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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

Series A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 14

*STRAIGHT BASELINES: BURMA*

The Geographer  
Office of the Geographer  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

STRAIGHT BASELINES: BURMA

The Government of Burma, on November 15, 1968, declared that the territorial sea of the state would henceforth extend 12 nautical miles seaward from straight baselines. The text of the decree is as follows:

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Rangoon, the 15th November, 1968

The following declaration by the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of the Union of Burma is published for general information:

WHEREAS International Law has always recognised that the sovereignty of a State extends to a belt of sea adjacent to its coast, AND WHEREAS international practice is not uniform as regards the extent of this sea belt commonly known as the territorial sea of the State, and consequently it is necessary to make a declaration as to the extent of the territorial sea of the Union of Burma, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of the Union of Burma hereby declares--

1. That notwithstanding any rule of law or practice to the contrary which may have been observed in the past relating to the Union of Burma or any part thereof, the territorial sea of the Union of Burma shall extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

2. Except as provided for in paragraph 3, the low-water line along the coast, as marked on large-scale charts officially recognised by the Government of the Union of Burma, shall be the base line for measuring the breadth of the territorial sea of the Union of Burma.

3. That where it is necessary by reason of the geographical conditions prevailing on the Union of Burma coasts, and for the purpose of safeguarding the vital economic interest of the inhabitants of the coastal regions, to establish the system of straight base lines drawn between fixed points on the mainland, on islands or rocks, the breadth of the territorial sea shall be measured from such base lines. The fixed points between which such straight base lines shall be drawn are indicated in detail in the schedule annexed to this declaration.

4. That where a single island, rock, or a composite group thereof, is situated seawards from the main coast or straight base lines, it shall have independent territorial sea extending twelve nautical miles from the low-water line along its coasts.

By order,  
TUN SHEIN,  
Secretary,  
Ministry of Foreign  
Affairs.

SCHEDULE

1. ARAKAN COAST

(a) Southern Point of OYSTER ISLAND	Lat	20°	11'	49" N
	Long	92°	32'	19" E
(b) BORONGA POINT	Lat	19°	48'	30" N
	Long	93°	01'	42" E
(c) SOUTH TERRIBLES	Lat	19°	22'	56" N
	Long	93°	16'	20" E

SCHEDULE (continued)

(d) Western Point of HENRY ROCKS	Lat Long	18° 93°	51' 26'	48" 15"	N E
(e) Western Point of NERBUDDA ISLAND	Lat Long	18° 93°	20' 56'	50" 25"	N E
(f) St. JOHN's or CHURCH ROCKS	Lat Long	17° 94°	27' 19'	39" 46"	N E
(g) NORTH WEST GROUP	Lat Long	16° 94°	55' 12'	28" 45"	N E
(h) KORONGE ISLAND	Lat Long	16° 94°	31' 14'	20" 21"	N, E
(i) SOUTH ROCK	Lat Long	16° 94°	18' 11'	55" 20"	N E
(j) BLACK ROCK	Lat Long	16° 94°	11' 10'	50" 50"	N E
(k) ALGUADA REEF (PATHEIN LIGHT)	Lat Long	15° 94°	42' 12'	13" 6"	N E
2. <u>GULF OF MARTABAN</u>					
(a) ALGUADA REEF (PATHEIN LIGHT)	Lat Long	15° 94°	42' 12'	13" 6"	N E
(b) Western Point of LONG ISLAND	Lat Long	14° 97°	24' 46'	15" 02"	N E
3. <u>TENASSERIM COAST</u>					
(a) Western Point of LONG ISLAND	Lat Long	14° 97°	24' 46'	15" 02"	N E
(b) NORTH ISLAND	Lat Long	14° 97°	09' 46'		N E
(c) Western Point of CABUSA ISLAND	Lat Long	12° 97°	48' 50'		N E
(d) Northern Point of SAURIM ISLAND	Lat Long	12° 97°	30' 47'	30" 42"	N E
(e) Western Point of H. PRINCEP ISLAND	Lat Long	12° 97°	03' 38'	03" E	N E
(f) GREAT WESTERN TORRES	Lat Long	11° 97°	47' 26'	15" 15"	N E
(g) North Western Point of NORTH TWIN	Lat Long	10° 97°	38' 41'	14" 45"	N E
(h) Western Point of SOUTH TWIN	Lat Long	10° 97°	28' 40'	12" 45"	N E
(i) WESTERN ROCKY ISLAND	Lat Long	9° 97°	51' 52'	24" 18"	N E
(j) HAYCOCK ISLAND	Lat Long	9° 97°	40' 54'	45" 30"	N E
(k) Western Point of MURRAY ISLAND	Lat Long	9° 97°	35' 58'	54" 12"	N E

