

SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
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TOPONYMIC DATA FILES

NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

Foreign Names Gazetteers Published
since 1987

Submitted by the United States of America**/

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**/ Prepared by Anne J. Wiernicki, Chief, Geographic Names Branch, and Charles M. Heyda, Scientific Linguist, Geographic Names Branch, Defense Mapping Agency, Bethesda, Maryland

All U.S. Government agencies and many firms in the private sector require authoritative foreign geographic names information. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and the Defense Mapping Agency (DMA) play major roles in the process of providing such information, through the compilation and publication of gazetteers of foreign geographic names.

BGN has a legal mandate to standardize geographic names for the purpose of providing authoritative nomenclature for geographic features to serve the national requirements of U.S. Government agencies. BGN, together with DMA, is responsible for preparing and publishing foreign names gazetteers.

BGN/DMA gazetteers contain valuable toponymic data, carefully collected over the years from the latest authoritative local sources. Names which are published in the gazetteers are standardized according to BGN principles, policies, and procedures. Each name is supplemented with a correct designation code (such as PPL for populated place, STM for stream, or MT for mountain), latitude and longitude, a code for the first-order administrative division in which the feature is located, a UTM grid reference, and a JOG sheet number.

Gazetteer production requires a substantial amount of time for research and review. Therefore, most of the gazetteers which were published since 1987 were only partially revised; no more than 15% of the main-entry names were re-examined. Some gazetteers, however, were totally recompiled, meaning that all of the main-entry names were re-examined.

Since the Fifth United Nations Conference on Geographical Names, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and the Defense Mapping Agency have prepared and published the following gazetteers. Those which were totally recompiled are identified with an asterisk (*).

1992

Argentina	Mexico
Bolivia	Paraguay
Brazil Supplement	South Africa*
Chile Supplement	

1991

Cuba

1990

China*	Panama
Denmark*	Senegal
Jordan	Undersea Features

1989

Chad	Philippines
Iraq	Sudan
Madagascar*	Sweden
Peru	

1988

Colombia	Poland
Libya	Mongolia
Namibia*	

1987

Bulgaria*	Paracel and Spratly Islands*
Ecuador	Somalia
Egypt	United Arab Emirates

BGN/DMA gazetteers are used primarily by U.S. Government agencies, by the U.S. military services, and by academic institutions, such as universities and libraries. There is also a great demand for the gazetteers by private individuals and commercial firms. Regular users of the gazetteers are private map makers, publishers, the communications media, and commercial firms

with foreign investments. Distribution records indicate that gazetteers are also purchased by foreign governments, foreign universities and libraries, and foreign commercial firms.

Surveys of the users of BGN/DMA gazetteers indicate that the gazetteers are used primarily for national intelligence purposes, for the support of various U.S. Government programs, such as the war on drugs, and for educational and commercial research. Foreign names gazetteers provide a valuable resource for U.S. Government agencies and for the private sector, as well. They provide access to orderly and uniform information about the names of geographic features throughout the world.

The production schedule of BGN/DMA gazetteers is based on various factors, including voluminous name changes necessitated by changes in a country's political situation, and the modification or adoption of new spelling systems. Primarily, however, the production schedule is based on the requirements and programs of U.S. Government agencies and reflects the priorities of need for specific areas of the world by those agencies. For example, the requirement for up-to-date gazetteers to provide current information on correct names and geographic locations to support the counter-narcotics offensive is reflected in the 1992 BGN/DMA gazetteer production program. In order to fulfill that requirement, all gazetteers published in 1992, so far, are of Latin American countries.