maud Land.

Addition of an English generic to the foreign name. Examples: Vorposten becomes Vorposten Peak, Tvisten becomes Tvisten Pillars, Ober-See becomes Ober-See Lake.

Acceptance, in rare instances, of well-established translated forms. Example: Cape Well-met was originally named Motesudden.

International Cooperation. As a member of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), the US is involved in many programs affecting that continent. At a meeting of SCAR in June of 1992, the US agreed to support a new SCAR activity to develop guidelines concerning treatment of names and to establish a central repository of antarctic names publications. The US believes the publication of a compendium of approved names would be useful, but it does not endorse any plan to create an international authority to select or approve names. Apart from any SCAR programs, ACUF recommends that nations engaged in naming features in Antarctica fully exchange reports of their activities. ACAN also suggests that nations follow comparable principles, policies, and procedures for naming features.