The straight baselines replace the low-water line of the coast with the exception of a narrow band in the north. This narrow band measures approximately 30 nautical miles in length and extends from the Pakistan boundary at the Naaf River to the point a) on Oyster Island. A brief analysis of the straight baselines, taken from large-scale nautical charts, follows:<sup>1</sup>

Point	Length (nautical miles)	Comments
<u>Akaran Coast</u>		
a - b	36.0	Oyster Island is a small isolated island situated approximately 11.4 nautical miles from the mainland. The line a-b deviates from the general trend of the coast by c. 14°.
b - c	30.1	Boronga point is situated at the southern end of Myengun Kyun (isl.). The entire coast from b-c is fringed with islands. Line b-c deviates from coast at an angle of 12°.
c - d	32.1	The line c-d deviates at an angle of 18° to enclose the large island of Cheduba within the internal waters of Burma.
d - e	42.5	This segment, 8° from the general trend of the coast, terminates at the southern end of the heavily-fringed coastline.
e - f	57.0	The straight baseline averages 18-20 miles offshore. Few islands exist in the neighborhood of the segment although many are situated close to the shore. The line is approximately 12° from the general trend of the mainland.
f - g	33.0	Same general situation but approximately 12 nautical miles from the shore and at an angle of 4°.
g - h	24.5	Same general situation except approaching coast; angle is 15° between segment and general trend.
h - i	13.5	Same but straight baseline now within 3 nautical miles of coast and angle is 2°.
i - j	7.1	Shortest length of straight baseline on the Arakan coast. Straight baseline forms an angle of c. 10° to the general trend of the coast. The segment averages slightly less than 2 nautical miles from the coast.
j - k	29.0	The final point of the Arakan coast is situated on a reef, which has a lighthouse thereon, near the Irrawaddy delta -- 13.8 nautical miles from nearest land. Angle measures c. 12° to the general coastal trend.

1. Unfortunately, a nautical chart for the use of this study was not available. The attached map is a reproduction of a standard country map and many of the small islets, rocks, etc. have not been represented. The descriptions, based upon large-scale nautical charts, are more accurate.

Points	Length (nautical miles)	Comments
<u>Gulf of Martaban</u>		
a - b	222.3	Point a is identical with the point k of the Arakan straight baseline. The closing line a-b is the longest straight baseline encountered in the world. The first segment remains within 12° of the trend of the delta but the eastern two-thirds deviates at an angle of 60°. At one point on the straight baseline, the nearest land is 75 nautical miles away and the mouth of the Sittang is over 120 nautical miles distant.
<u>Tenasserim Coast</u>		
a - b	15.5	The straight baseline segment lies slightly over 12 nautical miles from the coast at an angle of 11° from its general direction. A large number of islands (+20) are situated close to the segment.
b - c	80.8	In the north b-c averages nearly 20 nautical miles from the mainland at an angle of 13° from its general direction. The number of islands is not great until south of the Savoy River (13° 31' North).
c.- d	17.9	A very large number of islands fringe the coast for the remainder of its extent southward. For the most part, the straight baseline joins the outermost points. Three islets in this sector, however, are seaward of the straight baseline. The angle to the coast is c. 9°.
d - e	29.0	The angle increases to 19° as the straight baseline extends to include outer islands.
e - f	19.2	The angle is 38° to the general trend of the coast. Basepoint f is situated on a large island, over 75 miles from the mainland.
f - g	71.1	The number of islands in the vicinity of the straight baseline decreases markedly although many still fringe the coast. The angle of the straight baseline is 12° to the general coastal trend.
g - h	10.1	Same but the angle is 9°.
h - i	38.1	The straight baseline draws nearer to the mainland (c. 38 n.m.) and to the fringing islands (c. 9 n.m.). The angle to the general trend of the coast is c. 15°.
i - j	10.8	Same but the angle decreases to c. 10°.
j - k	6.8	The shortest segment of the straight baseline terminates the limits with the southernmost Burmese island. Because the line is trending towards the shore the angle increases greatly, to nearly 40°
Total	826.4 nautical miles	

The twenty-one straight baseline segments total 826.4 nautical miles, forming all but approximately 30 miles of the Burmese baseline. The average segment length is nearly 40 n.m. The maximum length is 222.3 n.m. which forms a closing line for the Gulf of Martaban. At no point does the straight baseline extend seaward of the continental shelf of Burma. None of the base points are situated on the mainland of Burma. The ratio of water to land enclosed within the baselines is estimated to exceed 50:1.

Burma has not adhered to the Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone.