



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 162 – November 8, 1977**

## **Argentina – Bolivia Boundary**

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**The Geographer  
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## ARGENTINA – BOLIVIA BOUNDARY

### I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Argentina–Bolivia boundary extends for approximately 832 kilometers (517 miles) between the tripoint with Chile on Cerro Zapaleri and the Paraguayan tripoint on the thalweg of the Rio Pilcomayo. It follows a number of geodesic lines between mountain peaks, the 22nd parallel, and rivers such as the Rio San Jaun del Oro, Rio Bermejo, Rio Grande de Tarija, and Rio Pilcomayo. The boundary is demarcated by pillars or rivers throughout its entire length.

### II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Article 20 of a treaty signed by Argentina and Bolivia on May 2, 1865, provided for a special convention following a report by commissioners concerning the two countries' common boundary. The Argentine approval reserved that country's claim to the territory of Tarija. A treaty signed on July 9, 1868, amplified the provisions of Article 20.

A protocol of February 27, 1869, agreed to cancel Article 20 of the treaty of July 9, 1868, and proposed a settlement of the boundary by a special convention after the Paraguayan War, with the arbitration of difficulties by a friendly country.

A protocol of June 11, 1888, fixed the 22nd parallel eastward to its intersection with the Rio Pilcomayo as a provisional boundary in the Gran Chaco.

On May 10, 1889, a boundary treaty was signed at Buenos Aires. It was approved by Bolivia on September 11, 1889, and approved with modifications by Argentina on November 12, 1891. Bolivia accepted the modifications on September 15, 1892. The treaty with modifications was ratified by Bolivia on January 2, 1893, and ratifications were exchanged on March 10, 1893.

The delimitation of the Argentina–Bolivia boundary in accordance with the treaty of May 10, 1889, including the modifications of the Argentine Congress, is given as follows:<sup>1</sup>

ART. I. The definitive limits between the Republic of Bolivia and the Argentine Republic shall be fixed as follows:--

In the territory of Atacama the Cordillera of the same name shall be followed from the head of the Diablo Pass towards the north-west by the eastern beginning of the same Cordillera to where begins the Zapalegui mountain ridge; from this point the line shall follow as far as the Esmoraca mountain ridge, following the highest summits up to the

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<sup>1</sup> Treaty between the Argentine Republic and Bolivia for the Delimitation of the Frontier between the Two Countries. Buenos Aires, May 10, 1889. *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 106 (1913), pp. 823–825.

western head of the La Quiaca Pass and descending by this pass it shall follow it to the point at which it meets the River Yanapalpa, and shall continue its direction from west to east in a straight line as far as the summit of the mountain of Porongal; from this point it shall descend to meet the western source of the river of that name (Porongal) and shall follow the waters of this river as far as its confluence with the Bermejo, opposite the town of that name. From this point the line shall descend the water of the same river, called Bermejo, as far as its confluence with the Rio Grande de Tarija, a place known as the Juntas de San Antonio; from here it shall reascend by the waters of the Tarija River to the point at which the River Itau debouches into it; and thence by the waters of the said river as far as the 22nd parallel, which parallel it shall follow as far as the waters of the Pilcomayo River.

Modification of 1891 of the Foregoing Treaty.

The Senate and Chamber of Deputies of the Argentine nation assembled in Congress, &c., sanction with the force of law:--

ART. I. The Treaty defining the limits between the Argentine Republic and the Republic of Bolivia, signed in this capital on the 10th of May, 1889, by the Plenipotentiaries of the respective Governments, is approved, with modifications, in the following terms, of the wording of the first Article thereof:--

ART. I. The definitive limits between the Argentine Republic and the Republic of Bolivia shall be fixed thus: By the west the line which joins the highest peaks of the Andean Cordillera from the extreme north of the limit between the Argentine Republic and Chile as far as its intersection with the 23rd parallel; thence it shall follow the said parallel as far as its intersection with its intersection with the highest point of the Zapalegui range; from this point the line shall continue until it meets the Esmoraca range, following by the highest peaks as far as the western head of the La Quiaca Pass, and descending by this pass it shall follow it to the point at which it meets the River Yanapalpa, and shall continue its direction from west to east in a straight line as far as the summit of the mountain of Porongal; from this point it shall descend to meet the western source of the river of that name (Porongal) and shall follow the waters of this river as far as its confluence with the Bermejo, opposite the town of that name. From this point the line shall descend the water of the same river, called Bermejo, as far as its confluence with the Rio Grande de Tarija, a place known as the Juntas de San Antonio; and from here it shall reascend by the waters of the Tarija River to the point at which the River Itau debouches into it; and thence by the waters of the said river as far as the 22nd parallel, which parallel it shall follow as far as the waters of the Pilcomayo River.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Documentation relative to the demarcation of the boundary between 1894 and 1939 is contained in the *Boundaries of the Latin American Republics, An Annotated List of Documents, 1493- 1943*, by Alexander Marchant, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944, State Department Publication 2082, Inter-American Series 24.

