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LIMITS IN THE SEAS

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No. 58

CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY:

BAHRAIN-IRAN

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The Governments of the State of Bahrain and the Empire of Iran signed a continental shelf agreement on June 17, 1971. Ratifications were exchanged and the agreement entered into force on May 14, 1972. Neither Bahrain nor Iran is a party to the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf.

The Agreement Concerning Delimitation of the Continental Shelf Between Iran and Bahrain stated that the two Governments:

Desirous of establishing in a just, equitable and precise manner the boundary line between the respective areas of the continental shelf over which they have sovereign rights in accordance with international law, have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1

The line dividing the continental shelf lying between the territory of Iran on the one side and the territory of Bahrain on the other side shall consist of geodetic lines between the following points in the sequence hereinafter set out: -

Point (1) is the Eastern-most point on the Eastern-most part of the Northern boundary line of the continental shelf appertaining to Bahrain as formed by the intersection of a line starting from the point having the latitude of 27 degrees, 00 minutes, 35 seconds North and longitude 51 degrees, 23 minutes, 00 seconds East, and having a geodetic azimuth of 278 degrees, 14 minutes, 27 seconds, with a boundary line dividing the continental shelf appertaining to Bahrain and Qatar, thence:

<u>Lat. North</u>	<u>Long. East</u>
Point (2) 27° 02' 46"	51° 05' 54"
Point (3) 27° 06' 30"	50° 57' 00"
Point (4) 27° 10' 00"	50° 54' 00"

ARTICLE 2

If any single geological petroleum structure or petroleum field, or any single geological structure or field of any other mineral extends across the boundary line set out in Article 1 of this Agreement and the part of such structure or field which is situated on one side of that boundary line could be exploited wholly or in part by directional drilling from the other side of the boundary line then:

- a) No well shall be drilled on either side of the boundary line as set out in Article 1 so that any producing section thereof is less than 125 metres from the said boundary line except by mutual agreement between the Imperial Government of Iran and the Government of Bahrain.
- b) If the circumstances considered in this Article shall arise both Parties

hereto shall use their best endeavours to reach agreement as to the manner in which the operations on both sides of the boundary line could be coordinated or unitized.

ARTICLE 3

The boundary line referred to in Article 1 hereof has been illustrated on the British Admiralty chart No. 2847.....

ARTICLE 4

Nothing in this Agreement shall affect the status of the superjacent waters or air-space above any part of the continental shelf.

ARTICLE 5

a) This Agreement shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged at Tehran.

b) This Agreement shall enter into force on the date of exchange of instruments of ratification.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned being duly authorized by their respective Governments so to do have signed this Agreement.

DONE in duplicate at Bahrain the 22nd Rabi' al-Theni 1391 corresponding to the 27th Khordad 1350 corresponding to the 17th June 1971 in the Persian, Arabic and English languages, all texts being equally authoritative.

ANALYSIS

The Bahrain-Iran continental shelf boundary is not based solely on the equidistance principle. Points 1 and 4 were determined by existing continental shelf boundary agreements; the remaining two points are nearly the same distance from Bahrain and Iran, so the assumption can be made that Points 2 and 3 are in fact equidistant points. The continental shelf boundary agreement does not specify that the principle of equidistance was utilized, but rather that the boundary divides the shelf in a "just, equitable and precise manner."

The continental shelf boundary extends for a distance of 28.28 nautical miles, with an average distance of 9.43 nautical miles between the turning points. The average water depth at the turning points ranges from 32 to 40 fathoms, with an average depth of 36.5 fathoms.

The turning points are an average of 54.11 nautical miles from Bahraini territory and 49.92 nautical miles from Iranian territory.

Physical Characteristics of the Bahrain-Qatar Continental Shelf Boundary

CSB Point	Distance Between Points (n.m.)	Water Depth (fathoms)	Bahrain Territory	Distance Land to CSB Point (nautical miles)	Iran Territory	
1		40	islet north of Jazirat al Muharrag	(58.50)	(48.75)	Nakhilu
	15.33					
2		39	islet north of Jazirat al Muharrag	(51.20)	(50.70)	Nakhilu
3	8.75					
		32	islet north of Jazirat al Muharrag	(52.00)	(50.75)	Nakhilu
	4.20					
4		35	islet north of Jazirat al Muharrag	54.75)	(49.50)	Nakhilu

Point 1 of the boundary is coextensive with Point 2 of the Iran-Qatar continental shelf boundary.^{*} Point 1 is approximately 10 nautical miles nearer Iran than Bahrain.

The distance from Point 1 to Point 2 is 15.33 nautical miles. Distance measurements on a hydrographic chart reveal that Point 2 is one-half nautical mile closer to Iran than Bahrain: this difference, however, may be attributed to the scale of the hydrographic chart. The assumption is that Point 2 is an equidistant point even though the boundary agreement does not specify that the location of the turning point was determined through utilization of the equidistance principle.

Point 3 is 8.75 nautical miles northwest of Point 2. It appears that Point 3 is also an equidistant point even though the turning point is 1.25 nautical miles nearer Iran. (This assumption made for the reasons relative to Point 2 above.)

Point 4 of the agreement coincides with Point 1 of the Iran-Saudi Arabia continental shelf boundary.^{**} The northeasterly extension of the Bahrain-Saudi Arabia continental shelf boundary obviously terminates in this tripoint even though the Bahrain-Saudi Arabia agreement does not specify a terminal point beyond boundary Point 14, which lies 12 1/4 nautical miles southwest of Point 1 (Iran-Saudi Arabia) and Point 4 (Bahrain-Iran).^{***}

Point 4, the northwest terminus of the Bahrain-Iran continental shelf boundary, is 4.20 nautical miles from Point 3. Point 4 is 5.25 nautical miles nearer Iranian territory than it is

^{*} See Department of State, Office of the Geographer, *Continental Shelf Boundary: Iran-Qatar*, Limits in the Seas, No. 25, July 9, 1970.

^{**} See Department of State, Office of the Geographer, *Continental Shelf Boundary: Iran-Saudi Arabia*, Limits in the Seas, No. 24, July 6, 1970.

^{***} See Department of State, Office of the Geographer, *Continental Shelf Boundary: Bahrain-Saudi Arabia*, Limits in the Seas, No. 12, March 10, 1970.

to Bahraini territory.

SUMMARY

The limits of the Bahrain-Iran continental shelf boundary were constrained by two terminal points which were part of existing continental shelf boundary agreements. The intervening turning points, Points 2 and 3, are apparently based on the principle of equidistance, although the agreement does not state that the equidistance principle was utilized.

The delimitation of the Bahrain-Iran continental shelf boundary leaves only the development of a continental shelf agreement between Bahrain and Qatar to complete the division of the seabed in the central Persian Gulf.

