



International Boundary Study

No. 133 – April 16, 1973

Mozambique – South Africa Boundary

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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Boundary Brief.....	2
II. Historical Background.....	2
III. Boundary Treaties	3
IV. Alignment	4

APPENDIX

Documentation	10
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MOZAMBIQUE – SOUTH AFRICA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

Demarcated and approximately 305 miles long, the Mozambique–South Africa boundary consists of two discontinuous parts. The longer part extends southward from the confluence of the Limpopo and Luvuvhurivier for 255 miles along straight-line segments to the northern tripoint with Swaziland at the Mpundweni Beacon. The remainder of the boundary from the southern tripoint with Swaziland to the Indian Ocean follows the Great Usutu downstream for about 17 miles and then continues by straight-line segments for about 33 miles.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mozambique. Portuguese exploration of the east coast of Africa began prior to the end of the 15th century, and in 1505 Portugal established a trading post on the island of Mocambique. In 1752, following the gradual extension of Portuguese territorial claims along the coast and into the interior of present-day Mozambique, Portugal placed the administration of the entity under a resident governor. Two hundred years later Mozambique was designated an overseas province, regarded by the Portuguese Government as an integral part of Portugal. By an amendment to the Portuguese constitution in December 1972, Mozambique was redesignated a state.

South Africa. Cape of Good Hope Province was ceded by the Dutch to the United Kingdom in 1814. British immigration followed and settlements were made at a number of sites, including Durban in 1824. Starting in 1836, Afrikaner farmers (Boers) made a series of northern migrations in a movement which became known as the Great Trek.

On the east coast of the continent, Natal was annexed by the British in 1843, became a part of Cape of Good Hope Colony the following year, and was made a separate colony in 1856. In the meantime, the independence of the Transvaal Boers was recognized by the United Kingdom by a convention signed at Sand River in 1852. The Transvaal territory became known as the South African Republic six years later.

In disagreement with the internal administration of the South African Republic relative to the convention of 1852, the United Kingdom annexed the republic in 1877. Subject to British suzerainty, self-government was restored by the Pretoria convention of 1881, but the name of the entity was changed to the Transvaal State. The London Convention of 1884 again authorized the use of the name of the South African Republic.

During the South African war, or Anglo–Boer war, of 1899–1902, the British annexed the South African Republic as the Transvaal Colony and the Orange Free State as the Orange River Colony, but in 1907 the internal self-government was extended to both colonies.

On May 31, 1910, the Union of South Africa came into existence as a British dominion. The Union consisted of the four former colonies now known as the provinces of the Cape of Good Hope, Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State. On May 31, 1961, following a nationwide referendum, South Africa became a republic.

III. BOUNDARY TREATIES

A treaty of July 29, 1869, between Portugal and the South African Republic established the northern part of the present Mozambique–South Africa boundary. In addition it stated in the treaty that the southern limit of the Portuguese district of Lourenco Marques or Delagoa Bay was the parallel of 26°30'S. inland from the Indian Ocean to the Lebombo Mountains, from which point the boundary extended northward along the summit of the mountains. The 1869 treaty was replaced by a new treaty on December 11, 1875, which did not include the delimitation of the respective boundaries as they were considered to be fixed. As suzerain of the Transvaal State, the United Kingdom reconfirmed the 1875 treaty with Portugal by an exchange of ratifications at Lisbon on October 7, 1882.

In the meantime, a dispute between Portugal and the United Kingdom relative to territorial claims in Delagoa Bay was submitted to President Marshal MacMahon of France for arbitration. His award, also in 1875, supported most of the Portuguese claims, giving to Portugal the bay and adjacent land to the south. In 1888 a joint boundary commission composed of representatives of the United Kingdom, Portugal, Swaziland, and the South African Republic agreed that the southern terminus of the Mozambique–Swaziland boundary was the Great Usutu,¹ with the boundary continuing northward along the summit of the Lebombo Mountains. In Article III of an Anglo–Portuguese treaty of June 11, 1891, it was stated that "Great Britain engages not to make any objection to the extension of the sphere of influence of Portugal, south of Delagoa Bay, as far as a line following the parallel of the confluence of the River Pongolo with the River Maputo to the sea-coast."

