



International Boundary Study

No. 169 – August 15, 1979

Cote D'Ivoire (*Ivory Coast*) — Burkina Faso (*Upper Volta*) Boundary

(Country Codes: IV-UV)

**The Geographer
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Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

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BURKINA FASO (UPPER VOLTA) – COTE D’IVOIRE (IVORY COAST) BOUNDARY

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I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Ivory Coast - Upper Volta boundary extends for approximately 584 kilometers (363 miles) between the Ghanaian tripoint in the Volta Noire (Black Volta) and the tripoint with Mali on the Leraba Occidentale. The line is undemarcated except by rivers, which comprise about two-thirds of its length. For much of the remainder of the boundary, it crosses a succession of small streams and low hills or ridges and, in places, follows straight-line segments and minor drainage divides.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In August 1889, French settlements in the Ivory Coast were placed under a Resident, subordinate to the Lieutenant Governor of the Southern Rivers (Les Rivières du Sud).¹ The colony of the Ivory Coast was established on March 10, 1893, and was included in the federation of French West Africa constituted on June 16, 1895. A French decree of October 17, 1899, transferred a number of administrative units from the French Sudan (Soudan Français) to other members of French West Africa, including Bouna, Kong, and Odiéne to the Ivory Coast.

The French Minister of Colonies reported to the President of the Republic on February 12, 1903, that the "the information transmitted by the Governor General of French West Africa on the political and ethnographic status of the Lobi territories belonging to the Ivory Coast show that it would be desirable to incorporate this area into the Second Military territory" [with headquarters at Bobo Dioulasso, it was part of the Territories of Senegambia - Niger].

The President of the French Republic then decreed, also on February 12, 1903, the following:

Article 1. The insurgent villages of the Lobis, Birifous, and Dagaris, located in the northern part of the Bouna District (Ivory Coast) shall be attached to the Second Military Territory.

The new northeastern boundary of the Ivory Coast shall be formed by a line beginning at the point where the Bouna - Ona road intersects the Vta, north of Tantama; following the road to the Birifou village of Honeki and then a straight line from Honeki, half way between Sagona and Dokita, passing between the villages of Kalamon and Tihini, north of Kouroukoumby, then, half way between Yologo and Tampouma, rejoining the present boundary south of Selika.

¹ The Lieutenant Governor of the Southern Rivers was under the authority of the Governor of Senegal.

By a decree of March 1, 1919, the colony of Upper Volta was constituted by detaching from the colony of Upper Senegal and Niger (Haut Senegal and Niger), formerly known as French Sudan,² the following cercles: Bobo Dioulasso, Dedougou, Fada, Gaoua, Ouahigouya, Ouagadougou, and Say. A decree of September 5, 1932, abolished the colony of Upper Volta and divided it among the Ivory Coast, French Sudan, and Niger. The cercles of Bobo Dioulasso, Gaoua, Kaya, Dedougou (eastern part), Koudougou, Ouayadougou, and Tenkodogo were added to the Ivory Coast. On July 13, 1937, the cercles were grouped into a dependency of the Ivory Coast known as the Upper Ivory Coast (Haute Cote d' Ivoire) under a senior administrator. Headquarters were first located at Ouagadougou and then later at Bobo Dioulasso.

Following World War II, Ivory Coast became an overseas territory of the French Union; and on December 4, 1958, it became an autonomous republic within the French Community. In April 1959, the federation of French West Africa ceased its legal existence, and the Republic of Ivory Coast was proclaimed independent on August 7, 1960, under the terms of an accord with France.

On September 4, 1947, Upper Volta was reconstituted and became an overseas territory within the French Union. It became a member of the French Community, as the Volta Republic, on December 11, 1958. The name of the Volta Republic was changed to the Republic of Upper Volta on March 2, 1959, and the state was declared independent on August 5, 1960.

III. ALIGNMENT

The tripoint with Ghana is located on the thalweg of the Volta Noire at approximately 9°29'30"N.³ From the tripoint, the Ivory Coast - Upper Volta boundary⁴ first utilizes a small stream for a short distance and then extends southwestward to about 9°24'40"N. and 2°47'30"W. It next turns northwestward, following successively low hills south of Kpuere, a straight-line segment, the Koulbi and one of its tributaries, and two straight-line segments to about 9°47'40"N. and 3°0'30"W.

The boundary continues generally northwestward, crossing the Kolongo river and then proceeding on an irregular course between villages to a small northward-flowing stream, which it follows to the Kanba. It continues upstream along the Kanba for about 15

² Upper Senegal and Niger was renamed French Sudan on December 4, 1920, which was the second time the colony had been known by the latter appellation.

³ In an enclosure to notes exchanged by the United Kingdom and France on May 11 and 15, 1905, it was stated that the boundary between British and French territories in the Volta Noire sector followed the thalweg.

⁴ The alignment of the boundary is taken from the French Institut Geographique National (IGN) topographic map series at a scale of 1:200,000, with individual sheets published between 1964 and 1975. The IGN sheets from east to west are as follows: NC-30-IX-X (Tehini - Bouna), NC-30-VIII (Kong), NC-30-XIV (Banfora), and NC-30-XIII (Nielle).

kilometers (9 miles) and then turns first northwestward and then northward to join another tributary of the Kanba. The boundary follows this tributary upstream to its source and then continues westward along an irregular course between villages, crossing various small streams and in places utilizing drainage divides and short segments of streams, to the Keleworo river.

The boundary follows the Keleworo upstream for approximately 34 kilometers (21 miles). It then passes southwestward along minor drainage divides to the Kodoun river. The remainder of the boundary, starting with the Kodoun, consists of rivers. In succession, the boundary follows the Kodoun downstream for about 25 kilometers (16 miles) to the Komoe, the Komoe upstream for about 58 kilometers (36 miles) to the Leraba, the Leraba upstream for about 165 kilometers (103 miles) to the Leraba Occidentale, and the Leraba Occidentale upstream for about 75 kilometers (47 miles) to the tripoint with Mali at approximately 10°25'12"N. and 5°30'48"W. The tripoint is located at the junction of the Danboro and Zagoundouba, which combine to form the Leraba Occidentale.⁵

IV. PRESENT SITUATION

A number of attempts have been made by the Department of State to obtain detailed information on the precise alignment of the boundary between Ivory Coast and Upper Volta since they gained independence in 1960. Efforts to obtain the official decrees establishing the boundary from the Governments of the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, and France have been unsuccessful. The two African countries have not indicated what they consider to be their de facto boundary. There are no known disputed sectors along the boundary.

⁵ The rivers referred to in this study as the Danboro and Zagoundouba are not named on the Nielle sheet. Other sources indicate that the eastward-flowing river is named the Danboro and the southward-flowing river is the Zagoundouba.

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 from the Office of the Geographer, Room 8742, Department of State, Washington, D.C. (Telephone: 632-2021 or 632-2022).