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11 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States...Ansel Oliver/ANN

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The shift, approved by the denomination's Executive Committee this morning, moves oversight of the region from the church's Southern Asia-Pacific Division, which is based in the Philippines.

The mission region includes the United States territories of Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau.

"Over the years there has been discussion whether it would fit better elsewhere," said world church Undersecretary Myron Iseminger. "Regulations are U.S.-oriented and many employees come from North America."

The region is home to roughly 4,500 Adventist Church members. The Adventist Church there also operates numerous elementary and secondary schools, which are staffed largely by student missionaries.

North American Division President Dan Jackson welcomed the move. "We are always happy to cooperate with the world church, and we will embrace the peoples and the ministry of the Guam-Micronesia Mission," he said.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division President Alberto Gulfan confirmed that his executive committee had made several requests to shift oversight of Guam-Micronesia.

"We loved serving Guam-Micronesia over the past years, but we have some challenges and we are very happy and grateful to the leadership of the North American Division ... for their willingness," Gulfan said. "I believe this is God's timing."

Southern Asia-Pacific acquired administrative oversight of the denomination's operations in Pakistan in a territorial realignment on Sunday.