



International Boundary Study

Series A

Limits in the Seas

No. 3 – January 23, 1970

Ireland

Straight Baselines: Ireland

(Country Codes: EI)

**The Geographer
Office of the Geographer
Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

Series A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 3

STRAIGHT BASELINES: IRELAND

This research document of the Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State is intended for background use only. This document does not represent an official acceptance by the United States Government of the line or lines represented on the charts or, necessarily, of the specific principles involved, if any, in the original drafting of the lines. Additional copies of the studies may be requested by mail from the Geographer, Department of State, Washington, D. C. 20520 or by phone (Telephone: 63-22021 or 63-22022).

STRAIGHT BASELINES: IRELAND

The Irish Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 1959, which came into effect on October 1, 1959 stated:

" ...

2.- For the purposes of the Act, the territorial seas of the State shall be that portion of the sea which lies between the baseline and the outer limit of the territorial seas.

3.- For the purposes of this Act, the outer limit of the territorial seas is the line every point of which is at a distance of three nautical miles from the nearest point of the baseline.

4.- (1) Save as otherwise provided, the baseline is the low-water mark-

(a) on the coast of the mainland or of any island, or

(b) on any low-tide elevation situated wholly or partly at a distance not exceeding three nautical miles from the mainland or an island.

(2) The Government may by order prescribe straight baselines in relation to any part of the national territory and the closing lines of any bay or mouth of a river, and any line so prescribed shall be taken as the baseline.

(3) The Government may by order revoke or amend an order under subsection (2).

5.- The internal or inland waters of the State shall extend to all sea areas which lie on the landward side of the baseline of the territorial seas and all such areas shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the State to the same extent in all respects as its ports and harbours, bays, lakes and rivers, subject to any rights of innocent passage for foreign ships in those sea areas which previously had been considered as part of the territorial seas or the high seas.

..."

To supplement this act, the Irish Government issued Statutory Instrument No. 173, effective January 1, 1960, delimiting straight baselines for the State. The Act reads as follows:

S. I. No. 173 of 1959**MARITIME JURISDICTION ACT, 1959 (STRAIGHT BASELINES)****ORDER, 1959**

The Government, in exercise of the power conferred on them by subsection (2) of section 4 of the Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 1959 (No. 22 of 1959), hereby order as follows:

1. This Order may be cited as the Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 1959 (Straight Baselines) Order, 1959.
2. This Order shall come into operation on the 1st day of January 1960.
3. Straight lines joining in succession the points the coordinates of which are given in a particular Part of the Schedule shall be straight baselines for the purposes of the Maritime Jurisdiction Act 1959.

SCHEDULE TERMINAL POINTS OF STRAIGHT BASELINES

Reference Number	Co-ordinates of Points		
	North Latitude	West Longitude	Location
Part A			
1	55° 22.6'	7° 24.2'	Scart Rocks, Malin Head
2	5° 15.4'	7° 47.1'	Melmore Head
3.	55° 13.7'	7° 58.9'	Horn Head
4.	55° 12.4'	8° 09.5'	Inishbeg
5.	55° 09.6'	8° 17.0'	Bloody Foreland
6.	55° 04.5'	8° 28.9'	Stag Rocks
7.	55° 00.8'	8° 33.8'	Rinrawros Point, Aran Island
8.	54° 42.0'	8° 48.2'	Malinmore Head
Part B			
9.	54° 39.6'	8° 47.3'	West entrance to Malinbeg Bay
10.	54° 17.8'	9° 03.3'	Lenadoon Point
11.	54° 19.7'	9° 20.5'	Downpatrick Head

 Part C

12.	54° 19.8'	9° 51.9'	Kid Island, Broadhaven
13.	54° 18.6'	9° 59.9'	Rocky Island, Erris Head
14.	54° 16.9'	10° 05.6'	Eagle Island
15.	54° 03.7'	10° 21.0'	Blacksod Bay, (Rocks to S.W. of Black Rock)
16.	53° 58.3'	10° 16.5'	Carrickakin, Achill Island
17.	53° 36.3'	10° 19.2'	Kimmeen Rocks, Inishark
18.	53° 24.0'	10° 14.5'	Slyne Head
19.	53° 08.8'	9° 51.6'	Eoragh Island, Aran Islands
20.	53° 08.4'	9° 50.9'	South Island, Aran Islands

 Part D

21.	53° 05.2'	9° 38.5'	S.E. corner Inishmore, Aran Islands
22.	53° 03.9'	9° 37.0'	Inishmaan, Aran Islands
23.	53° 02.8'	9° 33.3'	Inisheer, Aran Islands
24.	52° 56.4'	9° 28.5'	Cregga More
25.	52° 43.8'	9° 38.2'	Donegal Point

 Part E

26.	52° 33.6'	9° 56.3'	Loop Head
27.	52° 25.2'	9° 56.8'	Kerry Head
28.	52° 17.6'	10° 10.4'	Deelick Point

 Part F

29.	52° 10.9'	10° 28.4'	Sybil Point
30.	52° 08.3'	10° 34.5'	Inishtooskert, Blasket Islands
31.	52° 07.7'	10° 35.7'	Carrigduff, Blasket Islands

32.	52° 04.6'	10° 41.0'	Tearaght Rocks West, Inistearaght
33.	52° 01.3'	10° 41.3'	Great Foze Rock
34.	51° 45.8'	10° 32.7'	Washerwoman Rock, Great Skellig
35.	51° 35.5'	10° 18.5'	Gull Rock, Dursey Island
36.	51° 34.2'	10° 14.8'	Calf Rock, Dursey Island
37.	51° 26.9'	9° 49.2'	Mizen Head
38.	51° 25.2'	9° 30.8'	Bream Point, Cape Clear
39.	51° 28.0'	9° 13.4'	The Stags, Toe Head
40.	51° 31.8'	8° 57.2'	Galley Head
41.	51° 34.2'	8° 42.7'	Seven Heads
42.	51° 36.3'	8° 32.0'	Old Head of Kinsale
43.	51° 49.5'	7° 59.0'	Ballycotton Island
44.	51° 52.9'	7° 51.2'	Capel Island, Knockadoon Head
	45.51° 56.5'	7° 42.4'	Ram Head
46.	51° 59.6'	7° 34.6'	The Rogue, Mine Head
47.	52° 07.4'	6° 55.7'	Hook Head
48.	52° 06.5'	6° 37.4'	Great Saltee Island (Southernmost Point)
49.	52° 09.2'	6° 24.6'	Black Rock, Carnsore
50.	52° 10.3'	6° 21.8'	Carnsore Point

GIVEN under the Official Seal of the
Government, this 20th day of October, 1959.
SEAN F. LEMASS
Taoiseach.

A small scale map of the Irish baseline and straight baselines is attached.

The fifty points specified in the Order are situated: a) twenty-one on capes of the mainland, b) an equal number on islands or islets and c) the remaining eight points on rocks. No low-tide elevations or drying rocks have been utilized. All straight baselines begin and terminate on the mainland of Ireland with a single exception. Point No. 20 is on South Island of the Aran Islands. The next point, No. 21 comprises the southeast corner of adjacent Inishmore island in the same group. Because of geographic configuration and the lack of gain in the sea, a line has not been drawn to connect these two points. In effect,

however, this means that the continuous baseline is drawn so as to enclose Galway Bay within the Irish internal waters. The low water line of Inishmore effectively joins the points.

The Irish Government has applied the straight baseline principle in a unique manner. Six straight baselines alternate with seven normal baselines utilizing the low water line of the mainland or of adjacent islands. The eastern coast, on the Irish Sea, which is generally only locally indented and which lacks offshore islands, has not been supplemented by straight baselines. In the north, the coast between the boundary fjord (Lough Foyle) and Malin Head, a point on Ireland's North Point, forms the baseline. To the west and south, however, a series of baselines stretch to the southeast cape of Ireland. The straight baselines have replaced the low water line for more than 90% of this part of the coast. The individual segments of the Irish straight baseline measure approximately as follows:

Line	Length in Nautical Miles	Remarks
1-2	15.00	Enclose Lough Swilly
2-3	7.00	Enclose Sheep Haven (bay)
3-4	6.25	
4-5	5.00	Island studded coast
5-6	8.50	same
6-7	4.60	same
7-8	20.60	Enclose Baylagh Bay
Total	66.96*	
9-10	23.8	Enclose Donegal Bay
10-11	10.3	Enclose Killala Bay
Total	44.1*	
12-13	4.8	Island studded coast
13-14	3.6	same
14-15	16.2	same
15-	6.1	same
16-17	22.2	Enclose Clew Bay
17-18	12.6	Island studded coast
18-19	20.9	Same; serves to close Galway Bay on north
19-20	.5	
Sub-total	76.9*	
21-22	1.5	
22-23	2.4	
23-24	7.6	Closes Galway Bay on the south
24-25	13.3	
Sub-total	24.8*	
Total	101.7*	
26-27	8.25	Closes Shannon River estuary
27-28	11.40	Enclose Tralee Bay and two others
Total	19.65*	

29-30	4.50	Island studded coast
30-31	1.00	
31-32	4.50	
32-33	3.30	
33-34	16.30	Enclose Dingle Bay
34-35	13.60	Fjorted coast
35-36	2.70	
36-37	17.60	same
37-38	11.75	Southwest corner of Ireland
38-39	11.20	
39-40	11.00	
40-41	9.40	
41-42	7.10	Enclose Courtmacsherry Bay
42-43	24.25	Closes Cork embayment
43-44	6.10	
44-45	6.50	Enclose Youghal Bay
45-46	5.90	
46-47	25.20	Longest straight baseline; enclose Dungarvan Bay and Waterford harbor
47-48	11.30	
48-49	8.25	
49-50	2.10	
Total	240.90	
Grand Total	474.20	

Only two of the 44 straight baseline segments exceed 24 nautical miles; the one between points 42 and 43 and second between 46 and 47. The average length of the 44 segments is slightly more than 10.75 nautical miles.

The western coast of Ireland is deeply indented and the closing lines are demonstrative of this fact. The southern coast, while less indented than the west, contains a number of bays and several of the baselines close off these bodies of water as internal waters. In addition, two deep indentations exist at Cork and at Waterford. Unlike the Norwegian example, however, the Irish straight baselines have not, in every instance, utilized the points farthest from the shore.