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At the 1502 sighting of Martinique by Columbus, it was inhabited by the Carib Indians who called the island Mandinina, or “Island of Flowers.” Pierre Gelain d’Esnambuc landed on the northwestern side of the island and established a settlement and fort in 1635 that would later become the island’s first capital, Saint Pierre. The following year, French King Louis XIII signed a decree authorizing the use of slaves in the French West Indies. Within five years, settlers had colonized the land to the south to Fort-de-France, where they constructed a fort on the rise above the harbor. Clearing forests for sugar plantations caused conflicts and eventually warfare with the native Caribs until the last surviving Indians were forcibly removed in 1660. Occupied by the British several times over the centuries, Martinique was made a full Department of France by the 1946 Constitution. Martinique was the birthplace of Empress Josephine in 1763.

IGN has published a 3-parameter transformation from the Fort Desaix Datum of 1925-1926 (International 1924 ellipsoid) to WGS 84 Datum as: 

\[ \Delta X = +186 \text{m}, \Delta Y = +482 \text{m}, \Delta Z = +151 \text{m} \]

The 7-parameter transformation is listed as:

\[ \Delta X = +126.93 \text{m}, \Delta Y = +547.94 \text{m}, \Delta Z = +130.41 \text{m}, \delta_s = +13.8227 ppm, R_x = +2.7867^\circ, R_y = -5.1612^\circ, R_z = -0.8584^\circ \]

Note that the sense of the rotations shown herein conform to the American-Australian standard rather than the left-handed sense favored by many Europeans. The IGN guarantees the 7-parameters to be good to better than 6 meters, as the level is sufficient for the most part of cartographic applications. (Ce niveau est suffisant pour la plupart des applications cartographiques.)

The contents of this column reflect the views of the author, who is responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing and/or the Louisiana State University Center for Geoinformatics (CIG).