

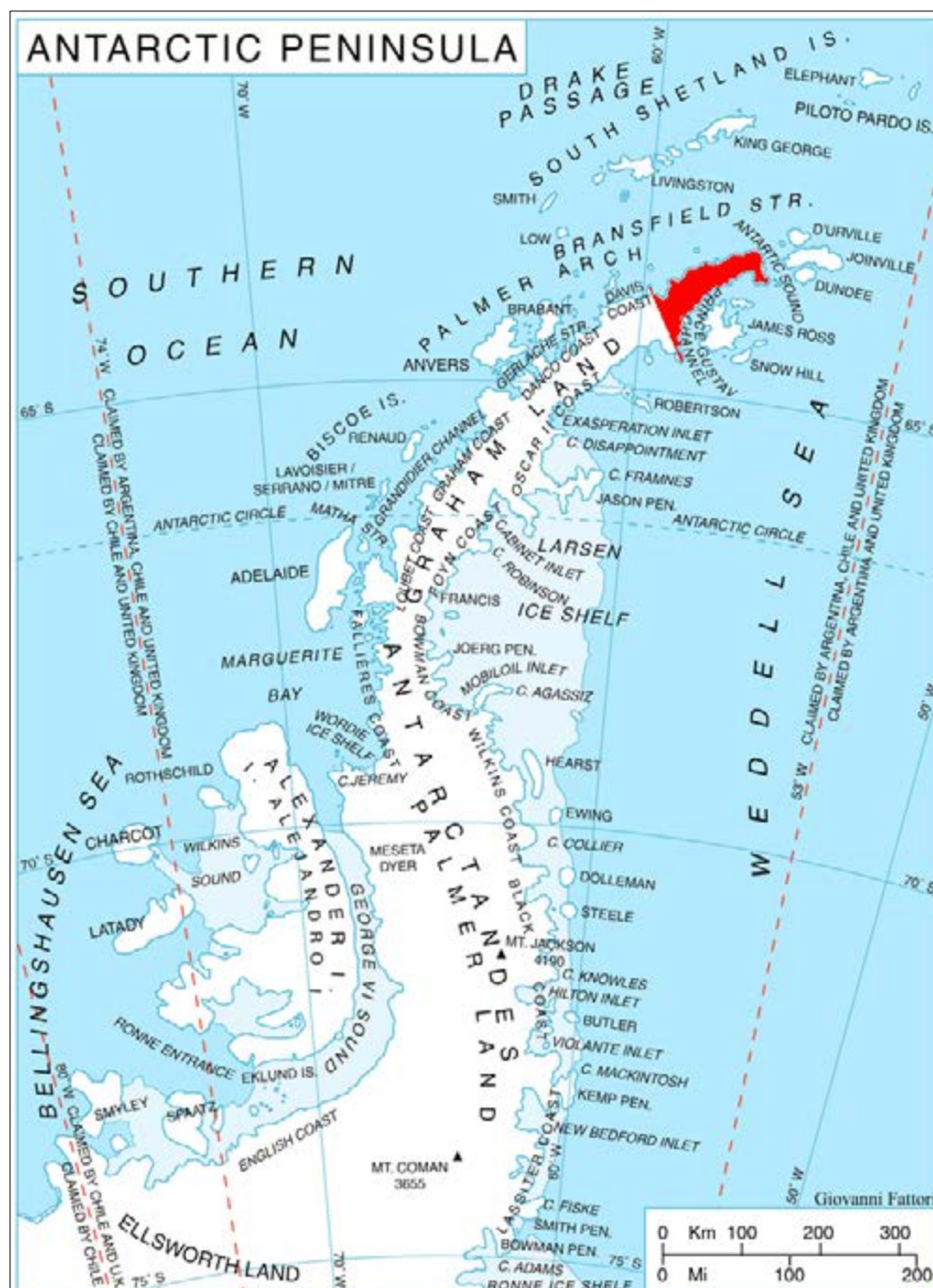


Chile Makes Advances in Antarctic Exploration

OE Watch Commentary: The following excerpts discuss Chile's activities in Antarctic exploration. They highlight the role of the Chilean military, recent successes by Chile in Antarctica, and how Chile and Argentina are looking for ways to improve bilateral cooperation to protect their common interests in the southern continent.

The first accompanying passage from the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs discusses “Dirantartica,” a Directorate responsible for planning and executing Antarctic affairs; along with its diplomatic, legal and political roles. Dirantartica works in conjunction with national and international organizations to safeguard Chile's interests in the conservation and preservation of Antarctica. The passage credits the Chilean Armed Forces for making it possible for scientists to conduct research in Antarctica through the innovative work of a group known as the O'Higgins Exploration and Rescue Section.

The O'Higgins Exploration and Rescue Section (SERO) is part of the Chilean Army and works to develop the planning and execution phases of exploration efforts, particularly to set up safe passage for scientists interested in studying never seen areas and areas that are difficult to access. As the second accompanying passage from a paper written by the Brazilian Navy discusses, SERO soldiers tasked to exploration missions are highly trained to operate in harsh environments. As part of a recently concluded mission that started in 2008 and ended in 2018, SERO was able to set up a base camp in Plateau Laclavere, north of the Antarctic Peninsula. The passage highlights the challenges related to accessing this area (aerial routes proved to be too dangerous due to rapid meteorological changes), and notes that despite these challenges, SERO found a way to access the area by land. Now, thanks to the diligent work of the SERO soldiers, national and international scientists have access to the new and vast area of Plateau Laclavere.



Plateau Laclavere, Antarctica.

Source: Apcbg via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ant-pen-map-Trinity-Peninsula.PNG>, CC BY-SA 3.0

Chile and Argentina both realize for the need to enhance bilateral cooperation on the Antarctic Peninsula. As such, they began forming interdisciplinary teams capable of conducting joint inspections of foreign bases as part of the Antarctic Treaty in 2016. The most recent inspections were conducted at the end of February 2019 and focused on bases operated by four separate countries. The joint inspections suggest the two countries' willingness to abide by the Antarctic Treaty and their desire to protect Antarctica. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Plateau Laclavere is 1,000 meters above sea level and is known for its flat terrain. These two factors present access problems as wind speed can increase up to 25 knots in a short time period which is generally accompanied with cloudiness which reduces visibility to a few meters. This means that Plateau Laclavere is hard to access by land but nearly impossible by air because of wind and visibility issues. It is also the reason SERO needed to build an efficient land route to this area.”



Continued: Chile Makes Advances in Antarctic Exploration

Source: “Antártica (Antarctica)”, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 February 2019. <https://minrel.gob.cl/minrel/site/edic/base/port/antartica.html>

Dirantartica places ample focus on all aspects that pertain to the Antarctic Treaty and its signatories. In doing this, Dirantartica fully complies with its international obligations as laid out by the Treaty to include following international guidelines and consultative norms regarding Antarctica. Additionally, Dirantartica strictly adheres to its own Antarctic Strategic Plan (2015-2019) and collaborates with other public entities competent in positioning Chile the Region of Magallanes and the Chilean Antarctic as the gateway to the Antarctic. Apart from the workload Dirantartica conducts, the organization also develops yearly principal objectives; some of which are listed below:

- *Applying the National Antarctic Policy of 2017, the Antarctic Strategic Plan (2015-2019) and the coordination and execution of the National Antarctic Program. These tasks are accomplished with the participation of the other organizations who play a role in Antarctic matters and with the help of the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some of these organizations include: the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH), the Directorate of Borders and State Limits (DIFROL); the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of the Environment, the Undersecretary of Tourism, the Undersecretary of Fisheries, and the XII Region of Magallanes, just to name a few.*
- *Prepares and coordinates with the national Antarctic delegation for their participation in international forums regarding the Antarctic Treaty. Additionally, Dirantartica helps organizations prepare for consultative meetings with experts in addition to implementing the decisions adopted in such instances.*
- *Coordinates everything related to the Commission for the Conservation of Living Antarctic Marine Resources (CCRUMA).*
- *Plays an active role in the Environmental Impact Operational Committee Assessment. This organization provides up-to-date assessments on condition in Antarctica to the Ministry of the Environment.*
- *Acts as the Executive Advisor to the Antarctic Policy Council and its Permanent Working Committees to include General Affairs and the Antarctica Financial team.*
- *Drafts and prepares legal regulations on issues that concern Dirantartica's areas of expertise.*
- *Conducts specific reports at the request of national authorities and solicits queries from public and private organizations related to issues relevant to their role in Antarctica.*
- *Disseminates work completed by the Chilean government to members of the Antarctic Treaty via the use of the thematic compendia, seminars, talks and courses.*
- *Coordinates and prepares documents that are entered in the annual Antarctic National archives.*

Source: “Plateau Laclavere, nueva ruta para la exploración y la ciencia (Plateau Laclavere: New Route for Exploration and Science),” *Marinha.mil.br*, 6 July 2018. <https://www.marinha.mil.br/secirm/sites/www.marinha.mil.br/secirm/files/publicacoes/rapal/documentos/di/DI-57%20-%20PlateauLaclavere%2C%20nueva%20ruta%20para%20la%20exploraci%C3%B3n%20y%20la%20ciencia.pdf>

The O'Higgins Exploration and Rescue Section (SERO) has improved over time in terms of techniques, procedures that must be followed to mitigate loss of personnel and equipment needed to operate in Antarctica and pave routes or move heavy ice blocks. In establishing new terms and procedures, SERO has come up with three principal objectives in the field. The first is to support scientific research on land and at sea while ensuring the safe movement of glaciers or islands located along the coast. Second, SERO is responsible for providing logistical support to scientists and ensuring their survival. And third, SERO aims to create safe land routes to locations in Antarctica where scientists are interested in exploring such as Plateau Laclavere.

The area known as Plateau Laclavere is located north of the Antarctic Peninsula. It measures 40 square kilometers and contains a mass of glacial ice that measures approximately 350 meters from top to bottom. This area does not differ greatly from general characteristics presented in other areas of Antarctica except for two distinct geographical characteristics. Plateau Laclavere is 1,000 meters above sea level and is known for its flat terrain. These two factors present access problems as wind speed can increase up to 25 knots in a short time period which is generally accompanied with cloudiness which reduces visibility to a few meters. This means that Plateau Laclavere is hard to access by land but nearly impossible by air because of wind and visibility issues. It is also the reason SERO needed to build an efficient land route to this area.

Source: “Chile y Argentina concluyen tercera inspección conjunta de bases extranjeras en la Antártica (Chile and Argentina Conclude Third Joint Inspection of Foreign Bases in Antarctica),” *Chilean Antarctic Institute*, 7 March 2019. <http://www.inach.cl/inach/?p=25869>

Joint inspections of foreign bases in Antarctica conducted by Chile and Argentina aim to prepare each country to face new regulations that will likely be included in the next iteration of the Antarctic Treaty. It also helps foreign countries operating in Antarctica to review its Protocol on Environmental Protection. The joint procedure conducted by Chile and Argentina allows optimization of resources to be able to exercise their central power rights granted to them through the Antarctic Treaty. Joint inspections also help to verify compliance with obligations assumed by Consultative Parties, particularly those related to the protection of the Antarctic environment. Finally, the inspections serve as a measure to help Chile and Argentina improve bilateral relations regarding work in Antarctica.