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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

Series A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 39

STRAIGHT BASELINES: SVALBARD

The Geographer
Office of the Geographer
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

STRAIGHT BASELINES: SVALBARD

The Government of Norway, by a Royal Decree of September 25, 1970, established straight baseline systems about Bjørnøya (Bear Island), Hopen (island), and the western and southern shores of the Svalbard archipelago. The points No. 1 - 17 of the Decree delimit the Bjørnøya system; No. 18 - 25, Hopen; and the remainder cover Svalbard.

The text of the Decree is as follows:

Royal Decree of September 25, 1970 concerning the demarcation of the sea territory for parts of Svalbard

THE FOREIGN MINISTRY

r e c o m m e n d s :

The limit of the Norwegian sea territory at Svalbard in the area at Bjørnøya (Bear Island) and Hopen and in the area from Verlegenhuken to Halvmåneøya shall be drawn (op. Royal Decree of February 22, 1812) four nautical miles outside and parallel with straight baselines between the following points:

No. of point	Name of the point	Northern lat. of the point	Position East longitude.
1	Keilhauøya	74 20,5	19 04,4
2	Kapp Ruth	- 24,8	18 53,2
3	Kapp Hanna	- 26,2	- 49,8
4	Utstein	- 28,6	- 45,6
5	Drangane	- 29,3	- 46,8
6	Snyta	- 30,0	- 48,4
7	Flisa	- 30,2	- 49,4
8	Emmaholmane	- 30,9	- 56,4
9	Nordkapp	- 31,3	19 06,5
10	Havhestholmen	- 31,2	- 08,4
11	Måkestauren	- 30,9	- 10,2
12	Framnes	- 28,3	- 17,3
13	Kapp Nordenskiöld	- 28,0	- 17,4
14	Kapp Levin	- 27,1	- 16,9
15	Brettingdalen odde	- 26,4	- 16,5
16	Makeholmen	- 21,9	- 12,0
17	Kapp Kolthoff	74 20,9	19 07,4

No. of point	Name of point	Northern lat. of the point	Position East longitude.
18	Kapp Thor	76 27,2	24 55,5
19	Vesterodden	- 27,7	- 53,5
20	Askheimodden	- 30,0	- 56,5
21	NV for Kollerfjellet	- 34,0	25 06,8
22	V for Flatsalen	- 42,0	- 25,8
23	Beisaren	- 43,0	- 29,8
24	Ostligste pynt	- 42,8	- 30,0
25	Skumskjera	76 27,4	24 59,5
26	Verlegenuken	80 03,7	16 15,6
27	Hoffen	- 02,4	14 30,8
28	Velkomstypnten	79 52,8	13 46,3
29	Biskayerhukun	- 50,6	12 24,8
30	Kobbeskjera, N	- 54,5	11 39,9
31	Ørneøya	- 52,3	- 16,7
32	Ytterholmane, N	- 46,2	10 35,0
33	Hamburgerbukta, skjaer utenfor	- 32,0	- 40,3
34	Tredjebreen, skjaer utenfor	- 20,6	- 51,7
35	Kapp Mitra, ytterste skjaer	- 06,7	11 09,8
36	Fuglehukun, V skjaer	78 53,6	10 28,6
37	Kapp Sietoe, N odde	- 47,2	- 30,7
38	Fidrasteien	- 42,5	- 37,5
39	Kverodden, skjaer	- 27,3	11 04,5
40	Plankeholmane, S	- 12,5	- 57,8
41	Salskjera, S	- 12,1	12 06,8
42	SV Agskjera (Daudmannsodden)	- 11,9	- 59,8
43	Kapp Linné, Revleodden	- 03,0	13 35,5
44	Holme NV for St Hanshl-e	77 53,4	- 32,8
45	Lågneset, V	- 45,2	- 43,8
46	Dunderholmane	- 29,3	- 54,1
47	Middagsskjera	- 25,1	- 53,2
48	Skjaer SV av Olshl	- 12,7	14 14,2
49	Svartsteinane (SV av Kroghryggen)	- 07,0	- 36,0
50	Dunøyane	- 03,3	- 57,8
51	Utskjeret (S av Suffolkpynten)	76 51,3	15 30,3
52	Brimingen	- 43,1	- 54,5

