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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

Series A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 48

*STRAIGHT BASELINES: FINLAND*

The Geographer  
Office of the Geographer  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

## STRAIGHT BASELINES: FINLAND

The Government of Finland decreed on August 18, 1966, a new law on the territorial sea for the state. The law-decree, No. 463, permitted the drawing of straight baselines about the coast of Finland:

### *Article 1.*

The Finnish territorial waters comprise the part of the sea directly connected with the country's land area which in the East, adjacent to the Soviet Union, is bounded by the country's maritime frontier in the Gulf of Finland through the Virolahti archipelago, defined in the Paris Peace Treaty (690-691/47) signed on February 10, 1947; and in the West, adjacent to Sweden, [is bounded] by the country's maritime frontier and the extension of the end thereof into the Perameri Sea in the Tornio archipelago, defined when the boundaries were fixed in 1926-1927 according to the topographic boundary declaration signed in Tornio on January 19, 1811, after the Hamina Peace Treaty. The outer limit of the territorial waters toward the open sea is the boundary of international waters, except in the Ahvena [Aaland] Sea, to the South and North of the rocky isle of Market. There the limit is the country's maritime frontier as defined in the above-mentioned boundary declaration of 1811, as it was included in the agreement signed on October 20, 1921 (64/22), regarding the neutralization of the Aaland Islands.

A solitary island, rocky isle, skerry, or a group formed by these, situated far out in the sea, may have separate territorial waters of its own,

### *Article 2.*

The territorial waters are divided into inner territorial waters and outer territorial waters, or the marginal sea.

### *Article 3.*

By inner territorial waters are meant that part of the territorial waters which is bounded on the shore side by the mainland and the estuaries of rivers, and on the seaward side by a line the angles or base points of which are located at the farther points of land, either on the mainland, on islands, rocky isles or skerries.

### *Article 4.*

The base points intended in Article 3 above are so chosen.

- (1) that they are above sea-level more than one half day per year, on the average, at low-water levels during the ten-year period preceding the year when this law takes effect;
- (2) that their distance from one another is at most twice the width of the marginal sea; and
- (3) that the inner territorial waters will be as extensive as possible. The base points will be corrected at intervals of thirty years.

### *Article 5.*

The marginal sea is a zone directly adjacent to the inner territorial waters. Its outer limit, the limit of international waters, is four nautical miles, or 7,408 meters, distant from the outer limit of the inner territorial waters, unless otherwise specified in this law.

Article 6.

If an island, rocky isle, a skerry, or a group formed by these is situated so far out in the sea that it remains beyond the outer limit of the inner territorial waters defined in Articles 3 and 4, such an island, rocky isle, skerry or group shall have separate territorial waters of its own, but the width of such waters shall be three nautical miles, or 5,556 meters.

Article 7.

From the Southern terminus of the country's Eastern maritime frontier the outer limit of territorial waters runs at a distance of four nautical miles from the farthest points of land to the Eastern terminus of the [Southern] limit of the Finnish maritime frontier as defined in the Paris Peace Treaty signed on February 10, 1947, which is a parallel of latitude South of the Haapasaari archipelago, where it joins the said frontier.

From the Western terminus of the [Southern] frontier mentioned in paragraph 1 above, by which the Finnish territorial waters are bounded, the outer limit of the marginal sea runs to the west along the extension of the said border, until it joins the outer limit defined in Article 5.

In the Tornio archipelago, of the Gulf of Finland, the base point which follows the last base point on the Finnish side is on the Swedish side.

Article 8.

The base points of the outer limit of the inner territorial waters and their exact locations will be listed in a decree, which will also give a more detailed explanation of the water-level intended in Article 4, as well as other stipulations which may be necessary for the enforcement and the application of this law.

Helsinki,

President of the Republic  
URHO KEKKONEN

Foreign Minister Ralf Törnqren

Approved Finnish Diet: May 23, 1956.

