

International Boundary Study

SERIES A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

Continental Shelf Boundary

BAHRAIN-SAUDI ARABIA



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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

Series A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 12

CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY: BAHRAIN-SAUDI ARABIA

The Geographer
Office of the Geographer
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BAHRAIN-SAUDI ARABIA CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY

The Government of the Shaykhdom of Bahrain and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed an Agreement on February 22, 1958, dividing the continental shelf in the Persian Gulf between the two countries. The two Governments also agreed to share equally in the income from the exploitation of petroleum resources in the Fasht bu Saafa Hexagon, which is located in Saudi Arabian waters. Ratifications were exchanged on February 26, 1958, and the Agreement then came into force.

Neither country is a party to the Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf; however, the two countries have adopted the shelf concept in general proclamations which give no precise definition to the shelf. The proclamations are:

Bahrain: Proclamation of June 5, 1949

Saudi Arabia: (1) Royal Proclamation of May 28, 1949 (revoked and superceded by Royal Pronouncement No. 33 of February 16, 1958;

(2) Regulations for the Ownership of Red Sea Resources, Royal Decree No. M/27 of October 1, 1968.

The Continental Shelf Boundary Agreement between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia set forth the following principles:

Article 1

1. The boundary line between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of Bahrain, on the basis of the median line, begins at Point 1 located at the midpoint of the line connecting the tip of Ras al-Barr at the southernmost extremity of Bahrain, and Ras Abu Maharah (B) on the coast of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
2. The above-mentioned median line then extends from Point 1 to Point 2 located at the midpoint of the line connecting Point (A) with the northern tip of the island of al-Zakhnuniyah (C).
3. The line then extends from Point 2 to Point 3 located at the midpoint of the line connecting (A) with the tip of Ras Sayyah (D).
4. The line then extends from Point 3 to Point 4 shown on the attached map and located at the midpoint of the line connecting points (E) and (F) shown on the map.
5. The line then extends from Point 4 to Point 5 shown on the map and located at the midpoint of the line connecting Points (G) and (H) shown on the map.

6. The line then extends from Point 5 to Point 6 shown on the map and located at the midpoint of the line connecting Points (I) and (J) shown on the map.
7. The line then extends from Point 6 to Point 7 located at the midpoint of the line connecting the southwestern tip of the island of Umm al-Na'san (K) with Ras al-Qurayyah (L).
8. The line then extends from Point 7 to Point 8 located on the westernmost tip of the island of Lubainah al-Saghirah, leaving this island to the Government of Bahrain.
9. The line then extends from Point 8 to Point 9 located on the easternmost tip of the island of Lubainah al-Kabirah, leaving this island to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
10. The line then extends from Point 9 to Point 10 located at the midpoint of the line connecting the northwestern tip of Khaur Fasht (M) with the southern tip of the island of Kaskus (N).
11. The line then extends from Point 10 to Point 11 located at the midpoint of the line connecting Point (O) on the western edge of Fasht al-Jarim with Point (N) mentioned in Paragraph 10 above.
12. The line then extends from Point 11 to Point 12 located at the intersection of Latitude 26° 31' 48" N and Longitude 50° 23' 15" E approximately.
13. The line then extends from Point 12 to Point 13 located at the intersection of Latitude 26° 37' 15" N and Longitude 50° 33' 24" E approximately.
14. The line then extends from Point 13 to Point 14 located at the intersection of Latitude 26° 59' 30" N and Longitude 50° 46' 24" E approximately, leaving Rennie Shoals (known as Najwat al-Raqay and Fasht al-'Annawiyah) to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
15. The line then extends northeastwards from Point 14 to the extent consistent with the [Saudi Arabian] Royal Pronouncement issued on 1 Sha'ban 1368, corresponding to 28 May 1949, and the Proclamation made by the Government of Bahrain on 5 June 1949.
16. Everything lying to the left of the line referred to in the above paragraphs belongs to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and everything lying to the right of the line belongs to the Government of Bahrain, with both Governments being bound by the provisions of Article 2 below.

