



International Boundary Study

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Kuwait – Saudi Arabia Boundary

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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

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KUWAIT - SAUDI ARABIA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Kuwait - Saudi Arabia Boundary is 101 miles in length and is demarcated. Beginning at the quadri-junction of the Kuwait - Iraq, Iraq - "Neutral Zone," and the "Neutral Zone" - Saudi Arabia boundaries with the Kuwait - Saudi Arabia boundary, the boundary follows a straight line east-southeast a distance of 39.5 miles to the intersection of 29° 00' North latitude and 47° 28' 05.683" East Longitude. The boundary then trends south-southeastward in straight line segments a distance of about 28 miles to 28° 31' 26.526" North Latitude and 47° 42' 25.153" East Longitude. The boundary then turns due east in a straight line a distance of 33.5 miles where it terminates on the coast at 28° 32' 02.488" North Latitude and 48° 25' 59.019" East Longitude.

II. GEOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND

The definition of a boundary in the desert has been described as similar to drawing a boundary in the ocean. This description, although exaggerated, indicates the difficulty involved. The Kuwait - Saudi Arabia boundary, like other boundary areas in the Arabian Peninsula, has long reflected the aversion of desert tribes to delineation of boundaries according to modern geographic practice. Furthermore, there are substantial historical precedents, based on Islamic religious tenets, which oppose the delineation of a boundary on the ground. Until recent times, control of a specific desert area rested with the tribe whose leader maintained the allegiance of his tribesmen. Boundaries by nature were indefinite.

In the 19th century, growing competition among the European powers for control of strategic land and sea communication links between Europe and Asia focused new attention on the Persian Gulf. At the same time within the Ottoman Empire, which included the Arabian Peninsula as well as Mesopotamia, there was an effort for administrative reform to meet the increasing challenge. But the real impetus for actual demarcation of boundaries on the ground came after the discovery of oil at Burghan in 1938 which was to prove to be the richest oil discovery area in the world.

The final division on December 18, 1969 of what has been known since 1922 as the Kuwait - Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone, under negotiation for many years, resolves a difficult unsettled segment of the international boundary, and removes a map "irregularity" which has been a bane to the cartographic community.

A. Early History

Historically, the boundary area is on one of the general routes of the Arabian tribes which crossed northward in search for the more fertile lands of the Tigris - Euphrates rivers. The age old conflict between the desert and the sown, until the finding of oil in recent times, often was reflected in the way of bedouin life and the pattern of tribal migration.

At about the beginning of the 19th century, the puritanical Wahhabi Movement was strong enough to make frequent attacks northward from the Najd including the boundary area, to assail the urban riverine centers of the Tigris - Euphrates. Basra was sacked many times until the Wahhabi were finally suppressed by Ottoman Egyptian forces under Ibrahim Pasha (1815 - 1818) and Ottoman authority asserted itself. Later in the 19th century the Ottoman administrative reforms of the Tanzimat established the Vilayet (equivalent to province) system for control of provincial areas. The Basra Vilayet headed by a Vali (governor) included the Kuwaiti area as a Sanjak (equivalent to district) headed by a Mutasarrif responsible to the Vali. The present ruling Al Sabah family, of Kuwait dates back to the leadership of tribal Shaykhs in the 18th century.

By the end of the 19th century the Persian Gulf was clearly a focal and strategic communication link between Europe and the South Asian sub-continent. To Great Britain, the consolidation of power in southern Mesopotamia (Iraq) and the boundary area became a major objective of its diplomacy. British concern for the preservation of its "Lifeline to India" is revealed by Britain's challenge of first Russian and later German plans for control of the Mesopotamian route to the Indian Ocean. In 1899 Turkish influence over Kuwait was ousted by Great Britain as a result of a Treaty with the Shaykh of Kuwait who agreed "neither to enter into agreements with, nor to make concessions to any other government."¹

In 1913, Britain secured Turkish recognition of the autonomy of Kuwait² in an area the boundary of which formed "a semi-circle, 40 miles in radius, with the town of Kuwait as its center," the agreement was never ratified. On November 3, 1914, a few days before the United Kingdom's Declaration of War on the Ottoman Empire, the British Political Resident promised British recognition of the complete severance of ties with Turkey in return for Shaykh Mubarak's cooperation³ in the projected British military plan against lower Mesopotamia; thereby removing the ambiguities of the unratified treaty.

