



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 73 – August 1, 1966**

## **Chad – Niger Boundary**

**(Country Codes: CD-NI)**

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



# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

No. 73

## CHAD – NIGER BOUNDARY

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Boundary Brief.....	2
II. Historical Background.....	2
III. Geographic Setting.....	6
IV. Boundary Alignment .....	7
V. Present Situation .....	9
Appendix .....	10



## **CHAD – NIGER BOUNDARY**

### **I. BOUNDARY BRIEF**

Located in the Sahara, the Chad–Niger boundary is approximately 730 miles in length. In the south the Nigeria tripoint is situated in Lake Chad at about 13° 42' 53" N. latitude and 13° 38' 20" E. longitude, and in the north the Libya tripoint is situated northwest of the Tibesti at 23° N. latitude and 15° E. longitude. Northward the boundary traverses Lake Chad, crosses typical sandy and gravelly surfaces, and continues through a region of rocky ridges and steep-sided hills. There are no known pillars demarcating the boundary.

### **II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Initially the boundary separated not only Chad and Niger but also the larger units of French West Africa<sup>1</sup> and French Equatorial Africa.<sup>2</sup> It was established and modified by means of French internal administrative procedures. Following the independence of both Chad and Niger in 1960, the boundary assumed the status of an international line.

In 1885 the General Act of the Berlin conference recognized that the upper valley of the Niger was within the French sphere of influence. An Anglo–French Convention on August 5, 1890, established a boundary between Say on the Niger and Barona on Lake Chad with British territory to the south of the line and French territory to the north. The original boundary was not satisfactory and was revised by subsequent treaties. Meanwhile in 1893, extension of the boundary between German Kamerun and Nigeria northward to Lake Chad left most of the Adamaoua area to Germany and Yola to the United Kingdom. The following year a Franco–German agreement determined the boundary between the territories of the two states in the Lake Chad area.

Prior to 1845 and again between 1859 and 1893, most of the territory under French control and later to become part of French West Africa was administered by the Governor of Senegal. In 1895 a federation of French West Africa was formed and the Governor of Senegal was appointed the governor-general of the new entity. Seven years afterward the governor generalship was changed to a separate office, and Senegal then held the same rank as the other colonies of the federation.

In addition to recognition of a French sphere of influence in the upper valley of Niger, the Berlin Conference of 1885 allowed France to retain possession of the lands explored by Savorgnan de Brazza from bases in Gabon including parts of the Congo basin and the Niari valley. In 1886 Gabon was administered by a lieutenant governor under the authority of Commissioner de Brazza. Later the same year, De Brazza was

---

<sup>1</sup> French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française, AOF) comprised what eventually became Dahomey, French Guinea (Guinée Française), Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), Mauritania (Mauritanie), Niger, Senegal (Sénégal), Soudan (Soudan Français), and Upper Volta (Haute Volta).

<sup>2</sup> French Equatorial Africa (Afrique Équatoriale Française, AEF) consisted of Gabon, Middle Congo (Moyen Congo), Ubangi-Chari (Oubangui-Chari), and Chad (Tchad).



appointed commissioner general over the two colonies of Gabon and French Congo. A decree in 1888 united Gabon and French Congo, and three years later another decree gave the whole the title of French Congo (Congo Francais) which replaced the earlier general term of "Ouest Africain." Starting from Libreville in 1897, the Marchand mission crossed unmapped lands to reach Fashoda on the upper Nile the following year, only to discover British forces already in possession of the area. Before Marchand reached Fashoda, however, the French had made plans to occupy the Chari–Baguirmi region south of Lake Chad, and in 1899–1900, three expeditions were organized with the aim of joining France's possessions in central, west, and north Africa. An expedition marched southward from Algeria, a second moved eastward from the Niger area, and a third traveled northward from the French Congo all meeting on April 21, 1900 at Kousseri (Fort Foureau) south of Lake Chad. The campaign was successful in linking together France's African possessions and in expanding the French Congo territories northward of Lake Chad.

In 1901 the so-called third military territory on military territory of Niger was created with headquarters at Zinder. For civil matters the territory was attached to the Haut Senegal–Niger administrative unit. About 1910 Niger was enlarged by the Gao cercle but the following year the cercle was returned to the Soudan. The Colony of Niger was organized in 1922 and the capital moved to Niamey in 1926. The Tibesti was transferred officially in 1931 from Niger to Chad. In 1933 the dissolution of the colony of Upper Volta gave to Niger the provinces of Fada and Dori on the right bank of the Niger, but with the reconstitution of Upper Volta in 1947 the provinces were returned. Following World War II Niger was made an overseas territory, became an autonomous member of the French Community in 1958, and two years later was granted independence.

In 1903 French Congo consisted of the colonies of Gabon and Middle Congo, the territory of Ubangi–Chari, and the military territory of Chad. The colony of Ubangi–Chari–Chad was formed in 1906 with Chad under a regional commander at Fort–Lamy subordinate to Ubangi–Chari. The commissioner general of French Congo was raised to the status of a governor generalship in 1908, and by a decree the name of French Equatorial Africa was given to a federation of the three colonies, each of which had its own lieutenant governor. In 1914 Chad was detached from the colony of Ubangi–Chari and made a separate territory; full colonial status was conferred in 1920. The federal constitution of French Equatorial Africa was replaced by a unitary administration from Brazzaville in 1934. In 1946 a boundary adjustment was made south of Fort–Archambault between Chad and Ubangi–Chari. Similar to Niger following World War II, Chad became an overseas territory in 1946, an autonomous member of the French Union in 1958, and independent in 1960.

Different maps have shown the Chad–Niger boundary with various alignments since 1900. Lack of adequate knowledge of landforms and tribal areas, broad interpretations of administrative instruments, and actual territorial changes all have contributed to divers representations of the boundary. Likewise, the line may be subject to future adjustments as additional boundary details become available.



Northward from the Nigeria tripoint to Molo, the boundary was determined initially in accordance with a convention signed by the Commanding Officers of the Chad and Niger military territories. It was approved on February 11, 1912, subject to adherence by the Governors General of French Equatorial Africa and French West Africa. Although the convention is not available in Washington, a letter written by Colonel Hocquart, Commanding Officer of the Niger military territory, to the Governor General of French West Africa affords the text of the convention as follows:

The administrative boundary starts from the Anglo–French border at the point where the latter dips toward the southeast after following the parallel at the confluence of the Komadougou (with Lake Chad). It runs in the direction of Karam through the Island of Binger and Garoa to the dune line forming the northern boundary of the Chad Basin.

From this dune line, boundary of the Territory swerves northeast so as to leave Karam in Niger territory and passes through the wells of Molo, Fayenga and Firkachi, common to the two adjacent territories.

Finally, by the means of this solution, the administrative boundary of the Territory eastward would be undecided north of the 16th degree of latitude.

Prior to the transfer of Tibesti from Niger to Chad by French Memorandum No. 2268 of March 18, 1931, maps indicated the Chad–Niger boundary as extending northeastward from the Nigeria tripoint by a straight line to a point of 16° N. latitude and 14° E. longitude. It continued northward by a straight line for a short distance beyond Kayougue in the Tibesti, and then by a zig-zag course through the eastern part of the mountains to about 22° N. and 19° E. From 1931 to about World War II, the boundary was shown usually as a straight line extending northward along the meridian passing through the Nigeria tripoint to 15° N. latitude. It then continued as a straight line to the vicinity of Siltou and for the remainder of the boundary the alignment as given in Memorandum No. 2268 was utilized. In 1939 a French boundary delimitation commission (often referred to as a demarcation commission) is known to have worked in the area north of Lake Chad but the results are not available in Washington. Apparently the present alignment between Lake Chad and Molo was determined under French supervision by the Institut Geographique National with the concurrence of the residents along the boundary of the two states. An agreement between the Governors of Chad and Niger in 1957 appears to be the basis for the present boundary between Molo and Siltou, although the terms of the agreement are not available in Washington.

Initially the contact between the British and French spheres of influence in the vicinity of Lake Chad was determined by the Anglo–French declaration of 1890 as follows:

The Government of Her Britannic Majesty recognizes the sphere of influence of France to the south of her Mediterranean possessions, up to a line from Saye (Say) on the Niger, to Barruwa (Baroua) on Lake Tchad, drawn in such



manner as to comprise in the sphere of action of the Niger Company all that fairly belongs to the Kingdom of Sokoto; the line to be determined by the Commissioners to be appointed.

A convention in 1898 between the United Kingdom and France changed the boundary between their respective spheres of influence, extended the boundary into Lake Chad, and determined the meridian on which the present Nigeria tripoint is located as follows:

...; then due north until it (boundary between French and British spheres of influence) regains the 14th parallel of north latitude; then eastwards along this parallel as far as its intersection with the meridian passing 35' east of the centre of the town of Kuka (Kukawa)...

An Anglo–French convention in 1904 determined the boundary between the territories of the two states as the thalweg of the Komadougou immediately west of Lake Chad and the parallel passing through the thalweg of the mouth of the mentioned river in the lake as follows:

The boundary will then, as before, follow the thalweg of the said river (Komadougou) to Lake Chad.

Thence it will follow the degree of latitude passing through the thalweg of the mouth of the said river up to its intersection with the meridian running 35' east of the centre of the town of Kouka (Kukawa),...

Two years later the Anglo–French convention of 1906 established the intersection of latitude and longitude, on which the present Nigeria<sup>3</sup> tripoint is based.

...then it (Anglo–French boundary) will follow the thalweg of the said river (Komadougou) as far as Lake Chad.

From the mouth of the Komodugu–Yobe (Komadougou) in Lake Chad the frontier will follow towards the east the parallel of latitude, passing through the thalweg of the mouth of the said river as far as a point situated at a distance 35 kilometers from the centre of the village of Bosso. From this point it will run in a straight line to the point of intersection of the 13th parallel of north latitude with the meridian running 35' east of the centre of the town of Kukawa, the meridian mentioned in the Conventions of the 14th June, 1898, and the 8th April, 1904.

---

<sup>3</sup> Nigeria proclaimed independence on October 1, 1960, following an agreement with the United Kingdom.



Apparently the Libya<sup>4</sup> tripoint of the Chad–Niger boundary is located on a conventional line. In accordance with available sources the Libya boundary between Tummo and the Tropic of Cancer is a conventional boundary based on the southern limits of the former Turkish vilayets of Tripoli and Barca.<sup>5</sup>

### **III. GEOGRAPHIC SETTING**

In the north the boundary traverses a rocky plateau west of the Tibesti. Known in part as the Massif D'Afafi, the area is typified by numerous ridges, steep-sided hills, and deeply cut wadies. Southward of the rocky plateau, sandy and gravelly surfaces extend for about 500 miles. In places there are extensive dune areas such as occur in the Grand Erg de Bilma. The southern part of the sandy and gravelly area is located in the Chad basin and slopes gradually downward to Lake Chad. The Chad–Niger boundary extends for about 46 miles through the shallow, freshwater body.

Essentially a lake of interior drainage, it overflows occasionally into the Benue system and some water seeps underground elsewhere. Lake Chad is about 800 feet above sea level and ranges in depth up to about 22 feet, although this depth varies with the level of the lake. Somewhat resembling an upright-Y in shape, it is considered usually to be about 175 miles long and 75 miles wide. The principal tributaries are the Komadougou and the Chari, and a navigable channel for small boats connects the mouth of the latter river with Bol. The shoreline is irregular and often undefined as the area of the lake ranges between 4,000 and 8,000 square miles during low and high-water periods, respectively. Marshy areas and mudbanks are typical of the lake and some of the numerous islands are inhabited such as along the eastern shore. In addition to grazing on certain islands, fishing and natron (sodium carbonate) extraction are associated with the lake.

Except for a low-latitude steppe climate around Lake Chad, most of the boundary passes through desert types with hot daytime temperatures and a few inches to negligible amounts of precipitation. Aquatic vegetation grows in and adjacent to the lake, north of which is a relatively narrow zone of short grasses with broad-leaved deciduous shrubs. The remainder of the boundary traverses areas of scattered broad-leaved deciduous, dwarf shrubs or barren wastes.

In general the boundary passes through sparsely populated areas. Immediately north of Lake Chad the population density ranges between 5 and 50 persons per square mile, then quickly drops to between 1 and 5, and the remainder of the boundary has less than

---

<sup>4</sup> Libya became independent upon receipt of administrative powers from the United Kingdom and France in pursuance of decisions passed by the United Nations in 1949 and 1950. Prior to World War II, Libya had been an Italian colony since 1912 and Turkish vilayets from 1835 to 1912.

<sup>5</sup> For purposes of indicating spheres of influence, the southern limits of the vilayets were accepted apparently as the boundary between Turkish and French territories by the Anglo–French convention of June 14, 1898, and the Anglo–French declaration of March 21, 1899, which supplemented the convention of 1898. In the Franco-Italian Agreement of November 1, 1902, Italy recognized the treaties of 1898 and 1899 and, in effect, concurred in the boundaries determined by the spheres of influence.



1 person per square mile with most of the Grand Erg de Bilma uninhabited. There are a few small villages or settlements where wells or other sources of water supply are available, and some support limited crops. Animal grazing is the major economic activity. Kanembu people adjacent to Lake Chad and Daza farther to the north inhabit areas on both sides of the boundary.

