



# **International Boundary Study**

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## **El Salvador – Guatemala Boundary**

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**INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY**

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## **EL SALVADOR - GUATEMALA BOUNDARY**

### **I. BRIEF**

The El Salvador - Guatemala boundary is about 126 miles in length. It extends southwestward from the Honduran tripoint at Cerro Monte Cristo (14° 25' 20.06" N., 89° 21' 28.46" W.) to the mouth of the Rio Paz on the Pacific Ocean. The boundary is comprised of approximately 105 miles of rivers, 19 miles of straight-line segments, and 2 miles in Lago de Guija. A mixed Boundary Commission completed the construction of 530 monuments and pillars along the boundary in 1940.

### **II. BOUNDARY BACKGROUND**

By an exchange of notes on the 17th and 23rd of August 1935, El Salvador and Guatemala agreed to fix and establish definitely their common boundary. It was agreed also by notes of September 21 and October 15 of the same year to set up a Mixed Boundary Commission consisting of one delegate each from El Salvador and Guatemala and a third from a neutral state. The Commission was instructed to prepare boundary maps on the basis of aerial photography and to undertake the surveys and investigations necessary to determine the line with exactness. On March 26, 1936, a protocol was signed by El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras for the acceptance of Cerro Monte Cristo (elevation 3,926 feet) as the tripoint of the boundaries of the three states.

The Mixed Boundary Commission documented its work by the preparation and issuance of Acts. Following the completion of preliminary data, the Commission then submitted a report to the respective governments, accompanied by maps which indicated the recommended boundary. On April 9, 1938, El Salvador and Guatemala signed a delimitation treaty which affords the present alignment of the boundary between the two states.

The delimitation treaty provided for finalization of the boundary by the construction of demarcation monuments and pillars. Article II of the treaty stated that the future shifting of a boundary river would not change the alignment of the boundary as determined at the time of demarcation. The Acts drawn up by the Mixed Boundary Commission were approved by the treaty and numbers XVI and XIX were included as an integral part of the agreement.

Four years and ten months after establishment, the Mixed Boundary Commission completed its assignment in September 1940. During this period, it determined numerous geographic positions, erected markers, and prepared detailed boundary maps. The report of the Commission, including the boundary demarcation and eight maps, was published in 1942.

### **III. ALIGNMENT**

The treaty signed by El Salvador and Guatemala on April 9, 1938, delimited the boundary from Cerro Monte Cristo southwestward to the Pacific Ocean. The alignment of the boundary is contained in Article I of the treaty.

### **Article I.**

The territorial boundaries between El Salvador and Guatemala were and are as follows:

(a) In the zone extending from the summit of the Montecristo ridge to the river Chingo, Coco or Jerez, the existing boundary, which, with slight technical modifications essential to demarcation, is defined as follows:

From the trifinial boundary-mark on the summit of the Montecristo ridge where the Republics of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras meet, in a straight line and an approximately westerly direction toward the head of the nearest of the ravines formed by the river Negro, Frio, Brujo or Anguiatu; thence following the median line of the ravine downstream and subsequently that of the river downstream to its meeting with the Los Cedros ravine which comes in on the left, thence leaving the river at this point and following the median line upstream from the said Los Cedros ravine to the head of the nearest tributary to the summit of the Brujo ridge, and thence in a straight line to the triangular mark erected by the Joint Frontier/Mixed Boundary/Commission at the summit of the aforesaid Brujo ridge; thence in a straight line and an approximately northerly direction to the boundary-mark known as La Piedrona which is at the edge of the river Negro, Frio, Brujo or Anguiatu and stands at the junction of the estates known as "La Yerba Buena" in Salvadoran territory, and "Montenegro and Brujo" and "Mescal," in Guatemalan territory; from the said Piedrona mark again following the median line of the river Brujo, Negro, Frio or Anguiatu downstream to its confluence with the river Angue, Nejapa or Grande, which occurs to the south-west of the Salvadoran village named Valeriano; thence following the median line of the river Angue downstream to its confluence with the Guayabillas ravine to the north of the hamlet called San Jeronimo; thence following the Guayabillas ravine upstream to the point where it joins a little dry ravine which passes close by the boundary-mark known as Salitre Rancho de Cuero; from its junction with the aforementioned little ravine following the latter upstream as far as the Salitre Rancho de Cuero boundary-mark itself, which stands on the boundary between the "Valeriano" and "Matanzas" estates in Guatemala and the "Matalapa" estate in El Salvador; thence in a straight line to the mark called Loma Talpetatosa on the road from Santa Barbara to La Canada; thence in a straight line to the summit of the Mamey ridge; thence in a straight line to the boundary-mark called "La Puerta" at the point of intersection of the road which passes to the north of the Tecuan ridge and leads from Pinuelas to "El Shiste" with the ravine which bears this name; thence following the median line of the "El Shiste" ravine downstream to the place where a boundary-mark is placed at the south-west corner of the "El Shisto"