B. Recent Developments

Following the close of World War I, the boundary between Kuwait and Najd (now Saudi Arabia) was defined in the Uqair Convention of December 2, 1922 as follows:

¹ Similar "exclusive" Agreements were concluded with Bahrayn in 1880 and 1892 and with the Trucial Shaykhs also in 1892.

² Anglo - Ottoman Convention, July 29, 1913.

³ To attack and "liberate" Basra.

The frontier between Najd and Kuwait begins in the west from the junction of the Wadi al 'Awja' with Wadi al Batin, leaving Raq'i to Najd; from this point it continues in a straight line until it joins latitude 29° and the red semi-circle referred to in Article 5 of the Anglo - Turkish Agreement of July 29, 1913. The line then follows the side of the red semi-circle until it reaches a point terminating on the coast south of Ras al Qali'ah and this is the indubitable southern frontier of Kuwait territory.

The area which was later to be called "Neutral Zone" is defined in the Uqair protocol as:

The portion of territory bounded on the north by this line⁴ and which is bounded on the west by a low mountainous ridge⁵ called Ash Shaq and on the east by the sea and on the south by a line passing from west to east from Ash Shaq to 'Ayn al 'Abd and thence to the coast north of Ras al Mish 'ab, in this territory the Government of Najd and Kuwait will share equal rights until through the good offices of the Government of Great Britain a further agreement is made between Najd and Kuwait concerning it.

Although the 1922 Agreement suggested that a solution to the so-called Neutral Zone would be forthcoming, it was almost 40 years before Kuwait and Saudi Arabia engaged in serious effort to negotiate a settlement, presumably by a division of the Zone. Negotiations commenced shortly after Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Salam Al-Sabah, the Ruler of Kuwait, visited Riyadh where he and the then Amir Faysal decided, in October 1960, that the Neutral Zone should be divided. On July 7, 1965, the two governments signed an agreement which took effect on July 25, 1966, to partition the Neutral Zone adjoining their respective territories, and prescribed surveys on the ground. A demarcation agreement dividing the Neutral Zone was signed on December 17, 1967 but did not formally take effect until the exchange of instruments and signing which took place in Kuwait on December 18, 1969. It was confirmed by the Council of Ministers on January 18, 1970, and published in the Official Gazette, Kuwait Al-Yaum No. 762, dated January 25, 1970.

III. ANALYSIS OF BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT

The Kuwait - Saudi Arabia boundary starts in the west at the junction of the Wadi al 'Awja' with the Wadi al Batin, at an elevation of about 700 feet. This junction is a quadripoint, that is, a meeting point of four political entities: to the east is Kuwait, to the south, Saudi Arabia, to the north Iraq, and to the west the Iraq - Saudi Arabian Neutral Zone. About three miles south of the quadripoint is Ar Rugi, a group of wells situated on the eastern bank of the Batin, as well as a Saudi Arabian police post. Leaving the quadripoint, the boundary proceeds in a straight line east-southeast for about 39.5 miles across gravel plains known as Ad Dibdibah, at elevations of about 700 feet, to a point marked on the official boundary map as boundary marker No. 2, where it joins latitude 29° and the semi

⁴ The "indubitable southern frontier of Kuwait territory."

⁵ Actually a depression rather than a "ridge"

circle formed by the radius from Kuwait^{6, 7} which formed the former boundary between Kuwait and the then "Neutral Zone". Eight miles east of the junction it is crossed by a road connecting Kuwait city with Ar Ruq'i and Hafar al Batin, a Saudi Arabian town close to the Trans-Arabian pipeline.

From point No. 2, now fixed as 29° 00' 00" North latitude and 47° 28' 05.683" East longitude, the boundary follows south-southeastward a distance of about 28 miles on the Wadi ash Shaq,⁸ to a boundary marker point called "H" on the official map located at 28° 31' 26.526" North Latitude and 47° 42' 25.153" East longitude. The boundary then turns eastward in a straight line a distance of about 33.5 miles where it terminates on the coast at 28° 32' 02.488" North Latitude and 48° 25' 59.019" East Longitude marked as point "G" on the boundary map. This latter 33.5 miles straight line segment of the boundary marks the formal division, and consequent elimination, of the former so-called "Neutral Zone."

