



International Boundary Study

No. 1 – April 28, 1961

Algeria – Libya Boundary

(Country Codes: AG-LY)

**The Geographer
Office of the Geographer
Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Background.....	2
II. Analysis of Boundary Segments	3
A. Between Ghudamis and Ghat.....	3
B. Between Ghat and Niger Tripoint.....	5
C. Between Fort Saint and Ghudamis	6
III. Conclusion.....	7

ALGERIA - LIBYA BOUNDARY

I. BACKGROUND

The Algeria - Libya boundary between Fort Saint and the Niger tripoint was established initially in two segments, each by a separate action. The boundary was first delimited between Ghudamis (Rhadames or Ghadames) and the present Niger tripoint by the Franco - Italian Arrangement of 12 September 1919; this arrangement also delimited French and Italian territories from Ghudamis southward to Tummo on the present Libya - Niger boundary. Between Fort Saint and Ghudamis the boundary was delimited and later demarcated as part of a line separating French and Turkish territories between the Mediterranean Sea at Rass Adjir and Ghudamis by the convention of the French Republic and the Sublime Porte of 12 May 1910. Although the delimitation between Ghudamis and the present Niger tripoint lacked detail, the boundary established by the Franco - Italian Arrangement of 1919 prevailed until the Franco - Libyan Agreement of 1956 changed the part between Ghudamis and Ghat (Rhat).

From the beginning the French were not entirely satisfied with parts of the delimitation of 1919 because certain tribal areas were dissected by the boundary. During World War II the French occupied the Fezzan area of Libya and reunited many of the tribal areas. With the creation of an independent Libya in 1951, it became necessary for France and Libya to come to a common understanding of problems associated with the Algeria - Libya boundary. The Franco - Libyan Treaty of 1955 provided among other things for the evacuation of French troops from the Fezzan, for movement by tribes along the boundary, for customs control, and for the clarification and detailed delimitation of those parts of the Franco - Libyan boundary as deemed necessary. The Treaty of 1955 was followed by an exchange of letters in December 1956, constituting the Franco - Libyan Agreement, which changed the initial boundary between Ghudamis and Ghat and delimited it in detail.

The Algeria - Libya boundary for purposes of this study is discussed in three segments. These segments based on differences in boundary status are 1) between Ghudamis and Ghat, 2) between Ghat and the Niger tripoint, and 3) between Fort Saint and Ghudamis. Recent boundary changes between Ghudamis and Ghat are considered authoritative by the United States Government, and future cartographic presentations of this part of the boundary should be made in accordance with the attached maps; these changes are the result of the Franco - Libyan Agreement of 26 December 1956. The Franco - Libyan Treaty of 1955 delimited very generally the boundary between Ghat and the present Niger tripoint by the inclusion of certain fixed points. The status of the boundary between Fort Saint and Ghudamis is unchanged by the Franco - Libyan actions of 1955 and 1956; in the absence of authoritative information, this segment is presented as part of the Algeria - Libya boundary in agreement with recent official French maps.

II. ANALYSIS OF BOUNDARY SEGMENTS

A. Between Ghudamis and Ghat

The boundary between Ghudamis and Ghat extends for about 410 miles from Boundary Marker 233 at Garet Hamel to the parallel of the Great Mosque of Ghat. Boundary Marker 233 is the southernmost point of the line demarcated from the Mediterranean to Ghudamis as a result of the Convention of 12 May 1910. This marker is located on the rocky surface of the Hammadat Tinghert; southward from the hamada, the boundary traverses sandy surfaces and escarpments to the east of the steep slopes of the Tassili - N - Ajjer. The oasis of Ghat is situated east of the boundary in a broad valley which contains the Wadi Tanezzuft in its northern part.

In addition to the delimitation of the boundary, the agreement of 1956 also made provision for the lease by the French of the part of the Edjele airfield located in Libya, and for the construction of sections of a road by the French in Libya. The Algeria - Libyan boundary crosses the Edjele Airfield (refer to provisional map of the Algerian - Libyan Frontier Zone between parallels 27°30' and 29°00' in Appendix), also known as Maison Rouge, which is located to the northeast of the Edjele massif. It was agreed that the Libyan Government would lease to the French Government for a term of 20 years, effective from 10 August 1955, the part of the airfield located in Libya and a security belt of 200 meters adjacent to it. It was agreed also by the Libyan Government that the French could construct sections of a road as the terrain might require in Libya to facilitate communications between Tarat and Tin Alkoum in Algeria, the sections of the road in Libya were to be free to French civil and military vehicles.

