

cartographic perspectives

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cartographic perspectives on the news

MAPPING THE IRAQ-KUWAIT BOUNDARY

In February, Miklos Pinther, Chief of the United Nations Cartographic Unit, travelled to the Middle East for a fifth time as Secretary of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission. The Commission was established in May, 1991 by the Secretary-General to formally demarcate the boundary between the two countries. Iraq-Kuwait boundaries that appear on recent published maps reflect interpretations of a boundary description originally agreed upon in a letter of exchange between the Prime Minister of Iraq and the Ruler of Kuwait in 1932. The description was subsequently confirmed in agreed minutes between the two countries in 1963. The new present demarcation effort was initiated by the Security Council at the conclusion of the Gulf War (Resolution 687 of 3 April 1991) as one of the arrangements to ensure the restoration of international peace and security in the area.

The Boundary Commission consists of five members: representatives of the governments of Iraq and Kuwait and three



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independent experts, including the Surveyor General of New Zealand, the Technical Director of Swedsurvey (the National Survey of Sweden), and the Commission Chairman, Dr. Mochtar Kusuma-Atmadja, who contributes a background in law. The Commission supervises a ground control survey and aerial photography team consisting of ten surveyors and four photogrammetrists.

Pinther, a United Nations cartographer since 1978, serves as an advisor to the Chairman on technical matters. His responsibilities include logistics and setting agendas for Commission meetings and site visits. His most important duty, however, is to keep detailed minutes of the meetings in order to help the Commission perform its task. He cites his familiarity with mapping

terminology as one of his most important qualifications for the post.

The Commission hopes to finalize the demarcation at its next session in April. After the summer heat abates, construction will begin on a series of intervisible concrete pillars that will give physical expression to the boundary for the first time.

Meanwhile, Pinther believes that the changing world political map will create similar opportunities for other cartographers. He has recently been asked for references, for example, from the International Court of Justice and the Government of Argentina.

about the cover

THE TOUCH OF MAPS

This issue's cover was embossed with the CP logo and the title "Cartographic Perspectives" in braille with the assistance of Dale Gasteiger, Director of Braille Institute Press, 741 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90029. In the following Dale describes Braille Institute's map making activities and solicits the cooperation of the cartographic community.

People who have experienced sight loss use maps in many ways. Tactile maps can provide instruction, direction, mobility assistance, room and area descriptions, campus layouts, bus and train routes and many other kinds of important information. The new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accents the need for reliable, portable tactile maps for blind users. Even though the ADA may cause the installation of wall plaques and signage in braille or large print, these are only useful once a blind person is given directions to the available signs or maps. But since memorizing such

signs and maps is inconvenient and unreliable, there remains a need for good portable maps that can easily be carried and referred to whenever necessary.

Braille Institute is a private, nonprofit organization that offers many services and programs to help blind and visually impaired people achieve independence. The Braille Institute Press is attempting to fill a serious void in the lives of blind people by producing tactile maps at no greater cost than those produced for sighted users.

Although we now have the technical capability to produce good tactile maps, we lack the experience and expertise necessary to design appropriately detailed maps. Therefore, we invite the cartographic community to submit any advice or information possible to help us ensure that our maps are as useful as we can make them. We heartily welcome your interest.

Tactile map production techniques

Until recently, tactile map making at Braille Institute has been a slow, tedious process involving paper, string, glue and other items used to provide various textures and shapes. Tactile maps of this sort are fragile, expensive to construct and inconvenient to use. The Braille Institute has been experimenting with two new techniques for producing portable, durable and easy to use tactile map using computer-assisted methods.

One of our computer-assisted methods involves the Howtek Pixelmaster, a 240 dot-per-inch color ink jet printer attached to a Macintosh computer. We originally acquired the Pixelmaster as a tool to produce print and braille simultaneously on the same page. But in evaluating the machine, I was particularly impressed by the beautiful pictures, with apparently endless variations of color and texture, it could produce. From this observation I felt that the