The following is a text of an English translation of A Supplementary Agreement Regarding the Confirmation of the Determination of the Frontier Dividing the Saudi - Kuwaiti Neutral Zone:

This supplementary agreement was concluded in the city of Kuwait on 9 Shawwal 1389 (December 18, 1969) between:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by His Excellency Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Wealth, as party of the first part,

and

The State of Kuwait, represented by His Excellency 'Abd al-Rahman Salim al-'Atiqi, Minister of Finance and Oil, as party of the second part.

Whereas the two states have concluded an agreement to partition the Kuwaiti - Saudi Neutral Zone, which is the agreement signed on 9 Rabi' al-Awwal 1385 (July 7, 1965), and known as "An Agreement between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Concerning the Partitioning of the Neutral Zone, and which is referred to hereinafter as the "Partition Agreement";

And whereas the first article of the Partition Agreement provides for determining on the ground the line dividing the Neutral Zone, by means of a commission for the survey and delimiting of the Neutral Zone, the formation of which had previously been agreed upon;

⁶ Op. cit., Anglo - Ottoman Convention of 1913.

⁷ Uqair Convention, 1922.

⁸ Formerly part of the "Neutral Zone" - Saudi Arabia boundary.

And whereas the aforementioned survey and delimitation commission, which has been named the "Joint Technical Commission," has supervised the determining of the dividing line by the Pacific Aero Survey Company, which has carried out this task in fulfillment of the agreements it has entered into with both the Government of Saudi Arabia and the Government of the State of Kuwait; and since it [i.e., the commission] has determined that the Pacific Aero Survey Company has performed the tasks assigned to it in accordance with the aforementioned agreements, which in turn are based on the provisions of the Partition Agreement; therefore, it [i.e., the Commission] has approved the final report and map drawn up by the aforementioned Company in this matter, and the Saudi and the Kuwaiti sides have signed a copy of both of them [i.e., the report and the map] as an indication of their approval and have recorded that [fact] in the minutes of the minutes of the fourth meeting held by the Joint Technical Commission from the 10th to the 12th of Dhu al-Qa'dah 1388 (January 28 - 30, 1969);

And whereas the competent high authorities in the governments of the two contracting parties have endorsed the approval by the Joint Technical Commission and have confirmed it in the minutes of the aforementioned fourth meeting of the Commission, and whereas each of the two parties has informed the other of its agreement thereto;

And whereas the first article of the Partition Agreement provides also for confirming by subsequent agreement the line dividing the Neutral Zone;

And in implementation of the provisions of the second article of the Partition Agreement, the two contracting parties, in confirmation of the line dividing the Neutral Zone, have agreed as follows:

Article 1:

The line dividing the divided Zone, which forms the definitive line of separation between its two parts, is represented by straight lines connecting the points whose coordinates are given below: It is the line that the Pacific Aero Survey Company has determined and which it has defined and delimited in the final report and map that it has submitted in this matter. Each of the two contracting parties has signed a copy of the final map accompanying this agreement

This final map, together with the aforementioned final report and the minutes of the fourth meeting of the above-mentioned Joint Technical Commission, which have been signed by the representatives of the two contracting parties and a signed copy of each of which has been retained by the two contracting parties, together constitute the reference authority for the definition, elucidation, and determination of the aforementioned dividing line:

Point	<u>North Latitude</u>	<u>East Latitude</u>
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	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
G	28	32	02.488	48	25	59.019
D-1	28	32	01.985	48	25	12.952
D-2	28	32	01.284	48	24	09.539
D-3	28	32	00.874	48	23	32.787
D-4	28	32	00.382	48	22	48.927
D-5	28	31	59.676	48	21	46.685
D-6	28	31	59.239	48	21	08.534
D-7	28	31	58.580	48	20	11.430
D-8	28	31	58.021	48	19	23.434
D-9	28	31	57.530	48	18	41.590
D-10	28	31	57.050	48	18	00.993
D-11	28	31	56.662	48	17	28.381
D-12	28	31	56.035	48	16	36.094
D-13	28	31	55.485	48	15	50.592
D-14	28	31	54.947	48	15	06.374
D-15	28	31	54.362	48	14	18.748
D-16	28	31	53.713	48	13	26.262
D-17	28	31	52.948	48	12	25.088
D-18	28	31	52.076	48	11	16.032
D-19	28	31	51.410	48	10	23.736
D-20	28	31	50.630	48	09	23.111
D-21	28	31	49.(?)	48	08	17.593
D-22	28	31	48.907	48	07	13.206
D-23	28	31	48.056	48	06	07.037
D-24	28	31	47.518	48	05	26.749
D-25	28	31	46.788	48	04	32.594
D-26	28	31	45.842	48	03	22.955
D-27	28	31	44.833	48	02	09.560
D-28	28	31	44.361	48	01	35.432
D-29	28	31	43.435	48	00	29.090
D-30	28	31	42.472	47	59	20.742
D-31	28	31	41.526	47	58	14.252
D-32	28	31	40.470	47	57	00.761
D-33	28	31	39.454	47	55	50.778
D-34	28	31	38.554	47	54	49.360
D-35	28	31	37.795	47	53	57.908
D-36	28	31	37.363	47	53	28.842
D-37	28	31	36.567	47	52	35.536
D-38	28	31	35.865	47	51	48.853
D-39	28	31	35.156	47	51	02.006
D-40	28	31	34.360	47	50	09.743
D-41	28	31	33.596	47	49	19.897
D-42	28	31	32.789	47	48	27.676
D-43	28	31	37.883	47	47	26.188
D-44	28	31	30.941	47	46	29.303
D-45	28	31	30.339	47	45	51.168
D-46	28	31	29.449	47	44	55.060

D-47	28	31	28.369	47	43	59.412
D-48	28	31	27.072	47	42	52.962
H	28	31	26.526	47	42	25.153

Article 2:

This agreement, together with the documents referred to above in Article 1, shall be considered as completing the Partition Agreement and as an inseparable part of it.

IV. SUMMARY

The Kuwait - Saudi Arabia Boundary is about 101 miles in length and is demarcated. The entire boundary traverses desert.

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the boundary was first defined and delimited in the Uqair Convention of December 2, 1922 between Kuwait, then under British protection, and the Sultanate of Najd, now Saudi Arabia. The 1922 Agreement left unsettled an area of about 2,500 square miles which was to be held jointly pending a final settlement. After 1922, however, there was little interest in a more definitive settlement in the so-called "Neutral Zone" until the discovery, in 1938, of oil in the Burgan (Burqan) Fields a few miles north of the "Neutral Zone."

With the probability of the discovery of oil within the "Neutral Zone" itself, concessions were granted in 1948/49 by each government to private companies. Later the two companies⁹ exploited the oil under a joint operating agreement. In July 1960 it was agreed that the "Neutral Zone" should be divided. On July 7, 1965, the two governments signed an agreement to divide the "Neutral Zone" after prescribing survey and demarcation on the ground. The new international boundary took effect with the exchange of instruments and signing of a Demarcation Agreement on December 18, 1969.

Much of the apportionment and allocations of properties and facilities were completed on May 20, 1970 as agreed. There remains some possibility of dispute, however, since much oil wealth is involved. Whatever potential for dispute, does not relate in any way to the international boundary itself. It is also noted that the boundary Agreement pertains only to the land boundary and contains nothing about offshore boundaries.

There are no maps generally available as yet showing the precise alignment of the new boundary. The official boundary map is titled Final Map of Dividing Line of the Kuwait - Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone prepared for the two governments by Pacific Aero Survey Co., Ltd., shows the entire boundary at a scale of 1:250,000. Map compilation data may also be based on AMS 1:250,000 sheets NH 38-12, 38-13, Series K502, provided this study

⁹ The American Independent Oil Company, (Aminoil) by Kuwait. Pacific Western Oil Company, later renamed Getty Oil Company, from Saudi Arabia.

and its map is consulted. Whatever map sources are available, it is advised that the coordinates noted in this study be used.

RGE-INR/Geographer
Director: RDHodgson
Analyst: ESBarsoum
Extension: 22022

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