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# LIMITS IN THE SEAS

**No. 84**

**MARITIME BOUNDARY:**

**COLOMBIA - COSTA RICA**

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MARITIME BOUNDARY: COLOMBIA-COSTA RICA

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Office of the Geographer  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

On March 17, 1977, the Governments of the Republic of Colombia and the Republic of Costa Rica signed an agreement delimiting a maritime boundary in the Caribbean Sea. To date, instruments of ratification have not been exchanged. The full text is as follows:

Treaty on Delimitation of Marine and Submarine Areas  
and Maritime Cooperation between the Republic of Colombia  
and the Republic of Costa Rica

The Republic of Colombia and the Republic of Costa Rica,

Realizing that international cooperation and reciprocity constitute the best means to resolve matters of common interest to nations which are friends,

Agreeing on the advisability and need to delimit their marine and submarine areas in the Caribbean Sea,

Concurring on safeguarding the sovereignty and jurisdiction of marine areas belonging to each country and the free and unimpeded transit through them,

Mutually interested in the adoption of adequate means for the preservation, conservation, and exploitation of the resources existing in those areas, and for the prevention, control, and elimination of their pollution, have decided to conclude a Treaty and for that purpose have appointed as their plenipotentiaries:

The President of the Republic of Colombia: Dr. Heraclio Fernandez Sandoval, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Costa Rica;

The President of the Republic of Costa Rica: Dr. Gonzalo J. Facio, Minister of Foreign Relations,

Who, after exchanging their respective full powers found in proper and due form, have agreed as follows:

### Article I

To delimit their respective marine and submarine waters which are established or may be established in the future by the following lines:

A. From the intersection of a straight line, drawn with azimuth 225° (45°SW.) from a point located at lat. 11°00'00"N. and long. 81°15'00"W., with the parallel 10°49'00"N.

West along the said parallel to its intersection with the meridian 82°14'00"W.

B. From the intersection of the parallel 10°49'00"N. and the meridian 82°14'00"W., the boundary shall continue north along the said meridian to where delimitation must be made with a third State.

N.B. The agreed lines and points are shown on the nautical chart, signed by the plenipotentiaries, which is annexed to this Treaty, it being understood that in all cases the wording of the Treaty shall prevail.

### Article II

To accept and respect the methods by which each of the two States currently exercises or may in the future exercise its sovereignty, jurisdiction, supervision, control, or rights in the marine and submarine areas adjacent to its coasts, delimited pursuant to this Treaty, in conformity with what each country has established or may establish in the future and with the regulations laid down by its domestic law.

### Article III

To develop the broadest cooperation between the two countries for the protection of the renewable or nonrenewable resources found within the marine or submarine areas over which they exercise or may in the future exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or supervision and to

use those resources for the welfare of their peoples and their national development.

#### Article IV

To support the broadest international cooperation in order to coordinate the conservation measures which each State applies in the zones of the sea subject to its sovereignty or jurisdiction, particularly as regards species that move beyond its jurisdictional zone, taking into account the recommendations of appropriate regional organizations and the most accurate and current scientific data. The said cooperation shall not impair the sovereign right of each State to adopt, within the framework of its respective maritime jurisdictions, the rules and regulations that it deems pertinent.

#### Article V

To offer each other the greatest possible facilities for the purpose of developing activities to exploit and use the living resources of their respective maritime jurisdictional zones through the exchange of information, cooperation in scientific research, technical collaboration, and encouragement of the formation of mixed corporations.

#### Article VI

Each of the Parties expresses its determination to cooperate with the other, in accordance with its possibilities, in the application of the most adequate measures to impede, reduce, and control any pollution of the marine environment which affects the neighboring State, irrespective of the source of such pollution.

Article VII

To support the broadest cooperation to promote rapid development of international navigation in seas subject to the sovereignty or jurisdiction of each State.

Article VIII

This Treaty shall be subject to the constitutional formalities of ratification by the High Contracting Parties and shall enter into force upon the exchange of the instruments of ratification which shall take place at Bogota, Republic of Colombia.

This treaty is signed in two copies, in the Spanish language, both texts being equally authentic.

Signed at San Jose, Republic of Costa Rica, on March 17, 1977.

Heraclio Fernandez Sandoval  
Gonzalo J. Facio

## ANALYSIS

The Colombia-Costa Rica maritime boundary, as set forth in this yet-to-be-ratified agreement,<sup>1</sup> is depicted on the attached DMA chart No. 26000. The boundary consists of one terminal point, one turning point, and a line continuation to an undetermined second terminal point.

The boundary commences in the east at the intersection of a line drawn at a 225° azimuth (true) from 11°00'00"N., 81°15'00"W., with the 10°49'00"N. parallel. The approximate coordinates of this point calculate to be 10°49'00"N., 81°26'15"W., and are shown as point A on the attached map. The boundary continues along this parallel of latitude until intersecting the meridian of 82°14'00"W. longitude; turning point B thus has the coordinates 10°49'00"N., 82°14'00"W. From point B, the boundary follows the 82°14'00"W. meridian due north to "where delimitation must be made with a third State" (i.e., Nicaragua).

The distance of the known boundary (A-B) is 46.99 nautical miles. Although it is impossible to determine precisely the northwest terminus of the Colombia-Costa Rica boundary, the boundary probably would extend at least to 11°N. before the Colombia-Nicaragua or Costa Rica-Nicaragua maritime boundary would be encountered.

No boundary delimitation principles have been specified in the treaty. The delimitation appears to have been negotiated on the basis of equitable principles established by agreement between the two states. Article I (A) is identical to the wording found in the Colombia-Panama maritime boundary agreement.<sup>2</sup> It is likely, therefore, that Panama would agree on the coordinate value of point A as calculated above, which would become the Colombia-Costa Rica-Panama trijunction point. As shown in Table 1, however, point A is situated closer to Colombian and Panamanian territory than to Costa Rican territory.

At turning point B the boundary is closer, by approximately 15 nautical miles, to Costa Rica than it is to Colombia. At 11°N., 82°14'W., the boundary is nearer to

1 The Colombian Senate approved the agreement on October 6, 1977; the Costa Rican Government has not ratified the treaty.

2 See Limits in the Seas No. 79, "Maritime Boundaries: Colombia-Panama," November 3, 1978.

Colombia (72.12 nautical miles) than to Costa Rica (75.49 nautical miles). It should be noted that at this point the closest Nicaraguan territory is only 78.02 nautical miles from the boundary. Thus, in a short distance, farther north along the 82°14'W meridian, the boundary will become closer to Nicaraguan territory than to Costa Rican territory.

Table 1

COLOMBIA-COSTA RICA MARITIME BOUNDARY

<u>Boundary Point</u>	<u>Nearest Land Territory</u>	<u>Distance to Boundary Point (nautical miles)</u>
A	Colombia-Cayos de Albuquerque	83.14
	Costa Rica-Punta Mona	99.29
	Panama-Wreck Rock	95.65
B	Colombia-Cayos de Albuquerque	82.62
	Costa Rica-Isla Uvita	67.15
11°00'00"N	Colombia-Cayos de Albuquerque	72.12
82°14'00"W	Costa Rica-Isla Uvita	75.49
	Nicaragua-Blowing Rock	78.02