



*Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Wellington*

January 10, 2008

U.S. Government delegation attends dedication of new multi-million dollar Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station

A high-level U.S. Government delegation will attend the dedication of the new multi-million dollar Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station this Saturday, January 12.

The delegation will be headed by U.S. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky. Under Secretary Dobriansky is responsible for coordinating U.S. foreign policy on a wide range of global issues, including the environment, oceans, and science.

On the ice, the group will be hosted by Dr Ardent Bement, Director of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), at the dedication of NSF's new Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

Amundsen-Scott is designed to support an array of scientific investigations, from astrophysics to seismology. "It's a US\$150 million engineering marvel," said U.S. Ambassador Bill McCormick, who visited Antarctica during the period of construction. "It will enhance the already extensive scientific collaboration between N.Z. and the U.S. on the 'White Continent'".

The station has been designed to meet the harsh conditions on the polar plateau: to counter drifting snow, the new station has the elevated profile of an airplane wing, facing into the near-constant prevailing winds. Because some snow buildup is inevitable, the 65,000-square-foot building also sits on hydraulic jacks that will allow it to be raised in 25-centimeter increments, thereby effectively adding decades to the building's life.

As the two mile deep glacier on which the Amundsen-Scott Station sits is constantly on the move - by as much as 10 metres each year - and because different parts of glaciers move at different speeds, the building is also in constant danger of being ripped apart: so all connecting walkways between the station's buildings are designed to be flexible. Similarly, the marker designating the true geographic South Pole must be moved annually.

The Station's builders faced the challenge of getting nearly 40,000 tons of construction materials to a site which completely lacked roads, railways or any other type of access infrastructure. They had to design the facility so that all the different parts could be

shipped by ski-equipped LC-130 Hercules cargo aircraft. To maintain heat and ease fuel consumption, the structure carries around five times the insulation of the average U.S. residence.

The Amundsen-Scott Station will accommodate NSF's Antarctic Research Program at the South Pole, which includes 150 people during the three-month austral summer and 50 people during the remaining nine months.

“This really is a city in miniature,” explained Ambassador McCormick. “It even includes a NASA plant-growth chamber for fresh food throughout the year.”

Further information on the new U.S. Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station can be found on the National Science Foundation’s website at:

http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/livingsouthpole/station_new.jsp.