



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 88 (*Revised*) – July 15, 1970**

## **Algeria – Mauritania Boundary**

**(Country Codes: AG-MR)**

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

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## **ALGERIA–MAURITANIA BOUNDARY**

### **I. BRIEF**

The Algeria–Mauritania boundary is delimited by a straight line about 288 miles in length. It extends between the Mali tripoint at 25° N., 4° 50' W. and the Spanish Sahara tripoint at approximately 27° 17' 40" N., 8° 40' W. The boundary traverses an arid sparsely populated area with sandy and gravelly surfaces typical of the western Sahara. There are no known demarcation pillars along the boundary.

### **II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

French commerce was conducted with the people of Mauritania through factories or trading posts such as those located on Ile d'Arguin and at Portendick as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During January 1885 a Spanish notification declared a protectorate over the Atlantic coastal area between Cabo Bojador and Cabo Blanco. On June 27, 1900, a Franco–Spanish treaty delimited a boundary between the French sphere of influence and the Spanish possession of Rio de Oro, presently known as Spanish Sahara. A formal protectorate was proclaimed by France over the Trarza and Brakna peoples of the Pays Maures (Moors Country) by 1903. A treaty between France and Spain delimited an additional part of the boundary between Mauritania and Rio de Oro on October 3, 1904. Fifteen days later Mauritania was established as a civil division within the framework of French West Africa.

Following World War II Mauritania was made an overseas territory in the French Union. It became a republic and an autonomous member of the French Community in November 1958. After agreement with France, Mauritania became an independent state on October 19, 1960.

French military forces occupied Algiers in 1830, and by 1847 most of northern Algeria was under the administration of France. In 1848 northern Algeria was proclaimed an integral part of France and was organized into the three departments of Oran, Alger, and Constantine. Under a French law of December 24, 1902, the Saharan area, known as the Territoires du Sud Algerien, (Southern Algerian Territories) was annexed by France. However, the territories were administered separately from the departments of northern Algeria.

An agreement between the military commander of the Departement de l'Oasis (part of Territoires du Sud Algerien) and the Commandant of Haut Senegal and Niger delimited a boundary between Algeria and French West Africa on June 7, 1905. In principle the boundary agreement of 1905 was completed by the Niamey Conventions of June 20, 1909, and August 26, 1909, and approved by a decision of the French President du Conseil on August 16, 1911. In 1947 the Algerian Statute altered the status of the Saharan territories (Ain–Sefra, Ghardaia, Touggourt, and Oasis) which then were to be organized

into departments. Ten years later the Saharan area was divided into the Department of Saoura in the west (capital at Bechar, formerly known as Colomb Bechar) and the Department of Oasis in the east (capital at Ouargla). Prior to 1960 the number of departments in northern Algeria were expanded gradually to 13. Pursuant to the Evian Agreements and subsequent plebiscites, Algeria became independent on July 5, 1962.

### III. ALIGNMENT

Between the tripoints with Mali and Spanish Sahara, the amended text of the Niamey convention of June 20, 1909, delimits the Algeria–Mauritania boundary by a straight line as follows:<sup>1</sup>

The [Algerian] boundary will begin at the source of the Oued Tin Zaouatene, will follow the watershed of the Tilemsi basin westward to the source of the Oued Ngouden, then will continue westward, following the outline of the Oued Ngouden and the Oued lukeouen basin to the place where this watershed is cut by the llatok–Aboukar–Tin–Tagen–Sounfat [Tessounfat] road (Itineraire Lapperrine, 1906). From this point the boundary will run to the Tarmanant [Tarhmanant] well (situated on the road from Taoudenni to Tafilalet) then will continue along the border defined in the June 1905 agreement, that is, it will run towards Cap Noun.<sup>2</sup> The pasture lands of the Oued Ngouden and its tributaries will belong to Algeria; the pasture lands of the Oued lukeouen and its tributaries will belong to West Africa.

The tripoint with Mali is determined by the Treaty of Delimitation of the Frontiers between the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Republic of Mali, signed at Kayes on February 16, 1963. The final paragraph delimits the Mali–Mauritania boundary from point "D" (25° N. and approximately 6° 34' 20" W.)<sup>3</sup> as the 25th parallel eastward to its intersection with the limits of Algeria (25° N., 4° 50' W.).

The Franco–Spanish convention of October 4, 1904, established the meridian of 8° 40' W. as the boundary between French and Spanish spheres of influence in the western Sahara.<sup>4</sup> The Algeria–Mauritania boundary extends to the meridian of 8° 40' W. at approximately 27° 17' 40" N. The tripoint is located on the north bank of a wadi which drains eastward to Tindouf in Algeria.

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<sup>1</sup> The Algeria–Mauritania boundary is determined by the extension of the line which also delimits the adjacent part of the Algeria–Mali boundary.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently the Cap Noun of the convention is the present Cap Draa (immediately north of the Oued Draa) in southern Morocco.

<sup>3</sup> See *Republique du Mali–Republique Islamique de Mauritanie*: scale 1:200,000; published 1965 by Institut Geographique National (French); sheet NG-29-VI (El Mzereb).

<sup>4</sup> Convention between France and Spain respecting Morocco. Paris, October 3, 1904. *British Foreign and State Papers (BFSP)*, Vol. 102 (1908–9, pp. 432–5)

## **MAP APPENDIX**

1. Carte de l'AOF: scale 1:200,000; published 1957–8 by Service Geographique de l'Afrique Occidentale Francaise (Dakar); sheets NG-29-XXII (Tindouf), NG-29-XVI (Oued el Hamra), NG-29-XVII (Gara Djebilet), and NG-29-XVIII (Aouinet Bel Egra).
2. Republique Islamique de Mauritanie: scale 1:200,000; published 1964 by Institut Geographique National (French); sheet NG-29-XII (Aguelt el Habib Ould Brahim) and NG-30-VII-VIII (Chegga).
3. Carte Aeronautique: scale 1:1,000,000; published by Institut Geographique National (French); sheets 2537 (Sequiet el Hamra–1962) and 2538 (El Eglab–1955).

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