estate, belonging to Doroteo Estrada, at the north-west corner of the estate of Monica de Bojorquez, and at the boundary of the estate of J. V. de Orellana, the two former being in the territory of El Salvador and the last-named in Guatemala; from this boundary-mark leaving the course of the Shiste ravine and following a straight line to the boundary-mark called Quebracho or Corral Falso, on the boundary of the "Matalapa" estate in El Salvador and the "Papalhuapa" and "Buena Vista" estates in Guatemala; from this mark in a straight line to the mark El Barreal at the southern corner of the "Buena Vista" estate, which stands on the more easterly of the two ravines formed by the Guacuco torrent; from the El Barreal mark following the course of the Guacuco torrent downstream to the point where it empties in the Virgen or Capichul ravine; thence following the median line of this ravine upstream to the mark called La Frutera on the boundary of the "Juan Martin" ranch in Guatemala and the "Ostua" ranch in El Salvador; then leaving the ravine in a straight line, which forms the boundary between the "Ostua" and "Juan Martin" estates, to the mark known as "El Jobo"; from the "El Jobo" mark in a straight line to the summit of the Junquillo ridge; from this point to the Junquillo mark at the south-east corner of the "Juan Martin" ranch and the north-east corner of the "Amajaque" ranch, both in Guatemala and on the boundary line of the "Ostua" ranch in El Salvador; thence following the boundary of the "Amajaque" and "Ostua" ranches through the Mora, Las Culebras ridge, and the rest of the marks on this boundary, to the junction of the two ravines which together form that known as the "Quebrada Precipitada" ravine to its junction with the river Ostua; thence following the median line of the course of the river Ostua downstream to where it now empties into the lake of Guija; thence in a southerly direction along the western edge of the peninsula which juts out from north to south into the lake of Guija, to the end of the said peninsula, or its most southerly point; thence crossing the lake of Guija in a straight line to the most northerly point of the peninsula known as "Tipa Afuera", which juts into the said lake from south to north; thence along the east side of the said peninsula and the edge of the lake to where the river Cuxmapa now empties; thence following the median line of the river Cuxmapa upstream to the point known as El Camposanto de Gamboa, in the plains of Sunza; thence leaving the river Cuxmapa, in a straight line to the boundary-mark known as El Talpetate; from this mark in a straight line to the summit of the hill known as El Cerron, which lies to the west of the hamlet known as Portezuelo de la Canada; thence in a straight line to the triangular stone erected on the central peak of the Campana ridge by the Joint Frontier Commission; thence in a straight line to the triangular stone erected by the said Commission near Amate and del Paso de San Cristobal; thence in a straight line towards the triangular mark erected by the Joint Frontier Commission on the summit of the Islamatepeque ridge, a distance of 1,250 metres measured from the triangular mark at Amate de San Cristobal, changing direction from the terminal point of this section of 1,250 metres and following a straight line towards the Ojo de Agua de El Naranjo; from the said Ojo de Agua de El Naranjo in a straight line towards the triangular mark erected by the Joint Frontier Commission on the summit of the Chingo volcano; thence in a straight line to the summit or the little ridge known as El Matadero on the southern slope of the Chingo volcano; thence in a straight line to the boundary-mark

known as Cuatro Piedras in the ravine of Seca del Palo de la Estrella; and finally, following the said Seca ravine to its junction with, or entry into, the river Chingo, Coco or Jerez.

(b) In the zone extending from the river Chingo to the mouth of the river Paz on the Pacific Ocean, with slight technical modifications essential to demarcation, the territorial boundaries are defined as follows:

Starting from the junction of the ravine of Seca del Palo de la Estrella with the river Chingo, Coco or Jerez, and following the median line of the said river downstream to its confluence with the river Pampe or Chalchuapa, and following the median line of the said river downstream to where the Los Sitios or Gueveapa ravine runs into it; thence following downstream the said river, which is known by the names of Gueveapa, Pampe or Chalchuapa, to its confluence with the river Paz at the point known as Los Naranjos; from this confluence the frontier follows the course of the river Paz downstream till it empties in the Pacific Ocean passing through the following recognized and accepted points:

- (1) Confluence of the rivers Chalchuapa and Paz;
- (2) Confluence of the rivers Paz and Pulula;
- (3) Confluence of the rivers Paz and Tacuba;
- (4) Point where an arm of the Paz leaves the main stream near Salamar;
- (5) Mouth of the river Paz.

## **Article II.**

No change in the bed of frontier rivers, whether due to natural causes such as alluvium deposits, landslides, freshets, etc. or to artificial causes such as the construction of public works, the deepening of channels for water supply, etc., shall affect the frontier as determined at the time of demarcation, which shall continue to be the international boundary even though a stream may have completely abandoned its original bed.

Each Government reserves the right to utilize half the volume of water in frontier rivers, either for agricultural or industrial purposes; but in no circumstances may concessions be granted to foreign undertakings or companies.