Article 2. [Following is] the area lying within the six sides described below:

1. A line beginning at the point of intersection of Latitude 27° 00' N and Longitude 50° 23' E, approximately;
2. Thence to the point of intersection of Latitude 26° 31' 48" N and Longitude 50° 23' 15" E, approximately;
3. Thence to the point of intersection of Latitude 26° 37' N and Longitude 50° 33' E, approximately;
4. Thence to the point of intersection of Latitude 26° 59' 30" N and Longitude 50° 46' 24" E, approximately;
5. Thence to the point of intersection of Latitude 26° 59' 30" N and Longitude 50° 40' E;
6. Thence to the point of intersection of Latitude 27° 00' N and Longitude 50° 40' E;
7. Thence to the starting point.

In view of the desire of HH the Ruler of Bahrain and the consent of HM the King of Saudi Arabia, the oil resources in the area mentioned and delimited above in the part belonging to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be developed in the manner which his Majesty may choose, on condition that he give the Government of Bahrain half of that which pertains to the Saudi Arabian Government of the net income derived from this development. It is understood that this shall not impair the right of sovereignty and administration of the Saudi Arabian Government in the above-mentioned area.

Article 3. A map, in two copies, showing the approximate locations and points referred to in the preceding Paragraphs, shall be attached to this Agreement. However, a final map shall be prepared by the Commission referred to in Article 4 hereinafter. This final map shall, once it has been approved and signed by authorized representatives of the two Governments, form an integral part of this Agreement.

Article 4. The two parties shall select a Technical Commission to carry out the necessary surveys for the establishment of the boundaries, as provided in this Agreement. This Commission shall start work not later than two months from the date on which this Agreement comes into effect.

Article 5. After the Commission referred to in Article 4 has completed [its work], and after the two parties have approved the final map which it has prepared, a commission composed of technical representatives of the two parties shall place the markers indicating the boundaries, in accordance with the details shown on the final map.

Article 6. This Agreement shall take effect from the date on which it is signed by the two parties.

Written in Riyadh, in two original Arabic copies, on the fourth day of Sha'ban in the year 1377, corresponding to 22 February 1958.

ANALYSIS

The delimitation of the continental shelf boundary (CSB) between the two countries employs a variation of the equidistance principle. The CSB is not a median line based on the configuration of the coastline, but rather a line midway between predetermined landmarks on both Bahraini and Saudi Arabian territory. Examples of this latter principle are Points 1-6, 10 and 11 of the CSB which are equidistant between fixed landmarks on the respective territories. An additional variation of the principle involved in determining a median line, is that in the case of Points 1-4, and 7, small islands between the coasts were not utilized in determining the midpoint between Bahraini and Saudi Arabian territory.

The CSB extends for a distance of 98.5 nautical miles. There are 14 points on the boundary. The average distance between the points is 7.57 nautical miles with a minimum and maximum distance between points of 1.5 and 25.25 nautical miles, respectively. The average water depth at the points is 6.93 fathoms, with a minimum depth of one fathom (Points 8 and 9 are on a reef) and a maximum depth of 27 fathoms.

The southern terminus of the CSB is Point 1 and it is the midpoint between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia if small islands are not used to determine the midpoint. Point 1, however, does not represent a trisection point of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar claims to the continental shelf. Points 2-4, and 7 of the CSB are also midpoints between landmarks and their location was determined independent of small islands in the vicinity.

Points 5, 6, 10, and 11 of the CSB do represent true midpoints between Bahraini and Saudi territory. In the case of these four points, there are no small islands that could be used to alter the location of the points.

On the westernmost tip of the Bahraini island of Lubainah al-Saghirah, is located Point 8 of the CSB. Point 9 is then located on the easternmost tip of the Saudi Arabian island of Lubainah al-Kabirah.

The final three points, 12-14, of the CSB are located on the eastern side of the Fasht bu Saafa Hexagon. The location of these points is based on agreed upon geographical coordinates, as opposed to points determined in relation to land features.

From Point 14 of the CSB, the boundary proceeds in a northeasterly direction into the Persian Gulf. The Agreement states that the line continues on consistent with the Saudi

Arabian Royal Pronouncement issued on May 28, 1949. However, this Royal Pronouncement was revoked and superceded by Royal Pronouncement No. 33, of February 16, 1958. The latter defines the territorial waters of Saudi Arabia which extend seaward 12 nautical miles. Since the Continental Shelf Agreement was ratified after the revocation of the Royal Pronouncement of May 28, 1949, it can only be assumed that the line from Point 14 does continue in a northeasterly direction as before. This is substantiated by the map that accompanies the CSB Agreement.