#### **IV. BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT**

By Memorandum No. 2268 of March 18, 1931, the Tibesti area was transferred from French West Africa to French Equatorial Africa or more specifically from Niger to Chad, respectively. In addition the boundary between the two states was delimited southward from the Libya tripoint to Siltou. The Memorandum affords the boundary alignment as follows:

1. Beginning at the Libyan border, the line of demarcation between the colonies of Chad (AEF) and Niger (AOF) is represented by a line that originates at the point of intersection of the 23rd parallel North and the 15th Meridian East and runs east of the Afafi massif to the point of intersection of the 22nd parallel with the meridian line 15°12' East.
2. From that point, it follows said meridian southward to parallel 21°30'.
3. Then, it runs to a point determined by the following coordinates:

Latitude 21°27' North  
Longitude 15°17' East

4. Then, it runs toward the point of intersection of Enneri Sidi with the 21st parallel north.<sup>6</sup>
5. From there, it follows the course of the Enneri Sidi, leaving it to run through the middle of the following depressions:<sup>7</sup>

Loga Accebamonto, Sougougouloga, Kalkatiouhateire Kalkatiouka,  
Kogomaguera, Bellediouhal.

---

<sup>6</sup> Probably the wadi referred to is the Enneri Sidi Abakenar which intersects the 21st parallel at about 15° 28' 30".

<sup>7</sup> The referenced depressions in the convention could not be located with any great degree of accuracy from available maps. Likewise, the places and routes named in paragraphs 8 and 9 could not be accurately determined in relation to the boundary points. The geographical coordinates supplied for this sector and the remainder of the boundary were measured or interpolated on what appeared to be the most detailed and reliable maps. The sheets used in the study are listed in sequence from north to south in the Appendix.



6. Thus, it reaches the Bonger Kessou depression, winds around to the northeast of the Monts Tieboro Lulu and meets the Enneri Mi at the easternmost edge of the Yey Lulu (Yey Loulli) mountains.
7. Then, it runs toward a point on meridian 16° east at 13 kilometers south of the highest peak in the Dourso massif.<sup>8</sup>
8. Then, passing through the Kouri Lahidomga (Kouri Lahidinga) dunes, it runs toward a point on the Erigueri trail, at Agazo, 17 kilometers west of the Erigueri well (point of reference 19° 56' 50" N., 15° 45' 20" E.).
9. Finally, it meets the old boundary, passing directly through the following points: boundary of the dune area, 17 kilometers west of Aragoua (point of reference 18° 47' 00" N., 15° 35' 40" E.),<sup>9</sup> and the Siltou trail toward Hamodji, 20 kilometers West of the well (point of reference 16° 44' 50" N., 15° 31' 10" E.).

The sector between Siltou and Molo was fixed apparently as a provisional boundary by the convention signed by the Governors of Chad and Niger early in 1957. It consists of a series of straight-line segments which, from north to south, pass through the following approximate points: 16° 44' 50" N., 15° 31' 10" E.; 15° 44' 20" N., 14° 23' 30" E. (Firkachi); 15° 36' 00" N., 14° 17' 00" E. (Fayenga); 15° 33' 00" N., 14° 14' 50" E. (Saoudinga); 15° 10' 10" N., 13° 58' 35" E. (Tabede Gana); 15° 08' 45" N., 13° 57' 50" E. (Tabede); 15° 03' 00" N., 13° 52' 30" E. (Deborom); 14° 52' 10" N., 13° 47' 30" E. (Yogou); 14° 47' 45" N., 13° 47' 45" E. (Alebaus); 14° 43' 50" N., 13° 48' 55" E. (road between Nguigmi and Mao); 14° 43' 30" N., 13° 48' 30" E.; 14° 41' 50" N., 13° 46' 00" E.; 14° 42' 10" N., 13° 44' 55" E., and 14° 38' 20" N., 13° 40' 20" E. (Molo).

The present alignment of the sector between Molo and the Nigeria tripoint was determined apparently by the boundary residents acceptance of an Institute Geographique National (IGN) boundary delimitation survey. Along with French Government representatives, officials of the Brazzaville Annex of IGN located the alignment of the boundary on site. The exact date of the delimitation is not known, but it is associated possibly with the delimitation of 1939. This boundary sector also appears to consist of straight-line segments, many of which pass through or near water wells. From north to south, the approximate coordinates of boundary points are given as follows: 14° 38' 20" N., 13° 40' 20" E.; 14° 37' 10" N., 13° 41' 35" E. (Dramountou); 14° 35' 15" N., 13° 41' 30" E.; 14° 33' 30" N., 13° 41' 40" E. (Bilangey); 14° 31' 10" N., 13° 38' 30" E. (Digidringa); 14° 30' 25" N., 13° 36' 10" E.; 14° 30' 45" N., 13° 34' 30" E.; 14°

<sup>8</sup> Paragraph 7 lends itself to several possible interpretations as regards the location of the boundary relative to the 16th meridian. The coordinates given assume a point on the 16th meridian at about 20° 16' 10".