## **Article III.**

The Acts drawn up by the Joint Frontier Commission in the course of its work are accepted and approved in their entirety, particularly Acts Nos. XVI and XIX, dated December 15th, 1937, and January 28th, 1938. Acts Nos. XVI and XIX shall be regarded as an integral part of the present Treaty.

#### **Article IV.**

The Joint Frontier Commission shall proceed immediately to the physical marking and tracing of the frontier on the spot in accordance with the data contained in the Acts mentioned in the foregoing Article and with the description given in Article I of this present Treaty. This description agrees with the data contained on Sheet Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the preliminary map of the frontier zone drawn up by the Frontier Commission itself, which shall be regarded as an integral part of the said Treaty and an essential graphic supplement to the description of the frontier.

A copy of this preliminary map, signed by the Plenipotentiaries signing the present Treaty and a copy of Acts XVI and XIX mentioned in Article III, shall be annexed to each copy of this Treaty.

The Joint Frontier Commission shall also proceed immediately to construct posts and marks to render the frontier visible and permanent and to determine definitively the geographical position of such marks and of all other important points, and to prepare and draw the final maps which, after approval by both Governments, shall be regarded as an integral and complete part of this present Treaty.

#### **Article V.**

The neighbouring local authorities shall at the first be responsible for the constant care and maintenance of the posts or marks and other frontier signs, such authorities to be responsible for alternate sections, to be determined as soon as the demarcation is complete.

#### **Article VI.**

The present Treaty shall as soon as possible be submitted for approval to the respective legislative assemblies of El Salvador and Guatemala, and the exchange of ratifications shall take place in Guatemala City within thirty days after the date of the later ratification.

## APPENDIX

### Bibliography

Protocol for the acceptance of the Montecristo triple point. Signed: Guatemala City, March 26, 1936.

El Salvador - Guatemala, Comision mixta, Informe, pp. 45 - 48 (Spanish).

Honduras, Memoria de la Secretaria de Estado (1935 - 1936), pp. 54 - 56 (Spanish).

Minutes of meetings of the Mixed Boundary Commission Signed: Santa Ana, Oct. 16, Guatemala City, Dec. 15, 1937; Santa Ana, Jan. 28, 1938; Sept. 30, 1940.

El Salvador, Diario oficial (Nov. 9, 1940) (Spanish) (minute of Sept. 30, 1940, only).

El Salvador, Tratados (1938), 2:953 - 963 (Spanish) (minutes of Dec. 15, 1937, and Jan. 28, 1938, only).

El Salvador - Guatemala, Comision mixta, Informe, pp. 56 - 69 (Spanish) (lacks minute of Sept. 30, 1940).

Guatemala, Tratados (1939), 1:463 - 473 (Spanish) (lacks minutes of Sept. 30, 1940).

League of Nations, Treaty Series, 189: 280 - 287 (Spanish); 296 - 311 (English; French).

Treaty of territorial limits.

Signed: Guatemala City, Apr. 9, 1938.

Approved: by both, Apr. 27, 1938.

Ratified: by Guatemala, May 3, 1938; by El Salvador May 19, 1938.

Ratification exchanged: Guatemala City, May 24, 1938.

El Salvador, Tratados (1938), 2:945 - 953 (Spanish).

El Salvador - Guatemala, Comision mixta, Informe, pp. 71 - 79 (Spanish).

Guatemala, Tratados (1939), 1:458 - 473 (Spanish).

League of Nations, Treaty Series (No. 4390), 189 - 275 - 311 (French; British; Spanish) (including minutes of the sixteenth and nineteenth meetings of the Mixed Boundary Commission).



## MAPS

1. Guatemala: scale 1:250,000; Dirección General de Cartografía, Guatemala, C.A. (1961); sheets 2359 III (Cerro Montegrcrsito), 2259 II (Asuncion Mita), 2258 I (Largo de Guija), 2258 II (Jerez), 2258 III (Comapa), 2257 IV (El Colorado), 2157 I (Pasaco), and 2157 II (Garita Champina).
2. Mapas Gue Acomañanal Informe Rendido a los Reposectivos Gobeirnos par la Comisión Mixta de Límites entre El Salvador Y Guatemala, Guatemala, C.A. (1942).
  - A. Mapa Índice de la Zona Froneriza.
  - B. Red de Triangulación de primero, Segundo y tercer orden.
  - C. Mapa General del la Zona Fronteriza.
    1. Zona de Montecristo a loa confluencia de la Quebrada Precipitada con el rio Ostúa.
    2. Zona de la Quebrada Precipitada al Ojo de Agua del Naranja.
    3. Zona del Ojo de Agua del Naranja al Paso del Colorado en el río de Paz.
    4. Zona del paralelo que pasa a inmediaciones del vértice de triangulación, situado sobre la Loma de Pululá a La Hachadura.
    5. Zona del Paso de Palulá, en el rio de Paz, hasta su desembocadura en el Océano Pacífico.