



International Boundary Study

No. 5 – May 23, 1961

Dominican Republic – Haiti Boundary

(Country Codes: DR-HA)

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

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - HAITI BOUNDARY

I. MEASUREMENT OF BOUNDARY

In the boundary brief on the introductory map the Dominican Republic - Haiti boundary is given as 224 miles, arrived at by measurement of a map at a scale of 1:100,000. Dr. S. Whittemore Boggs, in his book International Boundaries (1940), gives 171 miles as the length. It is indicated that the figure was calculated from measurement on a map at a scale of 1:820,000. Gordon Ireland, in his book Boundaries Possessions, and Conflicts in Central and North America and the Caribbean (1941) also states that the boundary is 171 miles in length.

It is quite natural that measurement on a larger scale map will give a greater mileage since more irregularities, especially along rivers, will appear and be measured.

II. POLITICO - GEOGRAPHIC SIGNIFICANCE

No sovereignty disputes exist along the Dominican Republic - Haiti boundary, so there are no problem areas relative to its alignment. But problems over water rights, movement of people, and commerce center on the position of the boundary and are sources of friction, either actual or latent, between the two states.

A. Water Rights

A number of rivers start in the Dominican Republic and flow into Haiti, creating the problem of water rights reminiscent on a smaller scale of the "Five Rivers" area in the Punjab. The important Artibonite River is truly international. With its headwaters in the Dominican Republic part of the middle course forms the boundary between the two countries while the lower basin comprises the principal agricultural region of Haiti.

B. Movement of People

Migration practices across the boundary, both long range and for seasonal employment by Haitians in the Dominican Republic, are fraught with tight regulatory legislation on the part of the latter. At times the situation is tense, leading to incidents.

C. Commerce

Trade across the boundary, which under any circumstances would be small, is further restricted by Haitian law and a closed frontier initiated by the Dominican Republic.

III. ORIGINS OF THE BOUNDARY

In the peace of Ryswick in 1697, the western third of Hispaniola became identified as French and the eastern two-thirds as Spanish. Disputes and incidents were frequent between the inhabitants on either side of a vague frontier. After some preliminary

agreements, a boundary treaty was signed in 1777 which spelled out a supposedly permanent boundary. Rivers served admirably for part of the boundary, but in the more unsettled districts the line was by no means definite. This survey line served to create more stability, but during the nineteenth century pressure from west to east strained relations between the Spanish and French and later between the Dominican Republic and Haiti when these states came into existence. Haiti was eager to acquire more territory by annexation. Several treaties were signed in an attempt to resolve the boundary problem but not until 1929 were there any effective documents drawn up.

IV. KEY BOUNDARY TREATIES

A. The Treaty of 1929

On January 21, 1929, there was signed at Santo Domingo a boundary treaty essentially setting forth the line as it exists today. The descriptive part of the document reads as follows:

Art. 1. The frontier line between the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Haiti starts from the thalweg of the mouth of the river Dajabon or Massacre, in the Atlantic Ocean (Bay of Mancenille, north of the island) and following the course of that river until opposite the town of Dajabon, according to the map, made in 1901 by the mixed Dominican - Haitian Commission, of the frontier line in the extreme north.

Subd. 2. From Dajabon, it follows the course of the river Dajabon or Massacre to its confluence with the river Capotille or Bernard, according to the studies of the said Commission, which are considered as annexed to the present treaty;

Subd. 3. From said confluence it follows then the course of the river Capotille or Bernard to its source, on Mount Citadel or Height of Las Palomas; from that point along the crest of the mountain chain northwestward to the point where it meets a mount covered with pines called Loma de los Pinos; along this last mount following its crest, to a plain (Loma Llana), whence it runs west to a bare peak; thence southwest to the summit of a mountain called Pan de Azúcar but commonly known in the locality as Mount Grimé; thence to the source of the river Libón; thence it follows the course of that river to the point where that river crosses the road called royal highway (Camino Real), which goes from Banica to Restauration (Gourabe), following that road to the point where it crosses the river Artibonite, opposite Banica. (Said royal highway passes to the west of Miel and to the east or Cerca-la-Source). Where said frontier line follows the road, it shall be traced in the middle of said royal highway, which thus remains at the service of both States. From where the said road crosses the river Artibonite, opposite Banica, the frontier line follows (the Artibonite to its confluence with the river Macasia; the Macasia to San Pedros along the crest of the ridge in a straight line to Fort Cachimán; through the center of said Fort and bending toward the southeast, in a straight line to the river Carrizal; up

that river to its source; in a straight line to Rancho de las Mujeres, leaving it to the east; in a straight line to Cañada Miguel; continuing southwest to the Rio de los Indios at a well defined promontory; along that river to the road which leads to Gobert; along that road, leaving Gobert and Carrefour to the west and following the crest of the ridge in a straight line to the south-eastern peak called Loma de Fond Pitte (Bajada Grande) to Las Lajas following the middle of the royal highway which leads towards Haiti; to El Fondo, following the same road);

Subd. 4. From El Fondo to El Número, the frontier line shall be that indicated (B-C-D-E) on the plan which, accepted by both parties and signed by Mm. Déjean and Troncoso de la Concha is annexed to this treaty, of which it forms a part.

Subd. 5. From El Número to Minguette; to Tempé; to Mare Citron; to Guasima; to the village of Bois Tombé; to Gros Mare or Gros Mat; to a gorge between Grande Savane and Sabana de Zumbi (formerly La Descubierta); to the source of the river Pedernales (Cabeza de Caboguette); along that river to the point where its water submerges; along the dry bed of the Pedernales to the point where the water submerges; along the dry bed of the Pedernales to the point where the water reappears, between Cabeza de Agua and Tête-à-l'Eau; along the course of that river to opposite Spanish or Banana court; to the point where that crosses the present road (royal highway) leading to Anse-à-Pitres and Pedernales, through the pass called Cénart Pass; along the middle of said road about 2.8 miles to Glace Pass; from where the royal highway crosses the Pedernales along the course of that river to the thalweg of its mouth, in the Caribbean Sea, south of the island.

