Some comments on the "H"ierarchical Continent Address Designator

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At the risk of opening Pandorra's Box, this note suggests a change in the 2-character continent designator portion of the PBBS "H" hierarchical address field. An example would be the North America .NA portion of the packet address,

K9DOG 3 W6SIX.DE.USA.NA

Let me state at the outset that I'm not convinced that we need to use the continent field. It seems to me that the country field by itself is adequate and that the packet BBSes can easily keep track of all the countries in the world. Let me also state that many of the issues addressed here arise because of constant confusion between the functions of addressing and routing.

The correct continent to assign to many countries of the world is confusing and/or ambiguous. To cite some examples of problems which have already been identified:

- 5B4 = Cyprus in the Mediterranian is listed by the IARU (for WAC) and the ITU as Asia. Ditto 4X = Israel and JY = Jordan in the middle East.

  Both TA = Turkey and and the Soviet Union have part of their counties in Europe and part in Asia. 8Q6 = Maldives is listed as both Africa and Asia. Several other counties are also "split".

- Although DU = Philipines and YB = Indonesia are regarded as Asiatic countries, the are listed as Oceania, along with Australia and Hawaii. If you venture to 9M = Malasia, you may be in either Oceania or Asia.

- The Central American and Carribean countries are nearly all part of North America, including YVO, but not 9Y. Anyone care to guess what continent the southern part of HP=Panama is in?

If the purpose of the continent portion of the "H"ierarchical address is to facilitate delivery of messages, then it is illogical to route Israeli and Jordanian traffic through the Orient. It is illogical to make automated routing decisions for messages to Turkish amateurs based on whether the addressee is on the east or west side of the Straits of Bosporus.

Stations in Israel and Cyprus already face this dilemma. Rather than using a .AS Asian address, they choose to use .EU European designator to avoid having their packet mail routed via the Orient. Some have suggested the use of a new continent designator other than .AS; One suggestion has been .ME (Middle East) but this has a serious conflict with the state of Maine.

The Central Americans and the Carribean are both "legally" .NA but feel they need a separate geographic identity and both areas have independently suggested the use of .CA but this would conflict with CA state.

All this leads to my suggestion that the present **2-letter** continent designator must be changed Either:

    (1). The present **2-character** designator should be dropped because it it not really needed and there are too many ambiguities. Users will always try to use address quirks to force routing, so don't give them the chance to fould things up. The computers at the international mail gateways can easily handle the entire DXCC list.

<p align="center">- or -</p>

    (2). A new logical regional designator which allows subcontinent sized regions should be adopted.

If a new, more flexible scheme is to be adopted, I'd suggest that new **4-character** designators be chosen:

- .NOAM, .SOAM, .CEAM, .CARB replacing the present .NA & .SA and solving the Central American and **Carribean** problem,

- **.ASIA** replacing . AS for the Orient,

- .MDLE for the middle-eastern countries like 4X, JY etc.,

   Oceania divided into smaller areas like **.NPAC**, .SPAC, **.AUST,**

- The Indian ocean (now partly in .OC and partly in .AF) be designated **.INDI,**

- **.AFRI** replacing .AF for Africa and **.EURO** replacing .EU for Europe,

- **.ANTR** added for Antarctica,

- Additional new designators added as needed for sub-continent sized logical areas.

This scheme affords the logic of a **2-character** field (.MD) for the "state", **3** characters (**.DEU**) for the country, **&** 4 (**.AFRI**) for the continent/subcontinent and avoids conflicts between **state**-sized areas and continents. Who knows, a few decades hence a 5 character field (**.EARTH**, **.VENUS**) may be needed too!

> [Note: Because of issues raised in this note, the W3IWI PBBS does not use a continent designator on any of its own transactions, although it transparently passes any originated elsewhere].