



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 137 – July 7, 1973**

## **South Africa – Swaziland Boundary**

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**The Geographer  
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**INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY**

**No. 137 - July 9, 1973**

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## **SOUTH AFRICA – SWAZILAND BOUNDARY**

### **I. BOUNDARY BRIEF**

Approximately 267 miles long, the South Africa–Swaziland boundary is demarcated by pillars and rivers. It forms an irregular semicircle westward of tripoints with Mozambique on the Great Usutu and at Mpundweni Beacon. Most of the boundary follows straight-line segments between peaks or extends along various ridges.

### **II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**South Africa.** The independence of the Transvaal Boers was recognized by the United Kingdom in a convention signed at Sand River in 1852, and the Transvaal territory was named the South African Republic in 1858. Formerly a part of the Cape of Good Hope Colony, Natal was made a separate British colony in 1856. In 1877, in disagreement with the internal administration of the South African Republic relative to the convention of 1852, the United Kingdom annexed the republic.

The Pretoria convention of 1881 restored self-government to the South African Republic, changed the name of the republic to the Transvaal State, and delimited a boundary between the Transvaal State and Swaziland. The London convention of 1884, substituted for the 1881 convention, authorized the return to the use of the name of the South African Republic. It also restated the same boundary delimitation contained in the Pretoria convention, which is the present alignment of the South African–Swaziland boundary adjacent to the Province of the Transvaal. Both the 1881 and 1884 conventions recognized the independence of Swaziland.

Located south of the Pongola and eastward to Amatongaland, Zululand was declared a British possession on May 14, 1887. British sovereignty was proclaimed over the Transpongola territory which was annexed to Zululand on April 23, 1895. The area was described as "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, Mdhlaheni, Sambane or Zambaan, and of other native chiefs therein residing." The delimitation of Transpongola on the north and west as contained in the annexation proclamation of 1895 is the basis for the present South Africa–Swaziland boundary adjacent to the Province of Natal. On December 1, 1897, Zululand was annexed to Natal.

In accordance with the terms of the treaty of Vereeniging in 1902 following the Anglo–Boer War, the South African Republic became a British colony and reverted to the name of Transvaal. On May 31, 1910, the colonies of Transvaal, Natal, Cape of Good Hope, and Orange Free State joined as provinces to form the Union of South Africa as a British dominion. Under the statute of Westminster, the Union achieved status as a sovereign

state in 1934. Following a nationwide referendum, South Africa became a republic on May 31, 1961.

**Swaziland.** Agreements between the United Kingdom and the Transvaal State in 1881 and 1884 recognized the independence of Swaziland. In 1890 a convention was signed by the Governments of the South African Republic and the United Kingdom for cooperation in the settlement of the disorganized internal affairs of Swaziland, and in 1894 an additional Anglo–South African convention gave the South African Republic powers of protection and administration for Swaziland. These powers passed to the United Kingdom after its annexation of the Transvaal in 1900.

In 1907 Swaziland was placed under the control of the British high commissioner for South Africa. It was administered as a High Commission Territory until the dissolution of the High Commission on August 1, 1964. On September 6, 1968, the entity became independent as the Kingdom of Swaziland.

### III. ALIGNMENT

The sector of the South Africa–Swaziland boundary adjacent to the South African province of Natal is based on a British proclamation by the Governor of Zululand which annexed the Transpongola Territories to Zululand. Thus from the Mozambique tripoint on the Great Usutu, the boundary follows the Great Usutu<sup>1</sup> upstream to the Lebombo Mountains. It then extends southward along the highest ridge of the Lebombo Mountains<sup>2</sup> to the northern point of the N'Yawos Hills where the Natal–Transvaal provincial boundary contacts Swaziland.

The remainder of the South Africa–Swaziland boundary is adjacent to the South African province of Transvaal and is determined by an Anglo–South African Republic convention signed at London on February 27, 1884. It is delimited by the convention clockwise from the northern point of the N'Yawos Hills to the northern tripoint with Mozambique at Mpundweni Beacon.