By supplemental decree, No. 464, 180 points along the coast were selected for the straight baseline system. The points are:

No	North East						No.	North East					
	°	'	"	°	'	"		°	'	"	°	'	"
1	60	19	27	27	37	16	16	60	2	23	25	47	41
2	60	18	36	27	34	44	17	60	4	32	25	38	27
3	60	16	31	27	20	20	18	60	6	17	25	25	40
4	60	15	54	27	16	26	19	60	6	12	25	22	9
5	60	14	15	27	1	44	20	60	5	27	25	8	12
6	60	12	42	26	55	55	21	60	2	9	24	53	40
7	60	13	52	26	53	2	22	60	1	54	24	52	21
8	60	16	29	26	41	41	23	59	59	4	24	37	37
9	60	15	0	26	35	31	24	59	54	40	24	26	55
10	60	14	30	26	29	45	25	59	52	10	24	18	40
11	60	13	1	26	19	58	26	59	52	6	24	18	22
12	60	9	44	26	15	51	27	59	53	50	24	4	7
13	60	9	40	26	15	44	28	59	51	41	23	55	1
14	60	9	2	26	5	12	29	59	49	10	23	40	51
15	60	6	18	25	51	30	30	59	47	13	23	35	29

No.	North East						No.	North East					
	o	i	"	o	i	"		o	i	"	o	i	"
31	59	44	56	23	23	51	91	60	54	43	21	2	20
32	59	45	28	23	13	19	92	60	55	28	21	3	3
33	59	44	57	22	58	27	93	60	58	57	21	7	42
34	59	44	37	22	45	54	94	61	3	2	21	10	14
35	59	44	16	22	30	50	95	61	9	18	21	18	22
36	59	43	22	22	30	15	96	61	15	28	21	20	23
37	59	43	17	22	30	0	97	61	20	37	21	22	55
38	59	42	50	22	25	7	98	61	25	14	21	16	23
39	59	44	59	22	13	5	99	61	25	20	21	16	16
40	59	43	4	22	4	54	100	61	28	47	21	19	23
41	59	43	14	21	57	37	101	61	36	37	21	22	10
42	59	44	0	21	44	39	102	61	38	46	21	19	54
43	59	40	33	21	30	24	103	61	38	52	21	19	54
44	59	40	29	21	30	13	104	61	43	21	21	21	38
45	59	40	30	21	29	45	105	61	49	53	21	19	32
46	59	44	47	21	19	36	106	61	52	58	21	14	35
47	59	45	22	21	9	10	107	61	56	3	21	16	27
48	59	44	2	21	2	55	108	62	1	7	21	14	5
49	59	45	54	20	58	43	109	62	7	42	21	17	0
50	59	44	10	20	44	22	110	62	10	22	21	17	3
51	59	46	30	20	31	53	111	62	16	44	21	14	44
52	59	49	26	20	24	15	112	62	18	54	21	9	40
53	59	49	36	20	15	7	113	62	22	33	21	6	57
54	59	50	49	20	1	18	114	62	25	8	21	5	21
55	59	50	3	19	56	50	115	62	28	41	21	4	16
56	59	48	33	19	47	10	116	62	34	34	21	2	39
57	59	50	9	19	52	18	117	62	38	32	21	1	23
58	59	57	31	19	57	23	118	62	45	15	20	53	8
59	60	3	10	19	49	34	119	62	48	2	20	48	25
60	60	4	58	19	42	35	120	62	55	27	20	53	25
61	60	7	22	19	36	31	121	62	57	32	20	44	22
62	60	8	47	19	33	4	122	63	5	4	20	43	2
63	60	9	25	19	18	13	123	63	7	53	20	41	42
64	60	14	48	19	11	15	124	63	14	12	20	35	2
65	60	18	3	19	8	7	125	63	15	18	20	38	2
66	59	30	10	20	24	57	126	63	21	17	20	45	52
67	59	31	5	20	25	40	127	63	25	28	20	47	20
68	59	30	13	20	21	6	128	63	26	38	21	4	37
69	59	30	16	20	21	0	129	63	27	12	21	8	25
70	60	18	6	19	8	7	130	63	27	12	21	10	22
71	60	20	0	19	22	36	131	63	24	19	21	21	30
72	60	25	43	19	23	40	132	63	25	56	21	30	50
73	60	25	53	19	23	53	133	63	29	13	21	44	20
74	60	25	40	19	34	6	134	63	28	24	21	58	15
75	60	29	13	19	44	57	135	63	31	44	22	9	25
76	60	28	19	19	56	59	136	63	37	29	22	21	52
77	60	28	14	20	8	42	137	63	37	37	22	21	59
78	60	32	21	20	12	25	138	63	37	59	22	22	28
79	60	32	25	20	12	33	139	63	38	16	22	23	11
80	60	32	24	20	12	45	140	63	45	6	22	31	20
81	60	31	35	20	28	3	141	63	51	52	22	37	18
82	60	34	33	20	31	33	142	63	53	55	22	39	54
83	60	35	47	20	40	54	143	63	55	41	22	43	3
84	60	37	56	20	47	36	144	63	56	11	22	44	24
85	60	44	28	20	44	50	145	63	57	37	22	48	44
86	60	45	58	20	44	39	146	63	57	50	22	53	57
87	60	45	8	21	0	2	147	63	59	28	23	9	43
88	60	50	46	21	0	16	148	64	4	56	23	22	42
89	60	51	0	21	0	20	149	64	5	34	23	24	0
90	60	52	3	21	0	45	150	64	11	55	23	33	14
							151	64	18	54	23	30	23
							152	64	19	44	23	27	0

