



International Boundary Study

No. 139 – August 27, 1973

Kenya – Uganda Boundary

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**The Geographer
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Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

No. 139

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KENYA – UGANDA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Kenya–Uganda boundary is approximately 580 miles long. From the tripoint with Tanzania, it extends northward through Lake Victoria for 86 miles. Except for about 94 miles between the Bukwa and Kanamuton rivers, the remainder of the boundary is demarcated by pillars or rivers.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1886 the United Kingdom and Germany reached an initial agreement on their spheres of influence in East Africa north and south, respectively, of a boundary established between the Indian Ocean and Lake Victoria. Trending northwestward from near Vanga on the Indian Ocean, the boundary extended inland to the intersection of the parallel of 1° south latitude and the eastern shore of Lake Victoria, a point a short distance north of the present port of Shirati. The Imperial British East Africa Company was chartered in 1888, and it began rapidly to establish administrative authority in the British sphere of influence. British and German penetration deep into the interior of the continent soon required the determination of their respective spheres of influence west of Lake Victoria. In 1890 a second Anglo–German treaty completed the boundary between their spheres by a line which followed the parallel of 1° south latitude across Lake Victoria and continued westward to the 30th meridian east longitude.

The Kingdom of Buganda, located north and west of Lake Victoria, was declared a British Protectorate in 1894. The following year the United Kingdom created an East Africa Protectorate which included the present Kenyan territory between the Indian Ocean and the Rift Valley, the latter a short distance west of Nairobi. Gradually the United Kingdom extended protectorate rights to the areas adjacent to Buganda, and the name of Uganda came into general usage for the entire area. The Indian Ocean and Lake Victoria were linked by a railroad in 1901 when a line from Mombassa reached Kisumu.

On April 1, 1902, the then Eastern Province of the Uganda Protectorate was transferred to the East African Protectorate by the British Foreign Office. The province was delimited on the west by the present Kenya–Uganda boundary, on the north by the Suam or Turkwel river, on the east by the eastern escarpment of the Rift Valley for much of the distance between Lake Rudolf and Lake Natron, and on the south by the German sphere westward to Lake Victoria.

An attempt to join the two protectorates in 1905 was unsuccessful, and the administration of both the East Africa and the Uganda protectorates was shifted from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office.

In January 1914 an agreement was reached on the hitherto undelimited Sudan–Uganda boundary. At this time the Sudan–Uganda boundary extended eastward to a tripoint with Ethiopia in the northern part of Lake Rudolf. In 1920 the East Africa Protectorate became Kenya Colony with the exception of the coastal strip leased from the Sultan of Zanzibar, which became the Kenya Protectorate.

Rudolf Province of Uganda, presently the Turkana District of the Rift Valley Province of Kenya, was transferred to Kenya in 1926 by an Order in Council. The former Ugandan province was delimited on the west by the present Kenya–Uganda boundary, on the north by the then eastern sector of the Sudan–Uganda boundary, and on the east and south by a meridian in Lake Rudolf and the Turkwel river, respectively. The Order in Council also delimited the Kenya–Uganda boundary from a point on the parallel of 1° south latitude in Lake Victoria northward to Mount Zulia at the Sudan tripoint.

Prior to the transfer, Kenya (East Africa Protectorate) had administered the Pokot (Suk) tribe of southwestern Rudolf Province since 1914, and in 1922 the Government of Uganda agreed that the administration of the Pokot should be continued by Kenya. It also was agreed that while the Pokot were to live on the Kenya side of the boundary they would be allowed grazing concessions for their herds of stock in Uganda. However, some of the Pokot settled in Uganda west of the international boundary; and in 1927 the Government of Uganda cancelled the grazing concessions of the Pokot.

In 1932 the Governments of Kenya and Uganda agreed that Karasuk, an area of Kenya lying to the west of the Suam or Turkwel river and formerly a part of Rudolf Province, should be administered by the adjoining Ugandan Karamoja District for convenience of tribal control. Thus was created an administrative boundary east of the international boundary. From south to north, the administrative boundary from the confluence of the Bukwa and Suam followed the latter river downstream through the Turkwel Gorge. It then extended northward along the base of the Turkana Escarpment to the international boundary south of the Karamuroi Pass.

Uganda became independent from the United Kingdom on October 9, 1962, and Kenya was granted independence the following year on December 12. By agreement between Kenya and Uganda, the Karasuk was returned to Kenyan administration in September 1970.

III. ALIGNMENT

The Kenya–Uganda boundary was established initially as an interterritorial line by a British Order in Council of 1926. Prior to the independence of the two states, administrative agreements amended the boundary in a number of places.