No. of point	Name of point	Northern lat. of the point	Position East longitude.
53	Svartskjeret	- 32,3	16 19,2
54	Brattholmen	- 28,2	- 31,2
55	Sørkappfallet	- 26,5	- 38,1
56	Flaskkjeret, S	- 28,0	- 49,0
57	Tristeinane, SØ	- 32,9	17 03,8
58	Dumskolten	- 42,4	- 10,0
59	Davislaguna (ved Hedgehogfjellet)	- 58,6	- 19,5
60	Odde mellom Markhambr. - Crollbr.	77 10,9	- 26,0
61	Kvalvågen, SV	- 25,0	- 36,7
62	" Ø	- 29,5	18 13,2
63	Kvalhovden	- 31,5	- 16,2
64	Thomsonbreen, odde i S	- 37,5	- 20,2
65	Beresnikobreen, odde i S	- 48,2	- 26,5
66	Kapp Dufferin	- 57,2	- 29,0
67	SØ for Agardhfjellet	78 03,2	- 56,7
68	Ø "	- 05,9	19 02,2
69	Kapp Johannesen	- 13,5	- 04,0
70	Jakimovitsøyane, SV	78 12,0	20 24,2
71	Kapp Lee, V	- 04,8	- 46,8
72	Blankeodden	77 58,8	21 12,5
73	Kapp Spører	- 49,5	- 23,7
74	Skjaer V for Russebukta	- 35,1	20 47,4
75	V holme i fjorden	- 31,7	- 02,2
76	Kvalpynten	- 26,6	- 51,0
77	Kong Ludvigøyane, V	- 16,7	21 12,5
78	Utsira (mellom 77 og 79)	- 06,0	- 16,0
79	Håoyane, V	76 56,1	- 16,8
80	" S	- 55,2	21 20,5
81	Braekholmholmane, SØ (mellom 80 Og 82)	77 03,1	22 12,0
82	Menkeøyane, SØ	- 08,9	- 50,4
83	Halvmåneoya, Ø	- 16,4	23 18,0

ANALYSIS

Bjørnøya is a pear-shaped island measuring approximately 10.7 nautical miles along its major axis. The coastline of the island is serrated, but it can scarcely be described as deeply indented or cut into. A few scattered and isolated islets dot the shore, but the primary basepoints are mainland headlands. The maximum length of a straight-baseline segment (1 - 2) is approximately 5.25 nautical miles.

Hopen, in contrast, is an elongated island nearly 15 nautical miles in length and scarcely a mile in width. Eight straight-baseline segments encircle the featureless coastline with little justification and only a minor effect on the outer limit of the territorial sea. The longest segment (24 - 25) is about 15 nautical miles in length.

Svalbard's straight baselines extend from the northern cape of Ny Fries Land on Vestspitsbergen along the entire western coast of the island. The coastal areas are heavily fjorded and fringed with many small islands and rocks. The southeast coast, in contrast, is relatively smooth and lacks deep embayments. Of interest, several of the straight baselines intersect glaciers which project seaward of the baselines. (Note: The chart accuracy may be of a low degree which could cast doubt on the conclusion.) However, if more accurate charts show this condition to prevail, the example of Svalbard may affect future treatment of coastal, glacial tongues as "special circumstances" for the measurement of the territorial sea.

The final sector of the system serves to "tie" the island of Edgeøya to Vestspitsbergen. The segments continue southward to include the isolated, detached, and small islets of the Tusenøyane within the Svalbard internal waters. The land/water ratio in this section would be exceedingly small.

The longest single segment of the straight baselines (26 - 27) is approximately 18.5 nautical miles in length. The average length of segment appears to be about 10 nautical miles. The coastline of Svalbard bears a remarkable resemblance to the northern coast of Norway and consequently is well-suited to the creation of a straight-baseline system.

Norway is not a party to the Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea.