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## USAP moves to new International Antarctic Center in Christchurch

As researchers, support personnel, and members of the U.S. Navy Support Force, Antarctica (NSFA) arrived in Christchurch, New Zealand, en route to McMurdo Station to begin the 1990–1991 austral summer field season, they were pleasantly surprised to find that the familiar U.S. Antarctic Program offices had been replaced—with the new International Antarctic Center. The center, which opened in 1990, was designed and constructed by Christchurch International Airport Ltd. Located next to the airport, it will provide a variety of services for national programs that use New Zealand to support research in the Ross Sea region.

The U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP) and the New Zealand Antarctic Research Program (NZARP), both of which moved from older facilities in Christ-

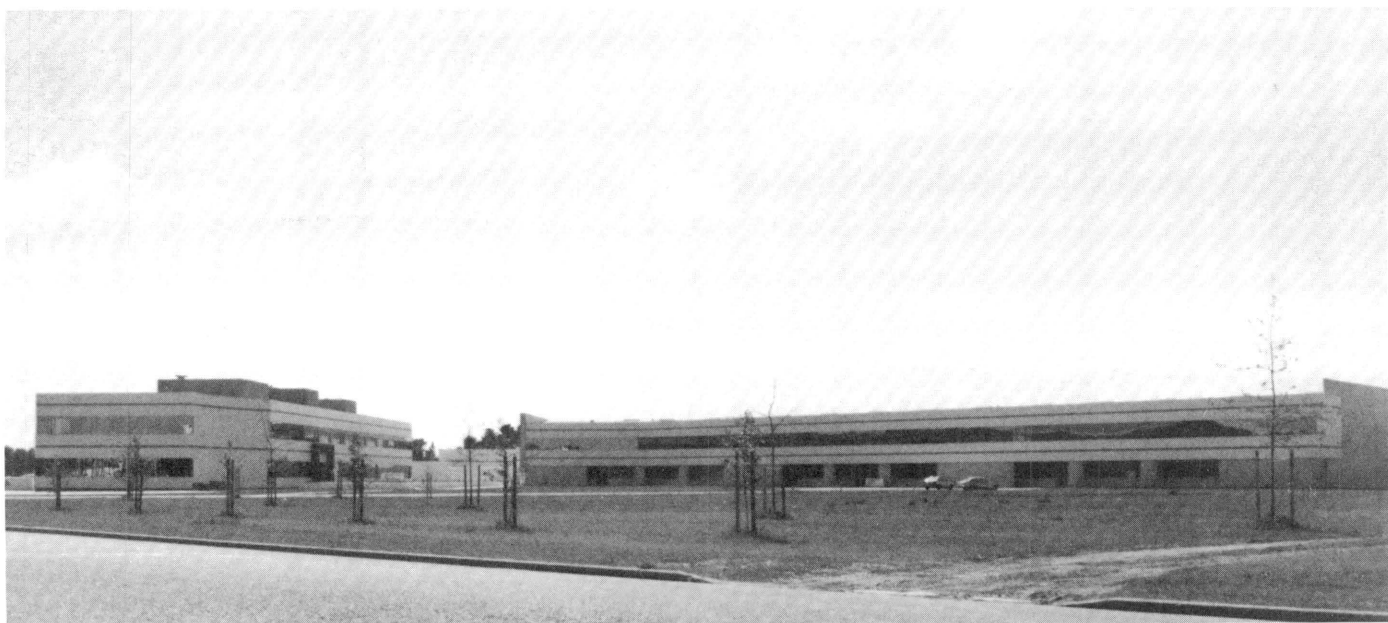
church, are the first tenants of the new center. Since the International Geophysical Year (1957–1958), the United States has leased several buildings in a complex near the new center to support its year-round science program in Antarctica; however, these buildings no longer were adequate to meet the needs of the U.S. program. The New Zealand program had leased space in a building in Christchurch's downtown business district but had to find new space because the building was scheduled to be torn down as part of the redevelopment of the area.

The new center houses the NZARP headquarter's offices and USAP administrative offices for the National Science Foundation, NSF's support contractor, and the New Zealand detachment of NSFA; it provides facilities for process-

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The International Antarctic Center in Christchurch, New Zealand, opened in September 1990. Located near the Christchurch International Airport, the center provides office space, a passenger terminal, and storage facilities for cold-weather clothing for both the U.S. Antarctic Program and the New Zealand Antarctic Program.



ing passengers traveling to and from Antarctica and for storing and distributing polar clothing; and it boasts an antarctic library, medical facilities, and the U.S. Navy Fleet post office.

For more than a century, Christchurch has served as a gateway to the Antarctic. From this New Zealand city, Great Britain, the United States, and Japan—among others—have launched expeditions to Antarctica. Since the International Geophysical Year, the importance of Christchurch to antarctic research has grown. Its proximity to the southernmost continent—particularly the Ross Sea region—has made it an ideal starting point for transporting personnel and materials easily and, consequently, for maintaining the tenuous lifeline to the continent's isolated year-round stations. During the last decade, increased public interest in Antarctica also has made Christchurch a center for tourists interested in or traveling to the southern continent and its surrounding oceans.



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As the pressure of rapidly changing political, economic, and environmental factors alters the way in which scientific research is conducted in Antarctica, countries supporting year-round research programs are searching for safer, more cost-effective ways to operate. The new center represents a step toward this goal. By bringing together established national antarctic programs that operate in the Ross Sea area and providing operational support—particularly state-of-the-art technology—the center will enable these countries more efficiently to plan and conduct cooperative research and operations. In addition, other countries operating on an expeditionary basis will be able to use the center to coordinate their activities more effectively.

The center will have three distinct components, designed to support antarctic operations and to provide information to the public:

- the two completed buildings that provide support and operations services to national programs;
- an antarctic cultural and information center;
- temporary living quarters for science and support personnel traveling between Christchurch and Antarctica.

Other planned services for national research programs include global communication and database services. For the information center, designers plan to provide educational facilities and exhibits that will help tourists and other visitors understand Antarctica, its environment, and the on-going research programs.

## NSFA Christchurch detachment renamed

The International Antarctic Center was not the only change in the U.S. program based in Christchurch during 1990. On 1 October 1990, the U.S. Navy disestablished the Naval Support Force Antarctica Detachment Christchurch and re-established the group as the U.S. Naval Antarctic Support Unit, Christchurch.

The unit is comprised of about 55 military personnel and 40 civilians, who live year round in Christchurch. Commanded by the Commanding Officer of the Naval Support Force, Antarctica (NSFA), they provide administrative, operational, and maintenance support to the U.S. Antarctic Program. The senior officer of the Unit also acts as a liaison between NSFA, the New Zealand government, and private agencies, giving lectures and making presentations about antarctic support operations to visitors and local groups. Although much of the unit's work is focused on moving personnel and material to Antarctica during the austral summer, Navy and civilian personnel also have a significant role in the annual mid-winter airdrop of supplies to McMurdo and Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

This photograph shows the entrance to the passenger terminal where antarctic program participants from the U.S. and New Zealand programs will assemble before flights to McMurdo Station.

NSF photo by Charles Paul.