In the Schedule annexed to "The Kenya Colony and Protectorate (Boundaries) Order in Council, 1926," the Kenya–Uganda boundary is delimited in three sectors from south to

north: (1) Boundary from 1° south latitude, through Lake Victoria to the Mouth of the Sio River, (2) Boundary from the Mouth of the Sio River to the summit of Mount Elgon, and (3) Boundary from the summit of Mount Elgon to Mount Zulia, on the boundary of the Anglo–Egyptian Sudan [Democratic Republic of the Sudan].

The first sector begins in Lake Victoria at the Tanzania tripoint, which is located on the first parallel south and approximately 33°56' east longitude.

- (1) Boundary from 1° south latitude, through Lake Victoria to the Mouth of the Sio River.

Commencing in the waters of Lake Victoria on a parallel 1° south latitude, at a point due south of the westernmost point of Pyramid Island; thence the boundary follows a straight line due north to that point; thence continuing by a straight line northerly to the most westerly point of Ilemba Island; thence by a straight line, still northerly, to the most westerly point of Kiringiti Island; thence by a straight line, still northerly, to the most westerly point of Mageta Island; thence by a straight line north-westerly to the most southerly point of Sumba Island; thence by the south-western and western shores of that island to its most northerly point; thence by a straight line north-easterly to the centre of the mouth of the Sio River.

The second boundary sector contains two major boundary changes relative to the text of the Order in Council: (1) a detailed demarcation between the Sango and Alupe rivers, and (2) a completely new boundary alignment in the vicinity of Mount Elgon (Masaba).

- (2) Boundary from the Mouth of the Sio River to the summit of Mount Elgon.

Commencing at the centre of the mouth of the Sio River the boundary follows the centre of the course of that river up-stream to its confluence with the Sango River; thence continuing by the centre of the course of the latter river up-stream to its source, marked by a cairn; thence by a straight line to that cairn, and onwards by a straight line north-easterly to a cairn on the abandoned road (now a footpath) from Busia to Mumeri's (Lukoli's); thence by the eastern edge of that road to its intersection with the Alupe River; thence by the centre of the course of that river down-stream to its confluence with the Kame River; thence by the centre of the course of the latter river to its intersection with the eastern boundary of the Mjanji–Busia–Mbale road, such boundary being 100 feet distant from and parallel to the centre line of the said road; thence by that eastern boundary northerly to its intersection with the River Malawa (or Malaba); thence by the centre of the course of that river (also known as the Lwakaka or Lwagaga River) up-stream to its source; thence by a straight line north-easterly to the highest point of Mount Elgon.

It was agreed by both Kenyan and Ugandan government officials that the segment of the boundary in the relatively densely settled area between the Sango and Alupe rivers should

be demarcated by pillars for easy visual identification. The segment was demarcated with pillars by Ugandan survey parties in 1927 and 1933, and the present description¹ of the boundary between the Sango and Alupe reads as follows:

thence up-stream by the centre line of that river [Sio] to its confluence with the Sango River;

thence up-stream by the centre line of the Sango River to its source, marked by Boundary Pillar X covered by a cairn of stones;

thence by a straight line on a true bearing of 40°56'08" for a distance of 502.7 ft. to a stone;

thence by a straight line on a true bearing of 40°58'00" for a distance of 933.6 ft. to Boundary Pillar Y near the main Mumias–Busia Road;

thence by a series of straight lines each terminating at a boundary pillar on the following true bearing and for the following approximate distances successively to Boundary Pillar 9: --

From	To	Bearing	Distance (feet)
B.P.Y	B.P.1	58°-27'-17"	2,364
B.P.1	B.P.2	51°-43'-55"	463
B.P.2	B.P.3	44°-08'-44"	1,512
B.P.3	B.P.4	51°-24'-49"	580
B.P.4	B.P.5	41°-08'-52"	1,007
B.P.5	B.P.6	49°-06'-07"	976
B.P.6	B.P.7	67°-43'-11"	959
B.P.7	B.P.8	54°-07'-02"	1,226
B.P.8	B.P.9	70°-09'-26"	550

thence by the last line extended for a distance of approximately 54 ft. to Alupe River;

thence down stream by the centre line of that river [Alupe] to its confluence with the Kame [Kami] River;

Also changed in the second sector of the Schedule contained in the Order in Council and extending into the third sector is the boundary alignment between the source of the Malaba

¹ Kenya Legal Notice No. 718 of 1963, Schedule 11 Boundaries, Part I, the Districts, 37. Busia District, pp. 290–2.