The Fashtu bu Saafa Hexagon is an area under Saudi Arabian jurisdiction. However, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have agreed that the oil resources of this area shall be developed as the Saudi Arabians see fit, but revenues received from the exploitation of the petroleum will be evenly divided between the two countries.

The average distance between the six points of the Fasht bu Saafa Hexagon is 14.21 nautical miles, with a minimum and maximum distance between points of 0.5 and 28.25 nautical miles, respectively. The water depth at the points ranges from 2 to 10 fathoms, with an average depth at the points of 13.5 fathoms.

TABLE I. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BAHRAIN-SAUDIA ARABIA CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY

CSB Point	Distance between Points (nm)	Water Depth (fathoms)	Bahrain Territory	Distance Land to CSB (nautical miles)	Saudi Arabia Territory
1		7	Ra's al Barr (Point A)	11.75	Ra's Abu Maharrah (Point B)
	7.50				
2		13	Ra's al Barr (Point A)	9.75	Az Zakhuniya (Point C)
	1.50				
3		5	Ra's al Barr (Point A)	9.75	Ra's Saiya (Point D)
	7.75				
4		8	Ra's al Mattala (Point E)	9.50	Point F
	5.00				
5		5	Point G	9.25	Point H
	4.50				
6		10	Point I	9.75	Point J
	7.75				
7		10	Jazirat Umm Na'san (Point K)	6.75	Ra's al Qurayyah (Point L)
	6.00				
8		0	Lubainah al Saghirah	(0) (5.25)	Mainland
	7.25				
9		0	Khor Fasht	(3.50) (0)	Lubainah al Kabirah
	5.25				
10		1	Khor Fasht (Point M)	3.00	Kaskus (Point N)
	2.75				
11		3	Khor Fasht	(3.00) (4.00)	Kaskus
	7.50				
12		2	Fasht al Jarim	(5.00) (7.00)	Reef

CSB Point	Distance between Points (nm)	Water Depth (fathoms)	Bahrain Territory	Distance Land to CSB (nautical miles)	Saudi Arabia Territory
13	10.50	6	Fasht al Jarim	(4.50) (16.00)	Reef
14	25.25	27	Fasht al Jarim	(29.25) (37.50)	Reef*

* There are various reefs of the Rennie Shoals that could be considered as Saudi above water features. However, indications are that the Rennie Shoals are underwater features.

TABLE II. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FASHT BU SAAFA HEXAGON