.... [From the northern peak of the N'Yawos Hills] thence to the northern peak of the Inkwakweni Hills (Bea. XV); thence to Sefunda, a rocky knoll detached from and to the north-east end of the White Koppies, and to the south of the Muzana River (Bea. XIV); thence to point on the slope near the crest of Matanjeni, which is the name given to the south-eastern portion of the Mahamba Hills (Bea. XIII); thence to the N'gwangwana, a double-pointed hill (one point is bare the other wooded, the beacon being on the former), on the left bank of the Assegai River and upstream of

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<sup>1</sup> Although numerous maps indicate the tripoint and boundary to be on the median line or thalweg of the Great Usutu, available information does not indicate the exact relationship of the boundary to the river. The location of the tripoint on the Great Usutu was accepted by a joint commission in 1888, which included representatives of the United Kingdom, Portugal, Swaziland, and the South African Republic.

<sup>2</sup> The United Kingdom Parliamentary Paper No. C.7780 states that the boundary follows the highest ridge of the Lebombo Mountains.

the Dadusa Spruit (Bea. XII); thence to the southern point of Bendita, a rocky knoll in a plain between the Little Hlozane and Assegaai Rivers (Bea. XI); thence to the highest point of Suluka Hill, round the eastern slopes of which flows the Little Hlozane, also called Ludaka or Mudspruit (Bea. X); thence to the beacon known as 'Viljoen's,' or N'Duko Hill; thence to a point north-east of Derby House, known as Magwazidili's Beacon; thence to the Igaba, a small knoll on the Ungwempisi River, also called 'Joubert's Beacon,' and known to the Natives as 'Piet's Beacon' (Bea. IX); thence to the highest point of the N'Dhlovudwalili or Houtbosch, a hill on the northern bank of the Umgwempisi River (Bea. VIII); thence to a beacon on the only flat-topped rock, about ten feet high, and about 30 yards in circumference at its base, situated on the south side of the Lamsamane range of hills, and overlooking the valley of the great Usuto River; this rock being 45 yards north of the road from Camden and Lake Banagher to the forests on the Usuto River (sometimes called Sandhlanas Beacon) (Bea. VII); thence to the Gulungwana or Ibubulundi, four smooth bare hills, the highest in that neighbourhood, situated to the south of the Umtuli River (Bea. VI); thence to a flat-topped rock, eight feet high, on the crest of the Busuku, a low rocky range south-west of the Impulazi River (Bea. V); thence to a low bare hill on the north-east of, and overlooking the Impulazi River, to the south of it being a tributary of the Impulazi, with a considerable waterfall, and the road from the river passing 200 yards to the north-west of the beacon (Bea. IV); thence to the highest point of the Mapumula range, the watershed of the Little Usuto River on the north, and the Umpulazi River on the south, the hill, the top of which is a bare rock, falling abruptly towards the Little Usuto (Bea. III); thence to the western point of a double-pointed rocky hill, precipitous on all sides, called Makwana, its top being a bare rock (Bea. II); thence to the top of a rugged hill of considerable height, falling abruptly to the Komati River, this hill being the northern extremity of the Isilotwani range, and separated from the highest peak of the range Inkomokasi (a sharp one) by a deep neck (Bea. I). (On a ridge in the straight line between Beacons I and II is an intermediate beacon). From Beacon I the boundary runs to a hill across the Komati River, and thence along the crest of the range of hills known as the Makongwa, which runs north-east and south-west, to Kamhlabana Peak; thence in a straight line to Mananga, a point in the Libombo range, and thence to the nearest point in the Portuguese frontier on the Libombo range.

In the north the exact tripoint with Mozambique 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.

## APPENDIX

### Documentation

1. Convention between Her Majesty's Royal Commissioners and the Representatives of the Transvaal Burghers, for the settlement of the Transvaal territory. Signed at Pretoria, August 3, 1881. British and Foreign State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 72 (1880-1), pp. 900-11.
2. Convention between Great Britain and the South African Republic, in substitution of the Convention of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1881, for the settlement of the Transvaal Territory. Signed at London, February 27, 1884. Ibid., Vol. 75 (1883-4), pp. 5-13.
3. Proclamation by the Governor of Zululand, annexing certain territories to Zululand. Pietermaritzburg, April 23, 1895. Ibid., Vol. 87 (1894-5), pp. 1040-1.
4. Notification of the Annexation of the Trans-Pongolo territories to Zululand. London, June 8, 1895. Ibid., Vol. 87, (1894-5), p. 1040.
5. 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.

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