The detailed delimitation of 1956 takes into account many surface features such as hills, escarpments, and prominent rocky points; many parts of the boundary are formed by geometrical lines drawn between these natural features. Attached as an Appendix are 1) three map sheets of the Algeria - Libya boundary between parallels 26°30' and 30°10' North on an average scale of 1:200,000, as published by the French Institut Géographique National (National Geographic Institute) in 1956; and 2) map sheets of Fort Tarat and Fort Charlet on a scale of 1:500,000 as published by the French Service Géographique de l'Armée (Geographic Service of the Army) in 1936 and 1936 - 1943 respectively. The text of the delimitation for Points A through T, as contained in the United Nations Treaty Series, Volume 300, pages 288 - 289, 1958, is as follows:

"I. NORTHERN SECTION (Provisional maps of the Algerian - Libyan Frontier zone)

"The initial point is the frontier mark situated at Garet Hamel, approximately fourteen kilometres south-west of Ghadames, designated No. 233 in the record of the demarcation of the Franco - Turkish frontier in 1911.

"Point A, situated on the southern point of an escarpment, is joined to the initial point by a straight line.

"Point B, situated in the centre of a small escarpment, is joined to point A by a straight line.

"Point C, situated to the north of the southernmost Daia of a group of four, is joined to point B by a straight line.

"Point D, situated on an outcrop, is joined to point C by a straight line.

"Point E, an astronomical point called Ouan Taradjeli on the provisional map of the Algerian - Libyan frontier zone, is joined to point D by a straight line.

"Point F, situated on the north-eastern point of an escarpment, is joined to point E by a straight line.

"From point F to point G the frontier follows, at a distance of one kilometre to the west, the line representing the track passing to the east of Edjele.

"Point G is situated on the southern border of the landing strip situated one kilometre to the west of the line representing the track passing to the east of Edjele.

"From point G to point H the frontier follows, at a distance of one kilometre to the west, the line representing the track passing to the east of Edjele.

"Between point H, which is situated on the thalweg line indicated on the map, and point H, situated 0.2 kilometres from point H, the distance between the track and the frontier is reduced to 0.9 kilometres.

"From point H to point I the frontier follows, at a distance of 0.9 kilometres to the west, the line representing the track passing to the east of Edjele.

"Point I is situated at a distance of 0.9 kilometres from the line representing the track passing to the east of Edjele, at the point where the track assumes a southerly direction.

"From point I, the frontier follows a line which arrives at a point one kilometre to the north of Hassi El Mislane, rounds the Hassi and, from a point situated one kilometre to the south thereof, follows the parallel of that last point to point J.

"Point J is defined as being one kilometre west of the intersection of the said parallel and of the line representing the track passing to the east of Edjele.

"From point J to point K the frontier follows, at a distance of one kilometre to the west, the line representing the track passing to the east of Edjele.

"Point K is situated one kilometre west of point L.

"Point L, the junction of two tracks, one passing through Tin Haliouine and the other through Tilmas, is joined to point K by a straight line.

"From point L, the frontier follows the line representing the track passing through Tilmas, the track itself being in Libyan territory. That line reaches point M, which is the intersection of the aforesaid track and of a thalweg line.

"Point N, situated on an outcrop, is joined to point M by a straight line.

"Point O is joined to point N by a straight line.

"Point P, which is the astronomical point of Tan Emezadj, is joined to point O by a straight line.

"II. SOUTHERN SECTION

(Map of Africa on a scale of 1:500,000; special type for the Saharan regions)

"Point Q, which is the intersection of the line joining the aforesaid astronomical point to the filled-in well at Aoussedjine and of the track from Tan Kena to Fort Tarat, is joined to point P by a straight line.

"From that point, the frontier follows the track from Tan Kena to Fort Tarat as far as point R, the track itself being in French territory.

"Point R is situated at the place where the aforesaid track passes the southern point of an escarpment.

"Point S, situated on the escarpment immediately to the south of Ain El Kebir, is joined to point R by a straight line.

"Point T, at the intersection of the line joining point S with the astronomical point of Tin Khiamine and of the parallel of the Great Mosque of Ghat, is joined to point S by a straight line."

B. Between Ghat and Niger Tripoint

The boundary between Ghat and the Niger tripoint extends for about 180 miles from the parallel of the Great Mosque of Ghat to the Niger tripoint. The tripoint is believed to be located at latitude 23°30'54.0" North and longitude 11°59'54.6" East as determined by an astronomical point. The Niger tripoint is also known as reference point 1010, which figure refers to meters above sea level, and Garet Derouel el Djemel. South of the parallel of the Great Mosque of Ghat the boundary continues in a wide valley for about 50 miles; it then turns eastward and crosses two successive north-south trending uplands separated by a broad sandy area with scattered dunes. The boundary traverses from west to east Takharkhourri Gap and Anai Pass in negotiating the two uplands. Beyond the second upland the boundary turns sharply to the southeast and remains along the southern limit of a large sandy area to the Niger tripoint.