(also known as the Lwakhakha) and the point where the more northwesterly of two streams forming the Suam (known as the Turkwel in its lower course) emerges from the crater of Mount Elgon. The alignment of the boundary was officially amended in a letter dated March 7, 1936, from the Colonial Secretary of Kenya to the Chief Secretary of Uganda. The amended segment of the international boundary, taken from the Bungoma District boundary description contained in the Government of Kenya "The District and Provinces Bill 1968," reads as follows:

thence generally north-easterly and up-stream by the centre line of that river [Lwakhakha] to its source (at a latitude of approximately 1°06'23" N.);

thence easterly by a straight line for a distance of approximately 17,600 feet to the second highest summit [Lower Elgon]² of Mount Elgon at an altitude of approximately 14,140 feet;

thence northerly by a straight line for a distance of approximately 17,500 feet to . . . the vicinity of Hot Springs where the Suam River emerges from the crater of Mount Elgon.

In addition to the boundary change in the vicinity of Mount Elgon discussed in the second sector, the third sector was demarcated by pillars for about 280 miles between the Kanamuto river and the Sudan tripoint during 1959–60.

- (3) Boundary from summit of Mount Elgon to Mount Zulia, on the boundary of the Anglo–Egyptian Sudan.

Commencing at the highest point of Mount Elgon, the boundary follows a straight line north-easterly to the point where the more north-westerly of the two streams forming the River Suam (Swam) or Turkwel emerges from the crater of Mount Elgon; thence continuing by the centre of the course of that river down-stream to its confluence with the River Bukwa (Kibukwa); thence north-westerly following a line of cairns approximately in a straight line, and at first following a small natural depression to the source of the Kanyerus River (marked by a large tree); thence following the foot of the eastern portion (Moriting) of Mount Riwa northerly to its north-eastern extremity; thence following a straight line north-westerly to the western extremity of Kassauna Hill; thence by the foot of the north-western slopes of that hill north-easterly to the confluence of the streams Maron and Maragat; thence by the centre of the course of the latter stream to its source; thence by a straight line to the summit of the hill Murogogoi; thence along the highest points of the rocky ridge (forming a continuation of Mount Riwa and known collectively by the Karamojans as Kogipie) known severally as Karenyang, Muruebu, Kogipie (Karamojong) or Sagat (Suk), and Sagat (Karamojong) or Kogipie (Suk) to Sagat Hill; thence in a generally northerly

² See Kenyan map sheet 74/3 (Mt. Elgon, 1:50,000).

direction by straight lines to Korkurao Hill, to the hillock known as Kokas, to the small hillock known as Lokwamor, across the Kunyao River to Nong'alitaba Hill, across the Kanyangareng River to the hill known as Kauluk, to the hillock Morumeri, to the hillock known as Sumemerr (known to the Suk as Sumaremar) and thence to the westernmost of the small hillocks known as Lewi Lewi; thence continuing by a straight line, still northerly, to the foot of the western spur of the hill known as Aoruma, and by the foot of that spur to a beacon; thence north-westerly by a straight line to a beacon at the highest point of the ridge known as Kariemakaris; thence northerly by a straight line to the hillock called Lokuka; thence by a straight line to the top of the pass known as Karamuroi (Suk) or Karithakol (Karamojong); thence down the centre of that pass to the base of the Turkana escarpment; thence the boundary follows the base of that escarpment in a generally north-westerly direction (following the base of the spurs known as Yelele Hill, Sogwas Hill, and Ougume Hill) to Mount Zulia, and the base of that mountain to its intersection with the boundary of the Angl–Egyptian Sudan.

The demarcation of the Kenya–Uganda boundary northward from the Turkana Escarpment through boundary pillars 1–180 to the Sudan tripoint is given for the Turkana District in the "District and Provinces Bill 1968" as follows:

thence [from the Turkana Escarpment] in a straight line to the pillar UK.1 on the right bank of the river Kanamuton;

thence by straight lines each terminating at a pillar on the following true bearings and for the following approximate distances successively to a pillar UK. 180—

From Beacon	To Beacon	Bearing	Distance (feet)
UK. 1	UK. 2	266°07'	2,112
UK. 2	UK. 3	338°00'	10,395
UK. 3	UK. 4	347°20'	4,482
UK. 4	UK. 5	340°24'	1,785
UK. 5	UK. 6	272°56'	7,352
UK. 6	UK. 7	345°40'	12,000
UK. 7	UK. 8	349°05'	14,429
UK. 8	UK. 9	324°31'	2,289
UK. 9	UK.10	255°11'	5,044
UK.10	UK.11	186°50'	6,123
UK.11	UK.12	259°21'	3,788
UK.12	UK.13	308°23'	7,482
UK.13	UK.14	325°56'	9,097
UK.14	UK.15	337°19'	6,478
UK.15	UK.16	316°59'	17,307

UK.16	UK.17	342°32'	4,634
UK.17	UK.18	341°49'	6,006
UK.18	UK.19	313°27'	7,521
UK.19	UK.20	10°36'	12,898
UK.20	UK.21	11°10'	3,580
UK.21	UK.22	01°26'	2,542
UK.22	UK.23	353°19'	6,900
UK.23	UK.24	344°56'	11,085
UK.24	UK.25	342°28'	6,582
UK.25	UK.26	339°02'	1,137
UK.26	UK.27	339°12'	1,522
UK.27	UK.28	320°39'	3,143
UK.28	UK.29	254°05'	4,234
UK.29	UK.30	336°57'	7,396
UK.30	UK.31	334°27'	4,336
UK.31	UK.32	299°28'	2,032
UK.32	UK.33	289°05'	1,927
UK.33	UK.34	286°38'	2,097
UK.34	UK.35	293°29'	3,665
UK.35	UK.36	337°06'	3,252
UK.36	UK.37	300°25'	2,826
UK.37	UK.38	212°32'	6,258
UK.38	UK.39	278°58'	2,741
UK.39	UK.40	267°07'	6,099

From Beacon	To Beacon	Bearing	Distance (feet)
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UK.40	UK.41	285°33'	5,819
UK.41	UK.42	340°39'	14,972
UK.42	UK.43	299°36'	3,082
UK.43	UK.44	292°40'	13,232
UK.44	UK.45	350°00'	21,063
UK.45	UK.46	355°32'	7,091
UK.46	UK.47	322°05'	3,944
UK.47	UK.48	336°20'	4,169
UK.48	UK.49	357°35'	11,141
UK.49	UK.50	01°55'	6,136
UK.50	UK.51	05°03'	3,500
UK.51	UK.52	351°33'	7,589
UK.52	UK.53	311°09'	6,896
UK.53	UK.54	331°38'	10,044
UK.54	UK.55	297°32'	4,055

UK.55	UK.56	287°46'	9,418
UK.56	UK.57	246°06'	6,710
UK.57	UK.58	337°07'	5,115
UK.58	UK.59	327°13'	4,281
UK.59	UK.60	302°27'	284
UK.60	UK.61	304°01'	5,022
UK.61	UK.62	278°07'	3,818
UK.62	UK.63	328°52'	3,609
UK.63	UK.64	358°53'	6,324
UK.64	UK.65	352°44'	9,833
UK.65	UK.66	359°35'	5,101
UK.66	UK.67	354°59'	14,818
UK.67	UK.68	339°01'	9,269
UK.68	UK.69	345°27'	13,939
UK.69	UK.70	317°01'	8,709
UK.70	UK.71	309°00'	5,641
UK.71	UK.72	350°05'	2,587
UK.72	UK.73	01°55'	13,506
UK.73	UK.74	69°27'	3,158
UK.74	UK.75	32°11'	6,726
UK.75	UK.76	351°43'	6,334
UK.76	UK.77	327°08'	7,410
UK.77	UK.78	315°44'	7,662
UK.78	UK.78A	346°43'	3,498
UK.78A	UK.78B	74°05'	658
UK.78B	UK.79	125°56'	2,607
UK.79	UK.80	84°01'	9,781
UK.80	UK.81	54°33'	4,606
UK.81	UK.82	43°42'	6,391
UK.82	UK.83	34°56'	3,320
UK.83	UK.84	05°17'	9,408
UK.84	UK.85	05°17'	8,946
UK.85	UK.86	05°18'	3,718
UK.86	UK.87	353°59'	11,720

From Beacon	To Beacon	Bearing	Distance (feet)
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UK.87	UK.88	10°53'	9,774
UK.88	UK.89	09°05'	11,610
UK.89	UK.90	310°36'	3,998
UK.90	UK.91	289°54'	13,971
UK.91	UK.92	28°52'	5,792

UK.92	UK.93	346°14'	4,695
UK.93	UK.94	318°59'	2,497
UK.94	UK.95	317°48'	9,847
UK.95	UK.96	299°12'	3,050
UK.96	UK.97	271°40'	5,820
UK.97	UK.98	257°44'	6,713
UK.98	UK.99	252°50'	4,525
UK.99	UK.100	223°44'	3,513
UK.100	UK.101	199°19'	13,434
UK.101	UK.102	270°43'	989
UK.102	UK.103	26°19'	1,348
UK.103	UK.104	10°48'	3,490
UK.104	UK.105	07°04'	4,979
UK.105	UK.106	309°06'	5,399
UK.106	UK.107	305°22'	6,438
UK.107	UK.108	315°26'	8,205
UK.108	UK.109	336°21'	6,769
UK.109	UK.110	325°27'	8,509
UK.110	UK.111	259°55'	2,194
UK.111	UK.112	246°16'	1,937
UK.112	UK.113	259°44'	907
UK.113	UK.114	209°30'	2,694
UK.114	UK.115	253°00'	766
UK.115	UK.116	357°54'	1,945
UK.116	UK.117	354°30'	1,137
UK.117	UK.118	300°39'	591
UK.118	UK.119	288°26'	1,514
UK.119	UK.120	248°08'	2,676
UK.120	UK.121	248°27'	4,067
UK.121	UK.122	249°56'	6,268
UK.122	UK.123	261°33'	1,335
UK.123	UK.124	242°43'	4,611
UK.124	UK.125	311°49'	3,476
UK.125	UK.126	77°52'	1,900
UK.126	UK.127	68°20'	5,751
UK.127	UK.128	69°32'	2,213
UK.128	UK.129	344°54'	3,325
UK.129	UK.130	13°16'	1,233
UK.130	UK.131	287°02'	5,231
UK.131	UK.132	275°51'	1,882
UK.132	UK.133	253°20'	2,900
UK.133	UK.134	321°01'	1,898
UK.134	UK.135	251°53'	2,157

UK.135	UK.136	356°51'	2,685
From Beacon	To Beacon	Bearing	Distance (feet)
UK.136	UK.137	82°40'	1,631
UK.137	UK.138	64°58'	2,355
UK.138	UK.139	33°23'	4,857
UK.139	UK.140	40°56'	4,826
UK.140	UK.141	89°35'	12,526
UK.141	UK.142	96°03'	4,216
UK.142	UK.143	00°05'	6,988
UK.143	UK.144	349°22'	1,233
UK.144	UK.145	342°13'	10,907
UK.145	UK.146	273°11'	3,880
UK.146	UK.147	268°38'	2,969
UK.147	UK.148	264°15'	7,907
UK.148	UK.149	232°46'	1,387
UK.149	UK.150	234°05'	1,326
UK.150	UK.151	199°35'	2,151
UK.151	UK.152	266°30'	6,719
UK.152	UK.153	278°30'	7,857
UK.153	UK.154	259°24'	562
UK.154	UK.155	259°18'	6,628
UK.155	UK.156	242°15'	6,590
UK.156	UK.157	285°28'	1,390
UK.157	UK.158	321°19'	224
UK.158	UK.159	05°09'	797
UK.159	UK.160	06°44'	7,960
UK.160	UK.161	64°37'	5,256
UK.161	UK.162	64°44'	4,290
UK.162	UK.163	45°39'	1,958
UK.163	UK.164	28°42'	606
UK.164	UK.165	15°43'	12,045
UK.165	UK.166	13°32'	8,426
UK.166	UK.167	04°26'	1,847
UK.167	UK.168	298°30'	12,368
UK.168	UK.169	316°07'	12,882
UK.169	UK.170	288°18'	7,280
UK.170	UK.171	355°13'	6,533
UK.171	UK.172	72°36'	11,338
UK.172	UK.173	13°47'	3,942
UK.173	UK.174	00°05'	5,313

UK.174	UK.175	333°08'	9,457
UK.175	UK.176	296°35'	6,799
UK.176	UK.177	333°39'	11,091
UK.177	UK.178	37°00'	9,935
UK.178	UK.179	331°51'	14,674
UK.179	UK.180	312°41'	4,444

thence on an approximate bearing of 307° for an approximate distance of 21,500 feet to the point of commencement. [Sudan tripoint northeast of Mount Zulia, about 4°13' N. and 33° 58' E.]

DOCUMENTATION

1. Agreement between the British and German Governments, respecting the Sultanate of Zanzibar and the opposite East African Mainland, and their Spheres of Influence, October 29–November 1, 1886. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3 v., 3rd ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), Vol. 3, pp. 882–886.
2. Agreement between the British and German Governments, respecting Africa and Heligoland, Berlin, July 1, 1890. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 899–906.
3. The Uganda Order in Council, 1902, Order of the Secretary of State. Signed April 21, 1914. Uganda Official Gazette (May 30, 1914), Vol. VII, No. 10.
4. Order in Council annexing to His Majesty's Dominions and including in Kenya colony certain Territories in Uganda Protectorate, London, February 1, 1926. British and Foreign State Papers, Vol. 123, Part I, 1926, pp. 123–125.

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