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MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

Extended Antarctic summer season

After a successful summer season of scientific field work, Antarctica New Zealand, supported by the United States National Science Foundation, will extend its 2007/08 Antarctic summer season until mid-April.

Under normal circumstances the season for scientific field work runs from the first Monday in October until mid-February. This year though the United States Air force C-17 aircraft will be used to make the first ever late-season flights in April.

Antarctica New Zealand Chief Executive Lou Sanson said the longer season would provide researchers with valuable information on how Antarctic ecosystems shut down for the long winter period. "We have made this decision because a number of International Polar Year [IPY] initiatives have shown there is a need for an extended summer season, in order to better understand the adaptations to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean environments. This has also given us the ability to work with the US on their flagship International Polar Year research programme."

During the official flag lowering ceremony last week Scott Base Coordinator Yvonne Boesterling handed over to Winter Manager Grant Hill. This ceremony marks the usual end-of-season and the formal hand over to the 15 staff that will be wintering over through the long Antarctic night.

Scott Base Winter Manager, Grant Hill said "Normally our only physical contact over winter is the mid-winter flight in August. We are looking forward to the April extended season and the challenges of keeping the scientists out in the field in the extreme conditions of an approaching Antarctic winter.

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