



International Boundary Study

No. 160 – February 7, 1977

Indonesia – Papua New Guinea Boundary

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INDONESIA - PAPUA NEW GUINEA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Indonesia - Papua New Guinea boundary is approximately 885 kilometers (550 miles) long. From north to south across the island of New Guinea, it follows the meridian of 141° east longitude, the thalweg of the Fly, and the meridian of 141° 01'10" east longitude to the mouth of the Bensbach. The boundary is demarcated by 14 meridian monuments.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Portuguese set up trading posts in what is the present-day territory of Indonesia as early as the 16th century. Beginning in 1602, the Dutch slowly established themselves in the islands later known as the Netherlands East Indies.

A proclamation in 1828 claimed for the Dutch Crown that part of the island of New Guinea described somewhat vaguely as located between the meridian of 141° east longitude and the Cape of Good Hope in the northwest.¹ Twenty years later, a Dutch decree extended the rule of the Sultan of Tidore to all territory between the 141st meridian in the south and Cap Bonpland (Tandjung Djar), east of Humbolt Bay (Teluk Jos Sudarso), in the north. The Sultan of Tidore received an annual stipend from the Dutch East India Company for the implementation of its design for the territory, which under his rule was in effect a Dutch protectorate.

In 1884 a British protectorate was declared along the southern coast of New Guinea east of the Dutch boundary. During the same year, Germany annexed the northern coast east of the Dutch boundary.

The London Agreement of April 1885 delimited a boundary between the British and German territories by a series of lines from the north coast near Mitre Rock on the 8th parallel of south latitude to the intersection of the 5th parallel south latitude and the 141st meridian of east longitude.

The United Kingdom and the Netherlands signed a convention on May 16, 1895, delimiting a boundary between their possessions on New Guinea as follows:²

ART I. The boundary between the British and Netherland possessions in New Guinea starts from the southern coast of the said island at the middle of the mouth of

¹ Paul W. van der Veur. *Search for New Guinea's Boundaries*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1966, pp. 1 and 6 - 12. Also see: Paul W. van der Veur. *Documents and Correspondence on New Guinea's Boundaries*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1966, p. 2.

² Convention between Great Britain and the Netherlands defining the Boundaries between the British and Netherland Possessions in the Island of New Guinea. The Hague, May 16, 1895 [Ratifications exchanged at The Hague, July 20, 1895]. *British Foreign and State Papers* (BFSP), Vol. 87 (1894 - 95), pp. 18 - 21.

the Bensbach River, situated at about 141°1'47.9" of east longitude (meridian of Greenwich).

II. The boundary proceeds to the north, following the meridian which passes through the said mouth, up to the point where that meridian meets the Fly River.

III. From that point the waterway ("thalweg") of the Fly River forms the boundary up to the 141st degree of east longitude.

IV. The 141st degree of east longitude after this forms the boundary up to the point of intersection of the boundaries of the British, Netherland, and German possessions.

Previously administered by a chartered company, the German Imperial Government assumed direct control of German New Guinea in 1899. Following World War I, the British Government, on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia, accepted a mandate from the League of Nations in 1920 for governing the Territory of New Guinea. The protectorate of British New Guinea was annexed outright by the United Kingdom in 1888.

Following passage of the Papua Act of 1905, British New Guinea became the Territory of Papua and was placed under Australian administration in September 1906. The Papua and New Guinea Act of 1949 formally approved the placing of the mandate of New Guinea under the International Trusteeship system, and it also confirmed the administrative union of New Guinea and Papua under the title of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

Except for Netherlands New Guinea (Irian Jaya), the Netherlands East Indies became independent as Indonesia on December 28, 1949. Under an agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands,³ administration of Irian Jaya was temporarily turned over to the United Nations in October 1962, and in May of the following year, the territory was placed under Indonesian administration. During 1969 the people of Irian Jaya voted in eight consultative assemblies to remain in Indonesia, and on November 19, 1969, the General Assembly took note of the Secretary - General's report on the vote of the consultative assemblies.

In 1972 the name of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea was changed to Papua New Guinea. Self-government was achieved by Papua New Guinea on December 1, 1973, and the state became fully independent on September 16, 1975.

³ Signed at the United Nations in New York on August 15, 1962. For text, see U.N. Doc. A/5170, August 20, 1962, Annex. See also G.A. Res. 1752 (XVII). For a brief summary of the events, see II M. Whiteman, *Digest of International Law*, 1108 - 09 (1963).

III. ALIGNMENT

Article I of the agreement of February 12, 1973, between Australia and Indonesia determines the alignment of the Indonesia - Papua New Guinea boundary as follows:

The boundary between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea on the island of Irian (New Guinea) shall be more precisely demarcated as follows:

- (a) In the north the boundary is the meridian of Longitude 141° East extending southwards from the point of the intersection of the meridian with the mean low water line on the northern coast, located at Latitude $2^{\circ}35'37''$ South, to the point of its most northerly intersection with the waterway ("thalweg") of the Fly River and that meridian shall be deemed to lie along the geodesic lines successively linking the markers, MM₁, MM₂, MM₃, MM₄, MM₅, MM₆, MM₇, MM₈, MM₉, and MM₁₀ established by the Joint Survey and indicated on the chart annexed to this Agreement.
- (b) From the point of the most northerly intersection of the meridian of Longitude 141° East with the waterway ("thalweg") of the Fly River (at present located at Latitude $6^{\circ}19'24''$ South) the boundary lies along that waterway to the point of its most southerly intersection with the meridian of Longitude $141^{\circ}01'10''$ East (at present located at Latitude $6^{\circ}53'33''$ South).
- (c) From the last-mentioned point the boundary is the meridian of Longitude $141^{\circ}01'10''$ East extending southwards to the point of Latitude $9^{\circ}08'0''$ South (Point B3 shown on the chart annexed to this Agreement) and that meridian shall be deemed to lie along the geodesic lines successively linking the markers MM₁₁, MM₁₂, MM₁₃, and MM₁₄ established by the Joint Survey and indicated on the chart annexed to this Agreement.

Coordinates of Boundary Points

Station
No.

C1 2°35'37" 141° 00' 00"

MERIDIAN MONUMENTS (MARKERS)

MM

1.	2° 35' 39"	141° 00' 00"
2.	2° 40' 42"	141° 00' 00"
3.	3° 01' 27"	141° 00' 00"
4.	3° 14' 02"	141° 00' 00"
5.	3° 55' 22"	141° 00' 00"
6.	4° 08' 41"	141° 00' 00"
7.	4° 54' 54"	141° 00' 00"
8.	5° 38' 33"	141° 00' 00"
9.	5° 52' 39"	141° 00' 00"
10.	6° 19' 32"	141° 00' 00"
11.	6° 53' 27"	141° 01' 10"
12.	7° 49' 19"	141° 01' 10"
13.	8° 25' 45"	141° 01' 10"
14.	9° 07' 37"	141° 01' 10"

B3 9°08'08" 141° 01' 10"

FLY RIVER INTERSECTION

North	6°19'24"	141° 01' 10"
South	6°53'33"	141° 01' 10"

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared by the Office of the Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, in accordance with provisions of the Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-16.

Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Office of the Geographer, Room 8742, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520 (Telephone: 632-2021 or 632-2022).