<sup>9</sup> Referenced coordinates indicate the calculated intersection of boundary lines extended southward and northward from the 1:200,000 maps sheets NE-33-XXII and NE-33-IV, respectively, because the intervening Fond Topographique sheets NE-33-XVI and NE-33-X are not available. Coordinates measured on the 1:100,000 sheet 2,663 were 18° 44' N. and 15° 36' E., but those calculated by use of the larger-scale maps are presumed to be more accurate.



28' 55" N., 13° 29' 40" E. (Yatron Sasadinga); 14° 27' 40" N., 13° 28' 15" E., 14° 24' 30" N., 13° 28' 20" E.; and 13° 42' 53" N., 13° 38' 20" E. (Nigeria tripoint).

## **V. PRESENT SITUATION**

There are no known disputes relative to the alignment of the Chad–Niger boundary. Additional detailed maps and documentation are needed for an exact delimitation of the boundary.



## APPENDIX

### DOCUMENTS

1. General Act of the Conference of Berlin, relative to the Development of Trade and Civilization in Africa; the free Navigation of the Rivers Congo, Niger, etc.; the Suppression of the Slave Trade by Sea and Land; the occupation of Territory on the African Coasts, etc. Berlin, February 26, 1885. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3 vols. 3rd Edition. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909) Vol. 2, pp. 468–486.
2. Declaration between the British and French Governments, respecting Madagascar and the French Sphere of Influence South of her Mediterranean Possessions. London, August 5, 1890 (Approved by the British and French Governments, September 14, 1891).
3. Agreement between Great Britain and Germany respecting Boundaries in Africa. Berlin, November 15, 1893. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 913–915.
4. Protocol between the French and German Delegates for the Settlement of the Questions pending between the two Countries in the Region comprised between the Colonies of the Cameroons and French Congo; and to fix the Line of Demarcation of their respective Spheres of Influence in the Region of Lake Chad. Berlin, February 4, 1894.
5. Convention between Great Britain and France for the Delimitation of their respective Possessions to the West of the Niger, and of their respective Possessions and Spheres of Influence to the East of that River. Paris, June 14, 1898. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 785–793.
6. Convention between Great Britain and France, respecting Newfoundland, and West and Central Africa. London, April 8, 1904. (Ratifications exchanged at London, December 8, 1904). Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 816–819.
7. Convention between Great Britain and France, respecting the Delimitation of the Frontier between the British and French Possessions to the East of the Niger. London, May 29, 1906 (Ratifications exchanged at London, May 29, 1906). Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 843–847.
8. Delimiting Administrative Districts. Letter of Colonel Hocquart, Commanding Officer of the Military Territory of Niger, to the Governor General of French West Africa, Dakar. April 15, 1912.
9. Cession of Tibesti to the A.E.F. Memorandum No. 2268 of March 18, 1931. Signed Brevie–Antonetti.



## **MAPS**

The following sequence of Institut Geographique National (IGN) map sheets shows the boundary area continuously from north to south.

1. Minute Photogrammetrique: scale 1:200,000; published 1959 by Service Geographique, Brazzaville; sheets NF-33-XVI (Fokiri–Kourizo) and NF-33-X. Note the boundary is not indicated on these sheets. However, the sheets afford much topographic detail and the straight-line segments of the boundary can be superimposed easily upon them in accordance with Memorandum No. 2268 of March 18, 1931.
2. Fond Topographique (Type Regions Desertiques): scale 1:200,000; published 1962 by Annexe de Brazzaville; sheets NF-33-IV and NE-33-XXII.
3. Carte de l'Afrique (Surcharge OACI): scale 1:1,000,000; published 1961, Paris; sheet 2663 (Kaouar). This sheet shows the area between 19° and 17° N. latitude where 1:200,000 maps are not available.
4. Fond Topographique (Type Regions Desertiques): scale 1:200,000; published 1964 by Annexe a Brazzaville; sheet NE-33-IV (Siltou).
5. Carte de l' Afrique: scale 1:200,000; published 1959–61 by Service Geographique, Brazzaville; sheets ND-33-XXI (Dira), ND-33-XIV (Nguigmi), an ND-33-VIII (Boso).



This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared by the Geographer, Office of Research in Economics and Science, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, in accordance with provisions of Bureau of the Budget Circular No. A-16.

Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Geographer, Room 8744, Department of State, Washington, D.C. (Telephone: Code 182, Extension 4508).