



International Boundary Study

No. 151 – April 10, 1975

Mali – Senegal Boundary

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I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Mali–Senegal boundary is approximately 260 miles long and is demarcated by rivers for more than 90 percent of the distance. The principal river is the Faleme which forms the boundary in two discontinuous segments for a total of about 203 miles. Between these segments, the boundary passes eastward of the Faleme for about 50 miles leaving a small area of Senegal on the right bank of the river.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to 1880 the area to the east of the Faleme was administered as an integral part of Senegal. On September 6, 1880, a decree created the territory of Upper Senegal to the east of the Faleme, and authority for the new entity was vested in a military officer subordinate to the Governor of Senegal. In 1890, the name of the territory was changed from Upper Senegal to French Sudan, and administratively it came under the general direction of the Governor of Senegal. Two years later the French Sudan was removed from the administration of the Governor of Senegal, and in 1893 military control in the French Sudan was replaced by a civilian administration headed by a governor.

The federation of French West Africa was constituted by decree on June 16, 1895, and included both Senegal and French Sudan, along with Ivory Coast and French Guinea. The Governor of Senegal also was made the ex officio Governor General of the new federation. French Sudan gave up the district of Bakel and part of Bambouk, immediately to the east of the Faleme, to Senegal, and Faranah to French Guinea.

Article 3 of the decree of June 16, 1895, made provision for a study of the boundary between Senegal and French Sudan. The Governor General established a boundary commission on November 10, 1895, which met the following day at Kayes. The recommendations of the commission were included in an arrete signed by the Governor General on December 24, 1895, and put into effect on January 1, 1896. The arrete of December 24, 1895, is the basis for the present Mali–Senegal boundary.

In accordance with a decree of October 17, 1899, a number of districts of the French Sudan were transferred to French Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Dahomey. The remainder of French Sudan then consisted of the territory of Upper Senegal and Middle Niger and, at first, two military territories; later there were three military territories with headquarters at Tombouctou, Bobo Dioulasso, and Zinder respectively. The territory of Upper Senegal and Middle Niger was made a dependency of Senegal administered by a civil delegate of the Governor residing at Kayes.

By a decree of October 1, 1902, the Governor of Senegal ceased to be the ipso facto Governor General. Also, the names of Upper Senegal and Middle Niger were changed to

Senegambia and Niger, and the entity was placed under a permanent delegate resident at Kayes responsible to the Governor General.

In 1904 the colony of Upper Senegal and Niger was organized from the territory of Senegambia and Niger. The military territory of Zinder was detached from the colony in 1911 and placed directly under the Governor General. A decree of March 1, 1919, detached various districts from Upper Senegal and Niger to form the new colony of Upper Volta. First used during the period from 1890 to 1899, the name of French Sudan replaced that of Upper Senegal and Niger in 1920.

In 1946 both French Sudan and Senegal were made overseas territories within the French Union, and in 1958 they became autonomous members of the French Community. Sudan and Senegal joined to form the Federation of Mali on April 4, 1959. Senegal seceded from the federation and inaugurated an independent republic on August 20, 1960. The Republic of Sudan became the Republic of Mali on September 19, 1960.

III. ALIGNMENT

Prior to the Federation of French West Africa, the French Sudan–Senegal boundary followed the Faleme. The arrete of December 24, 1895, modified the boundary to include a small part of Bambouk in Senegal to the east of the Faleme. The territory in Bambouk was to extend from the Sanon Kole to Bountou,¹ including Boundou² and Domaio in Senegal. The boundary then was to continue along the middle bed of the Faleme and its tributary, the Dialo–Ko or Balin–Ko, to the Fouta Djallon.

The Mali–Senegal boundary is delimited as follows:

Southward from the Mauritania tripoint located at the confluence of the Senegal and Faleme, the boundary follows the latter river upstream for about 35 miles to its junction with a left-bank tributary known as the Sanon Kole. It follows the Sanon Kole for 23 miles, utilizes undemarcated straight-line segments and minor drainage divides for 21 miles, and continues along the Goumbamba for 6 miles to its confluence with the Faleme. For a total distance of 168 miles, the boundary then follows the Faleme upstream until it reaches a junction with the Balin–Ko, and then the Balin–Ko upstream for 7 miles to the Guinea tripoint at approximately 12°25' north latitude. The location of the tripoint was determined by a French decree of February 27, 1915, which established the eastern sector of the French Guinea–Senegal boundary.

¹ To the north of Bountou (Mali), the present-day Mali–Senegal boundary follows the Goumbamba to its confluence with the Faleme.

² East of the Faleme in Senegal, Boundou also is known as Bountou at the present time.

MAPS

Carte de l'Afrique de l'Ouest au 1/200,000: Institute Geographique National (France); published 1956-71; sheets ND-28-XVII (Bakel), ND-29-XIII (Kayes), ND-28-XII (Dalafi), ND-29-VII (Kossanto), and ND-29-1 (Kenieba).

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