



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 132 – January 2, 1973**

## **Cote D'Ivoire – Liberia Boundary**

**(Country Codes: IV-LI)**

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

**INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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

**APPENDIX**

I. Documents .....	5
II. Maps .....	5

## **COTE D'IVOIRE (IVORY COAST) – LIBERIA BOUNDARY**

### **I. BOUNDARY BRIEF**

Approximately 445 miles long, the Ivory Coast–Liberia boundary follows the Liberian bank of various rivers for most of the distance. Inland from the Atlantic Ocean, it extends along the Cavalla for about 305 miles, the Boan for 7 miles, and a short straight-line segment to the headwaters of the Dain. The boundary continues downstream along the Dain and Nimoi successively for a total of 16 miles to the Nuon. It then follows the Nuon upstream for 115 miles to the Guinea tripoint at Mount Nuon in the Nimba Range.

### **II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Although French contacts with the Ivorians dated from the arrival of missionaries at Assini in 1637, relations between France and the Ivory Coast were limited in scope for the next two centuries. Under instructions from the French Government to examine prospects for commercial expansion, Admiral Bouet-Willaumez cruised along the coast and made various treaties with local rulers from 1842–44, which secured for France most of the littoral of the present-day Ivory Coast. In 1893 Captain Binger was appointed the first French Governor of the Ivory Coast.

In the meantime the American Colonization Society was given a charter by the United States Congress in 1816 to settle freed slaves on the west coast of Africa. In 1822 the first of the freed slaves landed on Cape Mesurado at the site of Monrovia, and two years later the political entity was named Liberia. Other United States-sponsored settlements joined with Liberia in 1838 to form the Commonwealth of Liberia, and in 1847 Liberia became the first independent republic in Africa.

Article I of a Franco–Liberian convention of December 8, 1892, delimited a boundary between the possessions of France (Ivory Coast and French Guinea) and Liberia inland from the mouth of the Cavalla (Cavally) to the tripoint with Sierra Leone. To the east and north of the present Ivory Coast–Liberia boundary, the 1892 boundary was as follows:

1. By the thalweg from the Cavally River up to a point situated about 20 miles to the south of the confluence of the River Fodedougou-Ba at the intersection of 6°30' of latitude north and of 9°12' longitude west of Paris.<sup>[1]</sup>
2. By the parallel passing through the said point of intersection up to the conjunction of 10° of longitude west of Paris, it being understood that in every case the basin of the Great Sisters River (Cestos) belongs to Liberia and that the basin of the Fodedougou-Ba belongs to France.

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<sup>[1]</sup> The Greenwich longitude of the Paris prime meridian is approximately 2°20'E.

3. By the meridian 10° up to its conjunction with latitude 7° north. From this point the frontier will run in a direct line towards the point of intersection of 11° with the parallel which passes through Tembicounda (Timbekundu, approximately 9°06'N., 10°43'W.), it being understood that the town of Mahomadou will belong to the Republic of Liberia, the points of Naaba and of Mousardou belonging to France.

By a French decree of March 10, 1893, the Ivory Coast was made a separate colony, and it became a member of the federation of French West Africa which was constituted on June 16, 1895. A decree of September 27, 1897, terminated the membership of the Ivory Coast in the federation, but on October 17, 1899, it was restored to membership in French West Africa and the cercles of Bouna, Kong, and Odienne were transferred from French Sudan to the Ivory Coast.

A Franco–Liberian agreement of September 18, 1907, stated that it was physically impossible to apply the theoretical lines of the 1892 convention and that natural topographical lines should be used as much as possible. Providing for future detailed delimitation, the agreement redrew the Ivory Coast–Liberia boundary with the qualification that should the Nuon not be an affluent or tributary of the Cavalla an alternate line would be followed between the two rivers as follows:

3. The right bank of the Nuon River to its confluence with the Cavally River.
4. The right bank of the Cavally River to the sea.

In the event that the Nuon River should not be an affluent of the Cavally, the right bank of the Nuon would form the boundary only as far as the environs of Toulepleu; opposite and south of the outskirts of that village, the boundary would be drawn between the Nuon and the Cavally in the general direction of the parallel of that point, but in such a way as not to separate villages inhabited by the same tribe, subtribe, or group and to use natural topographical lines; beginning with the intersection of that parallel with the Cavally River, the boundary would be the right bank of the Cavally River to the sea.

In implementation of the 1907 agreement, a mixed commission determined that the Nuon was not a tributary of the Cavalla and delimited the present Ivory Coast–Liberia boundary as approved by the Franco–Liberian agreement of January 13, 1911. A Franco–Liberian commission surveyed and demarcated the entire French Guinea–Liberia boundary and the Ivory Coast–Liberia boundary southward from Mount Nuon to Gbople (Borpley) on the Nuon between 1926 and 1929.

A decree of September 5, 1932, abolished the French colony of Upper Volta and transferred some of its cercles to the Ivory Coast. These cercles were administered by the Ivory Coast until Upper Volta was reconstituted as an overseas territory on September 4, 1947.

In 1946 the Ivory Coast was made an overseas territory of the French Union, and on December 4, 1958, it became the autonomous Republic of the Ivory Coast within the French community. On August 7, 1960, the Ivory Coast was proclaimed independent under the terms of an accord with France.

### **III. ALIGNMENT**

In accordance with Paragraphs III and IV of the Franco–Liberian agreement of January 13, 1911, the present alignment of the Ivory Coast–Liberia boundary southward from Mount Nuon to the Atlantic Ocean is as follows:

#### **III.**

1. The right bank of the Nuon <sup>[2]</sup> or Nipoue river to its confluence with the Nimoi river;
2. The left bank of the Nimoi river to its confluence with the Tani [Dain] river;
3. The left bank of the Tani river to its source;
4. A straight line connecting the source of the Tani river with the source of the Boan river;
5. The right bank of the Boan river to its confluence with the Cavally (You or Dioubou), the village of Kanhobli remaining Liberian.

#### **IV.**

1. The right bank of the Cavally to the sea.

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<sup>[2]</sup> The Nuon is known as the Cestos in its lower course through Liberia.

## APPENDIX

### **I. Documents**

1. Convention between the Government of France and the Republic of Liberia. December 8, 1892. British and Foreign State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 85 (1892–3), pp. 639–41.
2. Agreement between France and Liberia defining the Boundaries between French West Africa and Liberia. Signed at Paris, September 18, 1907 [Ratifications exchanged at Paris, February 28, 1908]. BFSP, Vol. 101 (1907–8), pp. 1013–5 (French).
3. Agreement between France and Liberia for the Delimitation of the Frontier between the Possessions of the two Countries. Signed at Paris, January 13, 1911. BFSP, Vol. 107 (1914, Part 1), pp. 797–800 (French).

### **II. Maps**

Institut Geographique National-Paris: scale 1:200,000; 1956-68; sheets (S to N) NB-29-V (Tabou), NB-29-XI (Tai), NB-29-XVII (Guiglo), NB-29-XVI (Toulepleu), and NB-29-XXII (Danane).

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