No.	North East						No.	North East					
	o	i	"	o	i	"		o	i	"	o	i	"
153	64	20	4	23	26	33	167	65	0	15	24	34	28
154	64	18	58	23	31	7	168	65	2	22	24	33	22
155	64	18	32	23	49	24	169	65	5	10	24	37	50
156	64	21	17	23	54	18	170	65	5	10	24	47	34
157	64	25	2	24	1	19	171	65	12	38	24	54	8
158	64	26	56	24	5	30	172	65	14	20	24	46	0
159	64	32	16	24	15	10	173	65	14	46	24	44	18
160	64	39	31	24	19	25	174	65	20	8	24	39	22
161	64	40	30	24	19	14	175	65	24	52	24	49	7
162	64	40	55	24	19	26	176	65	32	47	24	47	42
163	64	42	8	24	21	18	177	65	36	17	24	36	53
164	64	42	44	24	23	27	178	65	33	51	24	18	49
165	64	49	12	24	31	42	179	65	36	11	24	12	10
166	64	55	28	24	37	30	(180)	(65	35	9)	(23	57	8)

SUMMARY

The Finnish straight baseline system has been printed on large-scale charts published by the Finnish Hydrographic Office. The most recent editions, which have been examined by this office, were printed in 1965.

The law contains three interesting concepts. First, the system is subject to a periodic review. According to Article 4(3), the points must be corrected at intervals of 30 years. Second, the Government of Finland has commenced its straight baseline system by connecting Swedish and Finnish islets; the intersection of this line with the Finnish-Swedish maritime frontier marks the beginning of the Finnish system. This unusual technique has been employed by several North European states.

The third, and most important, concept is stated in Article 4(2) which provides that the basepoints will be chosen so that their [basepoint] distance from one another is at most twice the width of the marginal sea...." As a consequence, the longest Finnish straight baseline segment measures 8 nautical miles or less in length, a restriction which contrasts sharply with the practices of many states. The limitation of the length of baseline segment means that the Finnish system nearly duplicates the configuration of the fringing islands. The Finnish system is the least expansive straight baselines yet analyzed by this office.

The total length of the Finnish system measures approximately 793.2 nautical miles between the Swedish and Soviet maritime frontiers. The average length of a segment is approximately 4.4 nautical miles.

The Finland-USSR territorial sea boundary is discussed in International Boundary Study No. 74 - February 1, 1964, Finland-USSR Boundary. The continental shelf boundary is analyzed in International Boundary Study, Series A, No. 16 - May 25, 1970, Limits in the Seas, Continental Shelf Boundary: Finland - Soviet Union.

Finland is a party of the Convention on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone.

NOTE: Not all points are shown on the attached map. Certain basepoints were too close to identify on the mapped scale.