A treaty signed by Argentina and Bolivia on July 9, 1925, determines the present alignment of the boundary except for the sector in the Rio Pilcomayo. This treaty was to settle the questions of interpretation which had arisen in the application of the boundary treaty signed on May 10, 1889, and modified in 1891. Although the treaty was approved by Bolivia on July 11, 1925, it was not approved by Argentina until September 7, 1938. Ratifications were exchanged at Buenos Aires on October 11, 1938.

Bolivia and Paraguay signed a treaty on October 10, 1938, which stated that their common boundary ended "in the thalweg of the Rio Pilcomayo at 62°37'19" longitude west of Greenwich." On December 13, 1956, an instrument of ratification was signed by Argentina and Bolivia for a protocol of February 10, 1941, to the boundary treaty of July 9, 1925. The protocol stated that the Argentina–Bolivia boundary between the intersection of the 22nd parallel and the Rio Pilcomayo (near D'Orbigny) followed the course of the Rio Pilcomayo to La Esmeralda (at the tripoint with Paraguay).

### **III. ALIGNMENT**

Article I of the treaty of July 9, 1925, delimits the Argentina–Bolivia boundary from the Chilean tripoint on Cerro Zapaleri to the Rio Pilcomayo as follows:<sup>3</sup>

ART. I. The Argentine nation agrees with the Republic of Bolivia to fix as the definitive boundary of the two countries the line which, starting from Zapaleri or Sapalegui Hill (5,649 metres), in a north-north-east direction, reaches Brajma Hill, goes on to Tinte Hill (5,860 metres), and continues by the hills Negro (5,680 metres), Vilama (5,210 metres), Bayo (5,490 metres), Alcoak (5,130 metres) and Panizos (5,360 metres). From Panizos the line continues by the Chilena Peak and the Hornillos Ridge to Limitajo Hill (5,200 metres). From Limitajo Hill it will continue along the summits which form a chain north-north-east, passing Cuevas Hill (5,490 metres) and Panizos Hill (5,494 metres), until it reaches the summit of the Ramada (5,540 metres). From thence a straight line will be drawn to the confluence of the rivers San Antonio and San Juan, whence it will continue along the course of the latter till it joins the river Mojinete. From this point another line will be drawn to the summit of Branqui Hill, whence it will go to that of Vaqueros, and from there to that of Grande Hill; from the extreme south of this peak another line will be drawn to that of Condor Hill, so that Sarcari remains in Bolivian territory. From Condor Hill the line will continue east to Tablon Hill in the Piscuno Heights. From Tablon Hill a straight line will be drawn towards the south-east to boundary post No. 1 of the valley of Huajra.

From the valley of Huajra it will continue by the line of boundary posts already placed in the gorges of Cuartel and La Quiaca, following the latter till it meets the outlet of the Sansana Gorge. From this confluence a straight line will be drawn to the western

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<sup>3</sup> Treaty settling the Boundary between the Argentine Republic and Bolivia. La Paz, July 9, 1925. *British Foreign and State Papers*, Vol. 137 (1934), pp. 883–885.

commencement of the Raya Gorge, along which it will descend till it joins the Yanalpa River. From this point another straight line will be drawn from west to east to the summit of Mecoya Hill (4,211 metres). From Mecoya Hill the line will descend towards the sources of the Mecoyita Stream, whose course it will follow to the Santa Rosa River, along which it will descend till its confluence with the Santa Victoria River, these two forming the Condado, and will continue along the latter till it flows into the Bermejo River, more or less opposite the village of the same name.

From that point the boundary line will descend along the waters of the Bermejo River till it joins the Grande de Tarija River at the junction of San Antonio. From there the line will rise along the waters of the Tarija River till it meets the mouth of the Itau River, whose course it will follow till it touches the 22° parallel, continuing along this parallel to the San Roque Stream. From this point it will descend along that stream and the Yacuiba Stream until its confluence with the Pocitos Stream, and following the course of the latter to parallel 22° in such a way that the town of Yacuiba remains under Bolivian sovereignty in the triangular zone formed by the afore-mentioned streams and parallel 22°.

From the point at which the Pocitos Stream crosses parallel 22° the line will continue along this parallel as already drawn as far as the Pilcomayo, which is the north-east boundary of the Argentine Republic in the Chaco.

Article I of the protocol of February 10, 1941, determines the boundary in the Rio Pilcomayo from the 22nd parallel to the Paraguayan tripoint as follows:

Article 1. The definitive frontier between the Argentine Republic and the Republic of Bolivia in the section of the Pilcomayo River between D'Orbigny and Esmeralda, is the present course of that river [thalweg], in accordance with the survey made in the year 1940 by the commission for the demarcation of the Argentine–Bolivian boundaries, as is recorded in the map of that survey on the scale 1:30,000, signed by the demarcation experts and the plenipotentiaries, and which shall be considered as a part of the present protocol.

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).