Located south of the Pongola and eastward to Amatongaland, Zululand was declared a British possession on May 14, 1887. On April 23, 1895, United Kingdom sovereignty was proclaimed over the Transpongola territory and annexed to Zululand; this action was followed by a British notification on June 8, 1895. The northern limit of the Transpongola territory was described as the Great Usutu, and the proclamation of the acquisition of this land serves as the basis for the present river boundary between Mozambique and South Africa along the Great Usutu.²

Also on April 23, 1895, British sovereignty was proclaimed over Amatongaland. In notes exchanged between the United Kingdom and Portugal, September 24–October 5, 1895, relative to the British acquisition of Amatongaland (Tongaland), it was agreed their

¹ In Mozambique, the Great Usutu is known as the Rio Maputo.

² The description of the limits of the Transpongola Territory also is the basis for the present South Africa–Swaziland boundary adjacent to Natal Province.

common boundary in this sector would continue to be along the parallel of the confluence of the Pongola and Great Usutu as delimited in the treaty of June 11, 1891. A joint commission demarcated this sector of the boundary two years later, as contained in a description signed at Lourenco Marques on October 2, 1897. Amatongaland was annexed to Zululand on November 30, 1897, and in turn Zululand was annexed to Natal on December 1, 1897.

An Anglo–Portuguese exchange of notes on October 6, 1927, approved a joint demarcation of the boundary sector between the Groot-Shingwidzirivier and the Limpopo. Also on the same date, a second exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and Portugal established an exact tripoint with Swaziland in the north at Mpundweni Beacon. The tripoint with Southern Rhodesia was determined to be a point on the Limpopo by an Anglo–Portuguese exchange of notes on October 29, 1940.

IV. ALIGNMENT

The exact alignment of the part of the Mozambique–South Africa boundary between the northern tripoint with Swaziland and the Southern Rhodesia tripoint is determined by various treaties and demarcations. The exact Swaziland tripoint was located at Mpundweni Beacon by an Anglo–Portuguese exchange of notes dated October 6, 1927. The site of the beacon was given in relation to M'Ponduine Geodetic Station (25°56'47.19"S. and 31°58'40.46"E.), based on a coordinate grid of X and Y values with the tripoint being 229.38 meters west and 512.66 meters south of the previously determined location.

From the tripoint northward to the Limpopo, the boundary is determined by a treaty signed at Pretoria between Portugal and the South African Republic on July 29, 1869, as follows:

...thence along the summit of the said mountains [Lebombo Mountains] as far as the pass of the river Comatie [Komati], where that river runs between the mountains of Le Bombo; thence to N.N.E. up to the mountain called Pokioenskop, which is the north of the river Oliphants, where it runs in those parts; thence to N.N.W. to the nearest point of the ridge of Chicundo where the river Umbovo [Groot-Shingwidzirivier] runs; thence in a straight line as far as the junction of the rivers Pafuri [Luvuvhurivier] and Limpopo.

Between the Groot-Shingwidzirivier (formerly known as the Singwetsi) and the Limpopo, a detailed demarcation was made by a joint boundary commission as contained in an Anglo–Portuguese exchange of notes at Lisbon on October 6, 1927:

1. The boundary is a straight line between beacon "T," which is the most northerly beacon of that portion of the boundary demarcated by a former commission and the junction of the Limpopo and Pafuri rivers referred to in paragraph 6 of annexure (A) to this report.

2. The points on the boundary line are defined by cement concrete beacons being quadrangular truncated pyramids, each 60 centimetres wide at the base, 25 centimetres wide at the top and 1 metre 25 centimetres in height erected on a concrete platform 1 metre square and approximately 4 decimetres in depth sunk level with the surface of the surrounding ground.

The centre of each beacon is marked by a galvanised iron tube 0.05 metres inside diameter and 0.055 metres outside diameter. This tube is let into the base on which the beacon stands and its top is just flush with the top of the beacon.

3. The beacon at the first point north of the Singwetsi river, referred to as "T" in our instructions, consisted of a cairn of stones approximately 3 metres in height and 4 metres in circumference at the base. This was replaced by a concrete beacon of the dimensions mentioned in paragraph 2 above, which is marked on its northern face by the number I engraved in the cement.

The other beacons along the boundary line are similarly marked by consecutive numbers from II to XIV.

Beacon No. II, 10,697.5 metres from No. I, is on a comparatively level plain covered with small bush, and is about 150 metres from the foot of a small ridge running approximately north and south.

Beacon No. III, 5,778 metres from No. II, is on the slope of the ridge referred to above, which is sparsely covered with bush.

Beacon No. IV, 5,031.7 metres from No. III, is almost on the highest part of the ridge referred to above in rather heavy bush.

Beacon No. V, 4,786.7 metres from No. IV, is similarly situated to No. IV.

Beacon No. VI, 7,374.9 metres from No. V, is almost on the summit of the ridge in heavy bush and is about a kilometre to the south of a deep valley in which water may be found during the greater part of the year.

Beacon No. VII, 13,004 metres from No. VI, is on slightly elevated ground in heavy bush, and is about a kilometre to the west of a small lagoon or "pan" which holds water for the greater part of the year.

Beacon No. VIII, 10,983 metres from No. VII, is in dense scrub known by the native name of "Nyundu." It is situated in the middle of a roadway of an average width of 10 metres cut through the Nyundu bush along the boundary line.

Beacon No. IX, 10,388 metres from No. VIII, is almost on the south-east edge of a sandy elevation which is covered with fairly heavy bush.

Beacon No. X, 6,986.5 metres from No. IX, is in heavy bush on elevated ground north of the Malunga valley.

Beacon No. XI, 8,164.4 metres from No. X, is on a bare hill on the highest part of the range overlooking the Limpopo and Pafuri valleys.

Beacon No. XII, 2,374 metres from No. XI, is on the plain between the hills and the Pafuri and Limpopo rivers, and is 3 or 4 metres south of the road from the Transvaal through the post of Pafuri to the district of Lourenco Marques.

Beacon No. XIII, 790.3 metres from No. XII, is on the plain on slightly elevated ground above the flood level of the rivers.

Beacon No. XIV, 1,624.5 metres from No. XIII and 321.1 metres from confluence, is in rather thick scrub and reeds on sandy ground which is under water when the rivers are in flood. It is approximately 200 metres from the bank of the river.

South of the Groot-Shingwidzirivier to the northern Swaziland tripoint, the boundary is demarcated by three different series of beacons as indicated on the map in this study. Much of this sector was demarcated initially during the period from 1887 to 1894. The international boundary also serves as the eastern boundary of Kruger National Park from the Southern Rhodesia tripoint to the vicinity of Komatipoort. In the Lebombo Mountains the boundary follows along the top of the eastern slope of this north–south trending landform.

The tripoint with Southern Rhodesia was determined from the demarcation of the Mozambique–Southern Rhodesia boundary, in accordance with an Anglo–Portuguese exchange of notes on October 29, 1940, as being "from Beacon 1 to a point where the prolongation of the straight line from Beacon 2 strikes the thalweg³ Limpopo River." The coordinates for Beacon 1 were given as 22°25'05"S. and 31°19'00"E. and for Beacon 2 as 22°24'35"S. and 31°19'49"E.

The part of the Mozambique–South Africa boundary between the southern tripoint with Swaziland and the Indian Ocean consists of two distinct sectors: (1) the Swaziland tripoint eastward along the Great Usutu to its confluence with the Pongola and (2) the confluence of the Great Usutu and Pongola eastward to the Indian Ocean.

³ In an exchange of notes of November 11, 1957, and March 11, 1958, between the British High Commissioner for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and the Secretary for External Affairs of the Union of South Africa, it was agreed that their common boundary was the median line of the Limpopo.

The Great Usutu sector⁴ was the northern limit of the Transpongola territory declared under British sovereignty by the proclamation of April 23, 1895, as follows:

Whereas it is expedient that the territories bounded on the south and east by the Pongola River, on the north by the Maputa or Usutu River, and on the West by Swaziland and the South African Republic, being the territories of the Native Chiefs Umbegeza, Mdhlaleni, Sambane or Zambaan, and of other Native Chiefs therein residing, should be added to the dominions of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

The sector of the boundary eastward from the confluence of the Great Usutu and Pongola to the Indian Ocean is given in the description of the demarcation of October 2, 1897:⁵

The frontier, with the exception of some slight deviations, follows the parallel of the confluence of the Rivers Pongolo and Maputo (Usutu) to the Indian Ocean, and is situated in latitude south 26°51'12.96" (twenty-six degrees, fifty-one minutes, twelve decimal ninety-six seconds). (See Report of the Meeting of the Joint Commission of the 4th November, 1896.)

From the point of departure, namely, the confluence of the Rivers Pongolo and Maputo (Usutu), the frontier follows the east channel of the Maputo (Usutu), known amongst the natives as the Pongolo River, as far as a clearing made in the bush at the water's edge on the right bank.⁶ From that point looking across a swamp Beacon No. 1 may be seen erected upon sloping ground at a distance of about 4 metres to the north of a large tree.

