



International Boundary Study

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Colombia – Panama Boundary

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COLOMBIA - PANAMA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

Extending between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, the Colombia - Panama boundary has a length of about 170 miles. The boundary is demarcated by pillars and follows drainage divides throughout most of its distance. Southward from Cabo Tiburon on the Caribbean Sea, it traverses a narrow coastal plain, connects heights of the Serrania del Darien, and passes through a broad lowland between the headwaters of the Rio Tuira and the Rio Perancho. The boundary connects successively the heights of Altos de Quia, Alturas de Nique, and Altos de Aspave and then crosses the coastal plain to Punto Equidistante on the Pacific Ocean.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Administered by the Spanish Viceroy of Peru, the Presidency of New Granada was created in 1564 including the present Territory of Colombia. In 1718 the Presidency was elevated to the Viceroyalty of New Granada, a year later demoted to a Presidency, and in 1739 restored to a Viceroyalty with Panama under its jurisdiction. In addition to Panama and Colombia the restored Viceroyalty also comprised the Provinces of Venezuela and Ecuador. On July 20, 1810, Colombia declared its independence from Spain, which was not assured until nine years later. The Congress of Angostura united Colombia and Venezuela on December 17, 1819, under the name of the Republic of Colombia, shortly thereafter to be called Greater Colombia. In 1821 Panama declared its independence from Spain and joined Greater Colombia, and the following year Ecuador joined.

In 1829 - 30 Greater Colombia split up into the states of Venezuela, Ecuador, and the Republic of New Granada which included Panama. With the neighboring Province of Veragua, Panama seceded in 1841 establishing the State of the Isthmus of Panama, but Colombia quelled the rebellion. The 1853 constitution of a newly organized Granadine Confederation comprised of Colombia and Panama gave the internal provinces or states the right to withdraw. The State of Panama, with boundaries essentially the same as the present Republic, was created in 1855 by legislative enactment. The boundary between the States of Panama and Cauca was fixed by Article 7 of the Colombian Law of June 9, 1855. In 1857 Panama exercised the constitutional right to secede from the Confederation, only to return a short time later.

Following the acceptance of a new constitution, a federal republic was established in 1863 known as the United States of Colombia. In 1885 President Nunez disregarded the constitution of 1863, which made the component States severally sovereign, and the state was called the Republic of Colombia. The State of Panama thereby was reduced to a department of Colombia, which status was retained until independence was proclaimed on November 3, 1903. Four days later the United States received a Panamanian diplomatic representative. Formal recognition was extended to Panama

by the United States on November 13 of the same year, and on November 18 a treaty was signed by Panama and the United States placing the Canal Zone under the administration of the latter.

On April 6, 1914, a treaty was signed at Bogota between the United States and Colombia for the settlement of their differences arising out of the independence of Panama by Colombia with the following boundary between the two states:

The Republic of Colombia recognizes Panama as an independent nation taking as a basis the Colombian Law of June 9, 1855, agrees that the boundary shall be the following: From Cape Tiburon to the headwaters of the Rio de la Miel and following the mountain chain by the ridge of Gandi to the Sierra de Chugargun and that of Mali going down by ridges of Nigue to the heights of Aspave and from thence to a point on the Pacific half way between Cocalito and La Arditá

A boundary treaty between Colombia and Panama was signed at Bogota on August 20, 1924. Article I states that the Colombia - Panama Boundary would be the same as provided for in the Colombian Law of June 9, 1855. Article II of the same treaty makes provision for a mixed demarcation commission to fix and mark the boundary on the ground. An exchange of notes at Panama (City) on June 17, 1938, afforded the boundary alignment and location of pillars between Colombia and Panama in execution of the demarcation provided for in the treaty of 1924.

III. GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

The Colombia - Panama boundary is located near the eastern end of the isthmus connecting the continents of North America and South America. It traverses narrow coastal plains, rugged mountains, and a central lowland. Elevations on the boundary reach to 6,150 feet in the Serrania del Darien and 5,143 feet in the Cerros de Quia. In general it follows the water divides although near the Pacific Ocean it crosses the Rio Jampavado. Boundary pillars placed on prominent elevations demarcate the boundary.

The boundary is in a tropical rainforest climatic region modified in places by high elevations. Temperatures are continuously hot and heavy precipitation falls in all seasons. Average annual precipitation ranges between 60 and 80 inches for most of the area. The typical vegetation consists of broad-leaved evergreen forest.

With between 1 and 5 persons per square miles, the area along the boundary is sparsely populated. Most of the people are engaged in a shifting cultivation type of livelihood. Access to the area is difficult with only tracks and trails crossing the boundary.

IV. BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT

In accordance with the exchange of notes of June 17, 1938, the alignment of the Colombia - Panama boundary is as follows:

The initial point of the frontier line shall be the north-west point of Cabo Tiburon, where there is a first-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°21'50.9" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°41'7.3" north, and altitude 81 metres. The frontier follows the line of the watershed of the rivers passing over the Cerro Medio, at the point where is situated boundary-mark No. 2, known as the boundary-mark of the Cerro Medio. This is a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°21'28.1" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°40'45.0" north, and altitude 151.4 metres; it then passes by boundary-mark No. 3, known as the boundary-mark of the Zapzurro - Camino la Miel, a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°21'46.8" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°40'17.7" north, and altitude 77.4 metres: it follows the crest of the cordillera up to the Cerro Parado, where there is a boundary-mark No. 4, known as the Parado boundary-mark, a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°21'30.7" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°38'58.9" north, and altitude 373.3 metres; then, still following the line of the watershed where the head-springs of the Rio la Miel rise, the frontier runs westwards until it reaches the Cerro Sande, where the second-class boundary-mark has been set up, boundary-mark No. 5 known as the Sande boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°22'26.5" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°39'8.4" north, and altitude 440.1 metres. The description of this part of the frontier was adopted by the two governments in the exchange of notes dated December 7th and 10th, 1936.