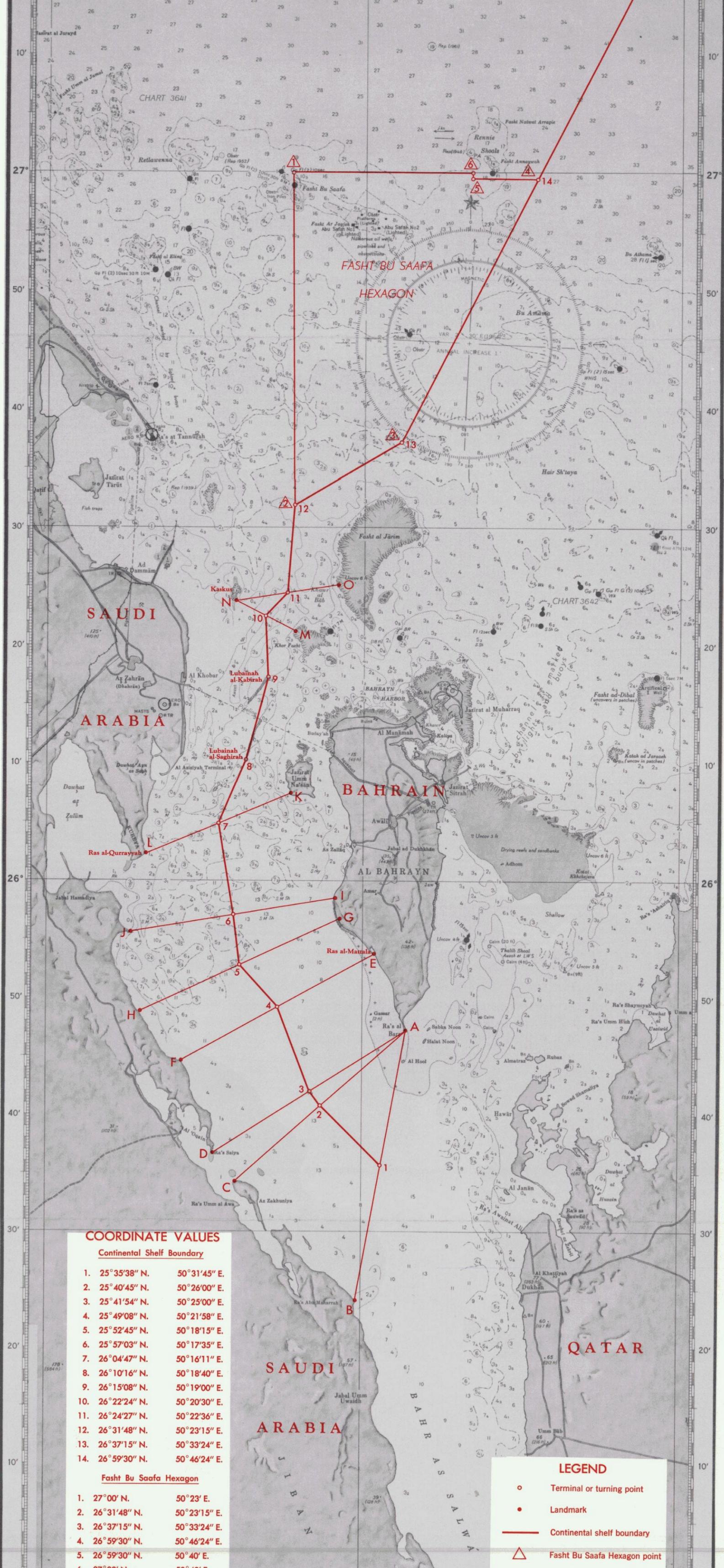
CSB Point	Distance Between Points	Water Depth
1	28.25	10
2	10.50	2
3	25.25	5
4	5.50	27
5	0.50	18
6	15.25	20
1		

SUMMARY

There are two unique features of the continental shelf agreement between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. First, is the case of the Fasht bu Saafa Hexagon, which is under Saudi Arabian jurisdiction. Saudi Arabia has agreed to the exploitation of a resource under its jurisdiction, but to share the revenue from such exploitation with Bahrain.

Secondly, is the employment of two variations of the equidistance principle in determining midpoints. This Agreement is an example of the establishment of the CSB by selecting points halfway between predetermined land markers. These land markers were selected independently of the coastal configuration. In another modification of the equidistance principle small islands were ignored in some instances in determining the terminal or turning points on the CSB.

Bahrain-Saudi Arabia Continental Shelf Boundary



COORDINATE VALUES

Continental Shelf Boundary

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| 1. 25°35'38" N. | 50°31'45" E. |
| 2. 25°40'45" N. | 50°26'00" E. |
| 3. 25°41'54" N. | 50°25'00" E. |
| 4. 25°49'08" N. | 50°21'58" E. |
| 5. 25°52'45" N. | 50°18'15" E. |
| 6. 25°57'03" N. | 50°17'35" E. |
| 7. 26°04'47" N. | 50°16'11" E. |
| 8. 26°10'16" N. | 50°18'40" E. |
| 9. 26°15'08" N. | 50°19'00" E. |
| 10. 26°22'24" N. | 50°20'30" E. |
| 11. 26°24'27" N. | 50°22'36" E. |
| 12. 26°31'48" N. | 50°23'15" E. |
| 13. 26°37'15" N. | 50°33'24" E. |
| 14. 26°59'30" N. | 50°46'24" E. |

Fasht Bu Saafa Hexagon

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. 27°00' N. | 50°23' E. |
| 2. 26°31'48" N. | 50°23'15" E. |
| 3. 26°37'15" N. | 50°33'24" E. |
| 4. 26°59'30" N. | 50°46'24" E. |
| 5. 26°59'30" N. | 50°40' E. |
| 6. 27°00' N. | 50°40' E. |

LEGEND

- Terminal or turning point
- Landmark
- Continental shelf boundary
- △ Fasht Bu Saafa Hexagon point