

OPENING STATEMENT
THE HONORABLE RALPH M. HALL (R-TX)
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
The U.S. Antarctic Program: Achieving Fiscal and Logistical Efficiency While Supporting Sound Science

November 15, 2012

The first United States presence in Antarctica dates back to 1830. Our support of explorers and scientists on that continent has yielded and continues to yield valuable research that not only affects our daily lives, but cannot be done in any other place on earth. As much as we currently know about Antarctica, there remains much to be learned. It is hard to believe that it has only been slightly more than 100 years since humans arrived at the South Pole, and now we are performing science there year-round at the U.S. South Pole Station, in addition to the work being done at McMurdo and Palmer stations, at remote camps across the continent, and on various research vessels in the Southern Ocean.

We are fortunate to have the National Science Foundation capably managing the U.S. Antarctic Program for the entire United States and are pleased that it, in consultation with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, initiated two activities to review the Program: (1) a National Academies report to focus on the science needs for the next two decades; and (2) a Blue Ribbon Panel report to focus on the logistics required to support that science. The purpose of the hearing today is to take a look at the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel's report, *More and Better Science in Antarctica through Increased Logistical Effectiveness*, and the benefits, costs and savings associated with those recommendations.

I, personally, have not had the pleasure of visiting Antarctica as many of my colleagues have, but I have learned from them and from others of the immense value and unique opportunities that continent holds for scientific discovery. I also recognize the important geopolitical reasons to maintain a U.S. presence there and appreciate the cooperation that must take place not only between relevant U.S. agencies, but also between our international friends and partners. Unfortunately, the magnitude of the logistics to support these activities is enormous and overwhelmingly dominates the budget for Antarctic activities. Therefore, the Blue Ribbon Panel's report recommendations are welcome.

The Blue Ribbon Panel report provides ten broad overarching recommendations for logistical effectiveness, and also provides a number of specific implementing actions categorized as either (1) essential for safety and health; (2) readily implementable; and (3) significant investment and large payoff.

I want to thank Norm Augustine; General McNabb; Bart Gordon, the former Chairman of this Committee; and all of the other Blue Ribbon panelists for the time and effort they spent on developing this report, and I look forward to discussing the feasibility of implementing their recommendations, particularly during this time of budgetary constraint, with all of the witnesses.