Art. 16. Although there has never existed any controversy on the subject of ownership of the adjacent islands to be found in the neighborhood of the mouth of the river Dajabon or Massacre and of the river Pedernales, it remains fixed in the present treaty that the islands, islets and isles following: in the north, Siete Hermanos and La Cabra, in the south, La Beata, Alta Vela or Alto Velo and Los Frailes are and always have been under the sovereignty of the Dominican Republic.

B. The 1935 Agreement

To carry out the provisions of the 1929 treaty, a demarcation commission during 1930 marked about 80 percent of the boundary. On the basis of previous negotiations, Haiti benefited by this survey. However, in five areas the commission encountered problems amounting to disagreement on the boundary alignment. After due consideration of these findings, including the personal attention of President Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, an agreement was signed February 27, 1935, to resolve the differences. The five areas in question were handled thusly:

First. To fix as source or head of the river Libón the point where the rivers Marigoyenne and Tenebras unite to form thence downstream the river Libón. The frontier, consequently, shall go in a straight line from the marker No. 48 on Mont

Grimé to said point.

Second. The course of the frontier from transit station No. 805 on the road from Restauración to Bánica to the river Artibonito was settled by the Miel protocol.

Third. From the point SP4 marked by the Demarcation Commission at San Pedro on the river Macasías the line shall follow the ridge of the hills, descending to Tumba la Rosa, passing by Dame Jeanne Cassée and by the cemetery established at Fort Cachimán; thence to the river Carrizal, leaving the royal highway in Haitian territory; up the waters of the river Carrizal to its head.

Fourth. From the head of the Carrizal to Mare Zephir (Rancho de las Mujeres) passing Maison Madame Salomón; thence to Canada Miguel.

Fifth. The line shall run from Gros Mare to the well-defined ravine at Mare Orange; thence to Bonite spring, head of the river Pedernales, the intermediate points to be located later...

C. The 1936 Treaty Revision

Following the signing of the 1935 document, the demarcation commission was reconstituted, resulting in a protocol revision of the 1929 Treaty, which was signed at Port-au-Prince on March 9, 1936. Its provisions read as follows:

Art. 1. The Dominican Republic consents to the revision of Paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the Treaty of Jan. 21, 1929 (to read): a line from Passe Maguane or the point marked 22 R.L. following the axis of the river Libón to the pass called Tilorí; thence the line shall follow the axis of a highway belonging to the two states to begin at the Pass of Tilorí or Madame Luchen, along the right bank of the river Libón, past Juan de Paz, then crossing the stream Los Algodones, across the stream La Guárana, along the right bank of Guáranas, past Hatillo, La Tasajera, La Baria, La Diablesa and Los Carraos to El Corte (Le Cour).

From El Corte (Le Cour) the highway shall follow the existing road for a distance of 1,500 meters towards Guayacán, thence the highway shall be constructed parallel to the course of the river Artibonito at a maximum distance of from 800 to 1,000 meters; thence through the cross roads called Fundo Viejo (Croix Vieux Fond), crossing the stream La Salle, then the brook called Cañada Bonita and on to the pass called Los Cacaos, where it crosses the river Artibonito. At this place shall be built the International Bridge of Artibonito. From said International Bridge the frontier line shall follow the axis of the river Artibonito to opposite the town of Bánica, whence it shall continue along the axis of the river Artibonito, in accordance with the boundary fixed in 1929...

Art. 8. The Dominican Republic accepts the revision of Paragraph 3 of Article 1 of

the Treaty of Jan. 21, 1929 (to read): thence through the center of Fort Cachimán and bending toward the southeast and at 15 meters from the axis, it follows a line parallel to the present royal highway which goes to Comendador, leaving that highway in Haitian territory, till it reaches the stream Carrizal.

V. SEAWARD TERMINI OF BOUNDARIES

Along both the north and south coasts of Hispaniola, the boundary between the Dominican Republic and Haiti reach the sea coincidental with the thalwegs of the Dajabon and Pedernales rivers. Seaward termini then, would in each case be along a line drawn across the mouth of the river, precisely at a point over the middle of the deepest channel.

Off the south coast of Hispaniola the islands of La Beata, Alta Vela, and Los Frailes are so located as to give the Dominican Republic undisputed claim over them. In the north the Seven Brothers (Siete Hermanos: Arena, Monte Chico, Monte Grande, Muertos, Ratas, Tercero, and Tororu) lie to the west of a line extending straight north from the seaward termini of the boundary. But the configuration of the Dominican Republic coast is such that this country has been able to claim them without dispute. An eighth small island, La Cabra, is unmistakably Dominican.

VI. PRESENT SITUATION

Since 1936 there have been no official boundary changes, but the line stands as a nearly impenetrable screen between two states vastly different in cultural and political outlooks though they may be quite similar in landscape and climate. The riots in 1937 leading to the killing of thousands of immigrant Haitian laborers did not augur well to the relationship of the two states. But no new incidents of so grave a nature have transpired since, and present problems are at least being handled by legislation and negotiation.

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared in the Office of the Geographer, Department of State, in accordance with provisions of Bureau of the Budget Circular No. A-16, Exhibit D.

Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Office of the Geographer, Room 7334, State Department Building, Department of State, Washington 25, D.C. (Telephone: Code 182, extension 4276). Unfolded copies of map enclosures may be obtained from the Map Library, Code 182, extension 3322.