Beacon No. I.

This beacon is built upon hard ground and considerably above the point where the waters come in the rainy season, and is situated at a distance of 220 metres from the river's edge, where the before-mentioned clearance has been made.

Beacon No. II.

This beacon is situated about 7,700 metres from Beacon No. I, and a clearance 12 metres wide has been made from one beacon to the other. This beacon is situated upon a small hill at a distance of about 300 metres to the south of "Matata's" road.

⁴ Although numerous maps indicate the boundary as the median line or thalweg of the Great Usutu, available information does not indicate the exact relationship of the boundary to the river.

⁵ The boundary description was accepted by the notes exchanged between the governments of the United Kingdom and Portugal on December 29, 1898, and January 25, 1899, respectively.

⁶ At the time of demarcation, an island at the mouth of the Pongola diverted part of the stream's flow into an eastern channel which joined the Great Usutu to the north of the main confluence of the two rivers. Calculations for determining the parallel of the confluence of the rivers were based on the point where the main or western channel joined the Great Usutu. The western channel is now silted up, the island is part of the interstream area, and the confluence of the streams is north of the boundary in Mozambique.

Beacon No. III.

This beacon is situated at about 2,000 metres from Beacon No. II. This beacon has been erected upon a wooded ridge at about 200 metres to the north of "Matata's" road. A clearance 12 metres wide has been made to the east and west of this beacon for an extent of about 500 metres.

Beacon No. IV.

This beacon is situated at about 6,500 metres from Beacon No. III. Beacon No. IV has been erected upon a small ridge, and is surrounded to the east and north by a dense bush. At the foot of the ridge and to the west the country is rather flat and open. On that plain, and at a distance of about 4,000 metres to the north, is the kraal belonging formerly to the Chief Sibunjana.

Beacon No. V.

This beacon is situated at about 2,000 metres from Beacon No. IV upon a prominent point on the range of hills which form the watershed between the Rivers Umfuzi (Futi) and Maputo (Usutu). This beacon is built near a curious tree which is in a conspicuous position distant about 40 metres from the beacon. The tree may be easily recognized by its curved trunk and by its branches, which are also curved; both trunk and branches are curved in a northerly direction.

Beacon No. VI.

This beacon is about 3,500 metres from Beacon No. V, situated upon a small wooded ridge. A clearance has been made for a distance of about 1,500 metres east and west of this beacon. In the immediate vicinity there are clumps of very dense bush. At about 100 metres to the north of the beacon, and growing in the midst of a clump of bush one may remark a big wild fig tree with spreading branches.

Beacon No. VII.

This beacon is situated at about 6,500 metres from Beacon No. VI, upon the right bank of the swampy River Umfuzi (Futi), and faces a clearance made on an island in the above-mentioned river, which clearance is situated about 600 metres south of the most northerly point of that island. This beacon is about 6,000 metres to the south of the kraal of Mlingalinga, of the Manyoka tribe.

Beacon No. VIII.

This beacon is situated at about 800 metres from Beacon No. VII, and is erected upon the right bank of the above-mentioned Umfuzi (Futi), at a distance of about 100 metres to the west of a clump of (Ndoni) trees. Dense bush surrounds this beacon to the north and south on the bank of the river.

Beacon No. IX.

This beacon is about 4,000 metres from Beacon No. VIII, and is situated upon a mound surrounded by many small palm trees in the vicinity of Makokela's kraal. Palms grow upon the slopes to the north, east, and west of the mound, which is bare upon its summit.

Beacon No. X.

This beacon, about 4,000 metres from Beacon No. IX, is situated amidst palms upon a long low ridge.

Beacon No. XI.

This beacon, about 3,000 metres from Beacon No. X, is situated in the middle of the horse-shoe shaped swamp called Enhlove. The beacon is surrounded by dense bush at the edge of the swamp on the three sides, south, east, and west. A large clearance has been made in the bush to the west of the beacon.

Beacon No. XII.

This beacon, about 8,000 metres from Beacon No. XI, is situated upon a bare ridge.

Beacon No. XIII.

This beacon, about 1,000 metres from Beacon No. XII, is situated upon a bare ridge. It is the last ridge of the frontier, and overlooks a small lake upon the other side of which are the sand dunes. This beacon is 2,670 metres from Oro Peak, bearing 76° N.E. (seventy-six degrees north-east).

The frontier terminates at the summit of Oro Peak, which is the most elevated point between Kosi River and Oro Point.

On the coast the frontier is the parallel of the summit of Oro Peak.

The frontier described in this document is in conformity with the sketch plan annexed to this document.

APPENDIX

DOCUMENTATION

1. Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Boundaries, between Portugal and the Transvaal Republic. Signed at Pretoria, July 29, 1869. British Foreign and State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 63 (1872–3), pp. 600–7.
2. Protocol of Conference between Great Britain and Portugal, relative to their respective Claims to certain Territories formerly belonging to the Kings of Tembe and Mapoota, on the Eastern Coast of Africa, including the Islands of Imyack and Elephant, and agreeing to refer the same to Arbitration (Delagoa Bay). Lisbon, September 25, 1872. Ibid., Vol. 63 (1872–3), pp. 1045–7.
3. Correspondence between Great Britain and Portugal, respecting the Territories on the South-east Coast of Africa, awarded to Portugal by the Decision of the President of the French Republic of July 24, 1875 (Delagoa Bay). June 1875. Ibid., Vol. 70 (1878–9), pp. 338–41.
4. Award of the President of the French Republic, on the Claims of Great Britain and Portugal to certain Territories formerly belonging to the Kings of Tembe and Mapoota, on the Eastern Coast of Africa, including the Islands of Inyack and Elephant (Delagoa Bay or Lorenzo Marques). Versailles, July 24, 1875. Ibid., Vol. 66 (1874–5), pp. 554–56 (French).
5. Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between Portugal and the Transvaal Republic, signed at Lisbon, December 11, 1875 [Ratified by the Queen of Great Britain as Suzeraine of the Transvaal State, and by the King of Portugal. Ratifications exchanged at Lisbon, October 7, 1882]. Ibid., Vol. 67 (1875–6) pp. 1256–63.
6. Treaty between Great Britain and Portugal, defining the Spheres of Influence of the two Countries in Africa. Signed at Lisbon, June 11, 1891 [Ratifications exchanged at London, July 3, 1891]. Ibid., Vol. 83 (1890–1), pp. 27–41. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, Portugal No. 1 (1891), C. 6375.
7. Proclamation by the Governor of Zululand, annexing certain Territories to Zululand. Pietermaritzburg, April 23, 1895. Ibid., Vol. 87 (1894–5), pp. 1040–1.
8. Notification of the Annexation of the Trans-Pongolo Territories to Zululand. London, June 8, 1895. Ibid., Vol. 87 (1894–5), pp. 1040.
9. Exchange of Notes between the British and Portuguese Governments, defining the Frontiers of their respective Possessions in the neighbourhood of Tongaland. September 24–October 5, 1895. The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3 vols., 3rd Edition (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909). Vol. 3, pp. 1033–4.

10. Notification of British Protectorate over Amatongaland. London, October 15, 1895. BFSP, Vol. 87 (1894–5) p. 1040.
11. Description of the Anglo–Portuguese Frontier between the British Protectorate of Amatongaland and the Portuguese Possessions in East Africa delimited by the Joint Commission in 1897, in accordance with Art. III of the Treaty of June 11, 1891, between Great Britain and Portugal. Lorenzo Marques, October 2, 1897. Hertslet, Vol. 3, pp. 1066–9.
12. Notes exchanged between Great Britain and Portugal relative to the Delimitation of the Frontier between the British and Portuguese Possessions in Amatongaland. London, December 29, 1898–January 25, 1899. Hertslet, Vol. 3, p. 1070.
13. Exchange of Notes between the Union of South Africa and Portugal for the Settlement of the Boundary between the Union and Mozambique. Lisbon, October 6, 1927. BFSP, Vol. 126, Part I (1927), pp. 627–32. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, No. 8 (1928), Cmd. 3070.
14. Exchange of Notes between the United Kingdom and Portugal for the Settlement of the Boundary between Swaziland and the Province of Mozambique. Lisbon, October 6, 1927. BFSP, Vol. 126, Part 1 (1927), pp. 271–5. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series No. 7 (1928), Cmd. 3066.
15. Exchange of Notes between the United Kingdom and the Portuguese Government regarding the delimitation of the Southern Rhodesia–Portuguese East Africa Frontier. London, October 29, 1940. BFSP, Vol. 144 (1940–2), pp. 164–72. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series No. 13 (1941), Cmd. 6280.

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