



International Boundary Study

No. 105 – October 15, 1970

**Angola (Cabinda) – Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville)
Boundary**

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**The Geographer
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Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

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ANGOLA [Cabinda] – REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (Brazzaville) BOUNDARY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Boundary Brief.....	2
II. Historical Background.....	2
III. Boundary Alignment	4

APPENDIX

I. Documents.....	6
II. Maps	6

ANGOLA [Cabinda] – REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (Brazzaville) BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Angola–Congo (Brazzaville) boundary extends inland from the Atlantic Ocean to the upper course of the Rio Chiloango. It is about 125 miles in length and is demarcated by pillars. Most of the boundary follows either drainage area divides or straight-line segments.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Immediately prior to the end of the 15th century, Portuguese Captain Diogo Cao explored the coast of present-day Angola and navigated the Congo (Zaire) inland from its mouth to the first cataract. He also established friendly relations with the King of Kongo who ruled the territory on both sides of the river between the coast and Stanley Pool. Shortly thereafter, the Portuguese sent missionaries, skilled workers, and settlers to the Kongo. In 1575 the King of Portugal granted a charter for a crown colony which initially included the territory between the Congo river and Rio Cuanza. Ultimately the colony was expanded both southward and eastward by the addition of large tracts of land. A Dutch fleet seized the ports of Luanda and Benguela in 1641, but they were restored to Portuguese control seven years later by an expedition from Brazil.

Apparently Portuguese authority was not exercised continuously north of the Congo river in the present-day Angolan district of Cabinda until a relatively recent date. It was occupied by the Portuguese in 1783, but a French expedition forced them to evacuate the area 11 months later. Portugal laid definite claim to Cabinda in an additional convention to the Anglo–Portuguese treaty of January 22, 1815. Again on February 26, 1884, an Anglo–Portuguese treaty acknowledged claims by Portugal that included not only Cabinda and the Congo river inland to Noqui but the whole Atlantic coast between 5° 12' and 8° south latitude. The treaty was not put into effect because of the storm of protest it produced from European states, and Portugal proposed an international conference to consider the entire question of the Congo, which resulted in the Berlin Conference held between November 15, 1884, and February 26, 1885.

Prior to the termination of the Berlin Conference, Portugal and the International Association of the Congo¹ signed a treaty on February 14, 1885, which delimited a boundary between Cabinda and the International Association north of the Congo river. In effect the treaty afforded recognition by the International Association of Portuguese claims to Cabinda, and Portugal guaranteed the International Association a narrow corridor of land to the coast. The General Act of the Berlin Conference made the Congo an international river and

¹ The International Association of the Congo was renamed the Congo Free State on July 1, 1885, and since that time the name of the entity has been changed successively as follows: Belgian Congo on November 15, 1908, Republic of the Congo on June 30, 1960, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on August 1, 1964.

guaranteed free trade in its basin. France also recognized the claims of Portugal in Cabinda, and a Franco–Portuguese convention of May 12, 1886, established a boundary between French Congo (Congo Francais) and Cabinda, which was supplemented by an arrangement on January 23, 1901, interpreting the previous convention.

In the meantime French interests in the Congo area date from early coastal trade and missionary work in Gabon. In 1839 Captain L.E. Bouet-Willaumez completed the first of a series of treaties with local chieftains for coastal rights, so that by 1862 French administration extended along most of the littoral of Gabon. In 1845 Les Rivières du Sud (Southern Rivers) comprised all French settlements south of Senegal to, and for a short time including, Gabon under the admiral in command of the Naval Station on the Ile de Goree. Libreville was founded by the French in 1849, and shortly thereafter a number of expeditions explored the interior of Gabon including those headed by Marche and DeCompiegne and by DeBrazza.

Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza in a series of expeditions between 1875 and 1882 explored the territory of the Ogooue, founded Franceville, made a treaty with the King of the Babundu at Stanley Pool on the Congo river, and penetrated to the Niari valley. The treaty with the Babundu ceded part of the north bank of the Congo to France, but DeBrazza decided to establish a post on Kintano island near the south shore in 1880. Later the post was transferred to the present site of Brazzaville.

Initially the French settlements in Gabon were under the control of a naval commander, and in 1881 the administration was entrusted to a senior naval officer with the title of "Commandant superieur des etablissements francaises du Golfe de Guinee." A French law of November 30, 1882, ratified the treaties DeBrazza had made with African rulers and set up a government for French Congo. DeBrazza was appointed "Commissaire de la Republique Francaise dans l'Ouest Afrique" in 1883, and at the same time the French "etablissements" were divided into two entities: (1) Gabon administered by its own commandant and having Cotonou and Porto Novo as dependencies, and (2) Grand Bassam and Assinie on the Ivory Coast.

On April 27, 1886, a French decree afforded Gabon a lieutenant governor under the general authority of DeBrazza as commissioner. Then a decree of June 29th of the same year appointed DeBrazza the "Commissaire General du Government", and it also gave him authority over the colonies of French Congo and Gabon, each with their separate government organization. A decree of December 11, 1888, united French Congo and Gabon into a single administrative entity which lasted until 1903, meanwhile, a decree of April 30, 1891, gave the whole the title of French Congo. Northwestward of French Congo, the territory of Ubangi–Shari (Oubangi–Chari) was formally established in 1894, and decrees of September 5 and 8, 1900 created the military territory of Chad.

On December 29, 1903, a decree placed the French possessions under the authority of a commissaire general. The French possessions consisted of the colonies of Gabon and Middle Congo (Moyen Congo), the territory of Ubangi–Shari, and the military territory of

Chad. Two years later the territory of Ubangi–Shari and the military territory of Chad were merged into a single territory. The colony of Ubangi–Shari–Chad was formed in 1906 with Chad under a regional commander at Fort-Lamy subordinate to Ubangi–Shari. The commissioner general of French Congo was raised to the status of a governor generalship in 1908; and by a decree of January 15, 1910, the name of French Equatorial Africa was given to a federation of the three colonies (Gabon, Middle Congo, and Ubangi–Shari–Chad), each of which had its own lieutenant governor. In 1914 Chad was detached from the colony of Ubangi–Shari and made a separate territory; full colonial status was conferred on Chad in 1920.

By constitutional amendment in 1951, the colony of Angola (also commonly referred to as Portuguese West Africa) became an overseas province of Portugal, and as such is considered by the Portuguese to be legally part of Portugal. The provincial government is administered by a governor general who is nominated by the Overseas Ministry and appointed by the Council of Ministers. The governor general exercises both executive and legislative authority under the guidance of the Overseas Minister in Lisbon.

Following World War II, the colony of Middle Congo was made an overseas territory of France and a member of the French Union. Middle Congo became the Republic of the Congo and an autonomous member of the French Community on November 28, 1958. The Republic of the Congo was proclaimed independent on August 15, 1960. On January 1, 1970, the Congo (Brazzaville) changed its long-form name to the People's Republic of the Congo.

III. BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT

The Angola–Congo (Brazzaville) boundary is delimited by the Franco–Portuguese convention of May 12, 1886, between Ponta Chamba and boundary pillar D. Ponta Chamba is situated near the Atlantic Ocean at the confluence of the Rio Loema and Rio Lubinda² and boundary pillar D is located inland at the end of the median line between these two rivers. The remainder of the boundary is delimited to the tripoint with Congo (Kinshasa) at or near the confluence of the Bidihimba and Rio Chiloango by the Franco–Portuguese arrangement of January 23, 1901, which interprets the convention of May 12, 1886, in this sector. The boundary is demarcated clockwise by pillars A through J, including additional intervening pillars. Boundary pillar A is located on Ponta Chamba and J is located on a hill about 0.5 mile southwest of the Congo (Kinshasa) tripoint.

The delimitation of the boundary between Ponta Chamba and boundary pillar D is as follows:

III. In the region of the Congo, the boundary line separating Portuguese from French possessions shall, as shown on May No. 2, annexed hereto, follow a line beginning

² The Rio Lubinda broadens in its lower course to form Lago Chissambe.

at Ponta Chamba, situated at the confluence of the Loema (or Louisa–Loango) and the Lubinda, shall run, insofar as the landmarks permit, an equal distance from these two rivers....

The delimitation of the boundary between boundary pillar D and the Congo (Kinshasa) tripoint is as follows:

Starting at boundary pillar D, placed by the Joint Commission at the end of the median line between the Loema or Louisa–Loango River and the Lubinda River, the boundary between the French and Portuguese possessions shall connect with the ridgeline separating the basins of the Loema or Louisa–Loango and the Chiloango, following the divide between the Lufica basin on the one hand, and the Lubinda basin, on the other hand, coming as close as possible to the parallel that runs by the aforementioned boundary marker D. The boundary shall then follow the ridgeline separating the basins of the Loema or Louisa–Loango and the Chiloango, until the parallel of the confluence of the Rivers Bilisi and Luali, it shall follow that parallel until the said confluence and then the thalweg of the Luali River to its source. Starting at that point, the boundary shall follow the ridgeline separating the basins of the Loema or Louisa–Loango and the Chiloango, until the source of the former river which lies at about Long. 10° 22' 50" east of Paris [12° 42' 50" east of Greenwich]³ and about Lat. 4° 21' 11" south. Starting at that point, the boundary shall follow the divide between the basins of the Niari–Quillou to the north, and the Chiloango to the south, until meridian Long. 10° 30" east of Paris [12° 50' east of Greenwich], coming as close as possible to the parallel that runs by the aforementioned source of the Loema or Louisa–Loango River. The boundary shall then follow meridian 10° 30' [12° 50' east of Greenwich] to where it intersects the ridge of the heights that bound the upthrust called "Forest of Mayumbe"; then it shall follow the ridge until it meets the Chiloango River, which there serves as the boundary between the Portuguese possessions and the Free State of the Congo.

³ Treaties of this period commonly considered the Paris prime meridian to be 2° 20' east of the Greenwich prime meridian, although a more accurate figure would be a difference of 2° 20' 13.95".

APPENDIX

I. DOCUMENTS

1. Convention between France and Portugal, for the Delimitation of the French and Portuguese Possessions in West Africa. Signed at Paris, May 12, 1886 (Ratifications exchanged at Lisbon, August 31, 1887). British and Foreign State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 77 (1885–6), pp. 517–20 (French).
2. Convention between France and Portugal, relative to the Delimitation of their respective Possessions in West Africa. Paris, May 12, 1886. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3v 3d ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), Vol. 2, pp. 673–5 (Translation).
3. Arrangement between France and Portugal, Signed January 23, 1901, for the Interpretation of Article 3 of the Convention of May 12, 1886, Revue General de Droit International Public, Vol. 8 (1901), Documents p. 8.

II. MAPS

1. Institut Geographique National – Paris: scale 1:50,000, 1956-7, sheets sb-33-1-2d (Dolisie 2d-Kimongo) and SB-33-1-4b and 11-3a (Dolisie 4b, Madingou 3a-Gandabinnda).
2. Insitut Geographique National-Paris (Annexe de Brazzaville): scale 1:200,000, 1959-62, sheets SB-33-1 (Dolisie) and SB-33-1 (Madingou).
3. Commissao de Cartographia – Lisbon: Scale 1:200,000, 1904, sheets (2) Provincia de Angola, Carta dos Territorios de Cabinda e Malembo.
4. Servicos Geograficos e Cadastrais – Luanda: scale 1:1,000,000, 1966 Carta de Angola.

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