From the Cerro Sande, the frontier follows the line of the watershed between the Chucurti and the Acandi and passes by way of boundary-mark No. 6, known as the boundary-mark of Chucurti, a second-class boundary-mark, the co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°23'44.2" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°36'38.8" north, and altitude 169.5 metres; it continues along the line of the watershed as far as the junction with the main cordillera; passing through the point marked by boundary-mark No. 7, known as the Junction [Empalme] boundary-mark, a second-class boundary-mark, the co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°26'3.4" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°33'50.0" north, and altitude 732 metres; it follows the line of the watershed between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean on the Serrania del Darien, passing through boundary-mark No. 8 situated on the Cerro Gandi, known as the Gandi second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°27'1.0" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°30'58.6" north, and altitude 1,160 metres; the frontier continues along the same line of watershed and passes over No. 9 boundary-mark, known as the Tanela boundary-mark, a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are:

longitude 77°17'33.0" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 8°13'29.6" north, and altitude 1,415 metres; it continues along the same line of watershed as far as boundary-mark No. 10, situated on the Alto Limon, known as the Alto Limon boundary-mark, a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°9'24.1" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 7°58'17.8" north, and altitude 604.7 metres; the frontier follows the same line of watershed and passes through boundary-mark No. 11, which is known as the Palo de las Letras boundary-mark, a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°20'40.0" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 7°50'45.9" north, and altitude 155 metres; continuing along the same line of watershed, the frontier passes through boundary-mark No. 12, known as the Mangle boundary-mark, a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°35'39.8" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 7°32'12.4" north, and altitude 470 metres; the frontier continues along the same line of watershed, circles round the springs of Salaqui and then follows the line of watershed of the waters of the Jurado and Balsas, passing through boundary-mark No. 13, known as the boundary-mark of el Cruce, a second-class boundary-mark, the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°44'5.5" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 7°28'25.5" north, and altitude 250 metres; the frontier follows the line of the water-shed of the Jurado and Balsas up to the "Altos de Aspave", to a point at which this line of waters shed is intercepted by the meridian of longitude 77°47'33" west of Greenwich, which defines the approximate co-ordinates agreed upon by the two governments in the exchange of notes dated December 3rd, 1937, with a view to settling the question submitted for their decision by the Mixed Commission in No. 8 of their Records, dated September 13th, 1937, and in accordance with the agreement reached by the present exchange of notes with a view to fixing the exact and final position of the boundary-mark known as the boundary-mark of the "Altos de Aspave". After the point known as the "Altos de Aspave" thus described, the frontier runs in a straight line up to the first-class boundary-mark on the Pacific coast situated at a point at an equal distance between Cocalito and La Arditá, which is boundary-mark No. 14, known as the boundary-mark of the Pacific [Punto Equidistante], the geographical co-ordinates of which are: longitude 77°53'20.9" west of Greenwich meridian, latitude 7°12'39.3" north, and altitude 26 metres.

V. PRESENT SITUATION

There are no known disputes relative to the alignment of the Colombia - Panama boundary.

APPENDIX

Documents

1. Treaty between Colombia and the United States of America for the Settlement of Differences arising out of Events in the Isthmus of Panama in November 1903, Bogota, April 6, 1914 [Ratifications exchanged at Bogota, March 1, 1922] British and Foreign State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 114, 1921, pp. 678 - 682.
2. Treaty for the Settlement of Differences arising out of the Events which took place on the Isthmus of Panama in November 1903, signed at Bogota, April 6, 1914. League of Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 9, 1922, No. 263, pp. 302 - 316.
3. Boundary Treaty between Colombia and Panama, Bogota, August 20, 1924 [Ratifications exchanged at Bogota, January 31, 1925]. BFSP, op. cit., Vol. 125, Part III, 1926, pp. 297 - 298.
4. Boundary Treaty between Colombia and Panama, signed at Bogota, August 20, 1924. League of Nations, op. cit., Vol. 33, 1925, No. 841, pp. 168 - 172.
5. Exchange of Notes between Colombia and Panama constituting an Agreement for the Delimitation of the Boundary between the two countries, in execution of the Boundary Treaty, 1924, Panama, June 17, 1938. BFSP, op. cit., Vol. 142, 1938, pp. 494 - 504.
6. Exchange of Notes constituting an Agreement for the Delimitation of the Boundary between the Two Countries, in Execution of the Treaty of August 20th, 1924, Panama, June 17th, 1938. League of Nations, op. cit., Vol. 193, 1938 - 1939, No. 4,500, pp. 232 - 265.
7. Marchant, Alexander, Boundaries of the Latin American Republics. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1944.
8. Arreglo de limites entre la Republica de Colombia y la Republica de Panama. Bogota: Editorial de la Litografia Colombia, 1941 (contains map of boundary and detailed sketches of boundary pillar sites).

Map

Republic of Panama: scale 1:500,000; published 1963 by United States Army Map Service: Special Map No. 2, Sheet III.

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