There is no detailed delimitation of this segment of the boundary available. The Franco - Libyan treaty of 1955 states that the boundary between Ghat and Tummo will pass through Takharkhourri Gap, Anai Pass, and reference point 1010. Likewise, there are no maps which indicate the delimitation of the boundary in sufficient detail to be definitive. The French Carte Aéronautique du Monde (World Aeronautical Chart) at a scale of 1:1,000,000 is recommended as the best source available at the present time for the alignment of the boundary; map sheets depicting the boundary between Ghat and the Niger tripoint are Tassili-N-Ajjer (2540) and Mont Serkout (2571) published in August 1959 and April 1959, respectively.

C. Between Fort Saint and Ghudamis

The boundary between Fort Saint and Ghudamis extends from Boundary Marker 220, about one and one-half miles southeast of Fort Saint, to Boundary Marker 233, about eight miles southwest of Ghudamis. The boundary markers refer to the southernmost part of the boundary demarcated between French and Turkish territories following the convention of 12 May 1910. The boundary forms a semicircle of approximately 20 miles in length to the west of Ghudamis. It is located on the Hammadat Tinghert near the eastern edge of the high dunes of the Grand Erg Oriental. A detailed description of the location of Boundary Markers 220 through 233 is contained in United Nations Treaty Series, Volume 300, pages 290 - 291, 1958.

The location of the Algeria - Tunisia tripoint with Libya is in dispute at the present time. At the time of the Convention of 12 May 1910, claims were made to the territory south of the line of Bir-Romane - Bir Aouine - Djeneien (or Zar) as being part of Algeria; thus it was maintained that the delegates representing the French in the delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between French and Turkish territories acted for both Tunisia and Algeria. Therefore, according to the territorial claims made for Algeria, any boundary between Zar and Ghudamis would be an Algeria - Libya boundary and not a Tunisia - Libya boundary. In 1911 the French Resident - General in Tunisia objected to this interpretation of the claim and demanded for Tunisia an access corridor to Ghudamis; the dispute was referred to Paris for resolution and the "Caillaux Line" resulted. By decision of the President of the French Conseil, Tunisia obtained a 25-kilometre-wide corridor to Ghudamis. The Algeria - Tunisia boundary was thus continued from Bir Romane to the line of Bir Aouine - Montesseur - Tiaret - Fort Saint, terminating the Tunisia - Libya boundary at Marker 220 rather than number 233. In 1923 the French Ministry of War established a new line of Bir Romane - Daklet El Guelta - Fort Saint farther to the west for purposes of military operations and although all French maps have not been consistent since that time, recent official French maps indicate this line as the boundary between Algeria and Tunisia.

On February 5, 1959, President Bourgiba of Tunisia referred to the boundary problem, and while acknowledging as satisfactory the boundary and its demarcation between the Mediterranean and Bir Romane as specified in the Convention of 1901, he stated that the line between Bir Romane and Marker 220 was not acceptable to Tunisia. Therefore, he proposed a natural prolongation of Tunisia southward from Bir Romane at least to the parallel of Marker 233.

Libya is in agreement with the present boundary as demarcated between the then French and Turkish territories following the Convention of 12 May 1910. The site of the disputed Algeria - Tunisia tripoint with Libya is part of the unresolved location of the Algeria - Tunisia boundary south of Bir Romane. The tripoint is not in dispute by Libya; the ultimate location of the tripoint will not affect the Libyan boundary, except for the location of neighboring countries to Libya.

For purposes of cartographic presentation, the policy of the United States Government is to show the Algeria - Tunisia boundary along the line of Bir Romane - Daklet El Guelta - Fort Saint; this policy should not be construed as indicating approval or disapproval of the Algeria - Tunisia boundary by the United States Government.

The following maps may be used for purposes of cartographic reference on the boundary between Fort Saint and Ghudamis: 1) Frontière Tuniso - Tripolitaine (Tunisia - Tripolitania Frontier), plate 8, scale 1:200,00, dated 1911; and 2) Afrique (Africa), Ghadamès (N.H. 32 - N.E.), dated August 1956.

III. CONCLUSION

Since 1919 the only official actions concerning the Algeria - Libya boundary have been the Franco - Libyan Treaty of 1955 and the Agreement of 1956. There are no known boundary negotiations or commissions active at this time. In the future, petroleum exploration and settlement near parts of the boundary may necessitate new decisions on sovereignty and boundary delimitation.

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared in the Office of the Geographer, Department of State in accordance with provisions of Bureau of the Budget Circular No. A-16, Exhibit D.

Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Office of the Geographer, Room 7334, State Department Building, Department of State, Washington 25, D.C. (telephone: Code 182, extension 4276). Unfolded copies of map enclosures may be obtained from the Map Library, Code 182, extension 3322.