



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 163 – March 7, 1978**

## **Syria – Turkey Boundary**

**(Country Codes: SY-TU)**

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

**INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY**

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# SYRIA - TURKEY BOUNDARY

## I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Syria - Turkey boundary is approximately 822 kilometers (511 miles) long. It extends between the Mediterranean Sea and the Iraqi tripoint at the confluence of the Tigris and Habur Nehri. The line is demarcated throughout by pillars or rivers.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Geographic Syria, including the present-day countries of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel, became a province of the Ottoman Empire in 1516. The province was governed by the Turkish Sultan through a pasha or governor until the Empire was dissolved in 1918. Following World War I, representatives of the Sultan signed the Treaty of Sevres<sup>1</sup> on August 10, 1920, which reduced the area of Turkey to northern Anatolia and Constantinople.

The treaty also placed the Turkish straits under a European commission, and the remainder of European Turkey was ceded to Greece. Italy and France were given zones in southern Turkey, and the creation of an autonomous Kurdish state and an independent Armenia was authorized. The Arab kingdom of Hejaz was to be independent, while the other Arab provinces were placed under the administration of the United Kingdom, France, and Italy. Although the transfers of territory outside of Turkey proper were completed, the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres were never enforced within Turkey and were superseded by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.

Article 27, Part II (Frontiers of Turkey), of the Treaty of Sevres delimited the Syria - Turkey boundary as follows:

From a point to be chosen on the eastern bank of the outlet of the Hassan Dede, about 3 kilometres northwest of Karatash Burun, northeastwards to a point to be chosen on the Djaihun Irmak about 1 kilometre north of Babeli,  
a line to be fixed on the ground passing north of Karatash;

thence to Kesik Kale,  
the course of the Djaihun Irmak upstream;

thence northeastwards to a point to be chosen on the Djaihun Irmak about 15 kilometres eastsoutheast of Karsbazar,  
a line to be fixed on the ground passing north of Kara Tepe;

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<sup>1</sup> Treaty of Peace With Turkey. Signed at Sevres, August 10, 1920 [With Maps]. United Kingdom *Treaty Series No. 11 (1920)* [Cmd. 964].

thence to the bend in the Djaihun Irmak situated west of Duldul Dagħ,  
the course of the Djaihun Irmak upstream;

thence in a general southeasterly direction to a point to be chosen on Emir Musi  
Dagħ about 15 kilometres south-south-west of Giaour Geul,  
a line to be fixed on the ground at a distance of about 18 kilometres from the  
railway, and leaving Duldul Dagħ to Syria;

thence eastwards to a point to be chosen about 5 kilometres north of Urfa,  
a generally straight line from west to east to be fixed on the ground passing north of  
the roads connecting the towns of Bagħche, Aintab, Biridjik, and Urfa and leaving  
the last three named towns to Syria;

thence eastwards to the south-western extremity of the bend in the Tigris about 6  
kilometres north of Azekh (27 kilometres west of Djezire-ibn-Omar),  
a generally straight line from west to east to be fixed on the ground leaving the town  
of Mardin to Syria;

thence to a point to be chosen on the Tigris between the point of confluence of the  
Khabur Su with the Tigris and the bend in the Tigris situated about 10 kilometres  
north of this point,  
the course of the Tigris downstream, leaving the island on which is situated the town  
of Djezire-ibn-Omar to Syria.

In the meantime, during April 1920, the Allies at the San Remo Conference in Italy agreed that France should be given a mandate for Syria and Lebanon. On September 1, 1920, the establishment of a "Greater" Lebanon was proclaimed, consisting to the former provinces of Lebanon and annexing the coastal cities of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre and the Al Biqa Valley. Syria was split into five subdivisions: the Jabal Druze, Aleppo, Latakia, Damascus, and Alexandretta.

Article VII of a Franco - Turkish agreement<sup>2</sup> of October 20, 1921 (Franklin - Bouillon Agreement), stated that a special administrative regime (autonomous) would be established for the district of Alexandretta (within the French-mandated state of Syria). In the same agreement, Article VIII made provision for changes in the delimitation of the Syria - Turkey boundary as follows:

The frontier line shall start at a point to be selected on the Gulf of Alexandretta immediately to the south of the locality of Payas and will proceed generally towards Meidan - Ekbes (leaving the railway station and the locality to Syria);

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<sup>2</sup> Franco - Turkish Agreement. Angora, October 20, 1921. *League of Nations Treaty Series*, Vol. 54, Treaty No. 1284, pp. 177 - 193.

thence it will bend towards the south-east so as to leave the locality of Marsova to Syria and that of Karnaba as well as the town of Killis to Turkey; thence it will join the railway at the station of Choban-bey. Then it will follow the Baghdad Railway, of which the track as far as Nisibin will remain on Turkish territory; thence it will follow the old road between Nisibin and Jeziret-ibn-Omar where it will join the Tigris. The localities of Nisibin and Jeziret-ibn-Omar as well as the road will remain Turkish; but the two countries shall have the same rights to the use of this road.

The stations and sidings of the section between Choban-bey and Nisibin shall belong to Turkey as forming parts of the track of the railway.

A class "A" mandate, which envisaged the ultimate independence of Lebanon and Syria, was issued by the Council of the League of Nations on August 12, 1922.

Annexed Protocol No. I of the Franco - Turkish Convention of May 30, 1926, delimited the Syria - Turkey boundary in three sectors: (1) from the Mediterranean to the station of Choban-Bey (Cobanbey), (2) from the station of Choban-Bey to Nisibin (Nusaybin), and (3) from Nisibin to Jeziret-ibn-Omar (Cizre). The Protocol of Delimitation of the Turco - Syrian Frontier contained in the agreement between Turkey and France of June 22, 1929, delimited the third sector of the boundary from Nusaybin to the Iraqi tripoint at the confluence of the Tigris and the Habur Nehri. In a report to the League of Nations dated May 3, 1930, *Annex 1, Final Delimitation Protocol*, it was stated that the boundary would follow the thalweg of the Tigris wherever it moved.

A Franco - Syrian treaty of alliance was signed on September 9, 1936, which guaranteed the independence and sovereignty of Syria within three years. A joint commission was established under Article 14 of the Franco - Turkish General Staff Agreements of July 3, 1938, for the demarcation of the boundary between Syria and the Sanjak of Alexandretta. On November 1, 1938, the commission reported that it had undertaken the demarcation in conformity with the provisions of Article 4 of the Status of Sanjak and a map drawn at a scale of 1:100,000.

A protocol signed at Antioch on May 19, 1939, stated that a number of supplementary pillars had been erected in addition to 448 boundary pillars placed in numerical order. In accordance with an agreement of June 23, 1939, changes were made in the alignment of the boundary starting at pillars 230 and 419. By disposition of France in its capacity as League of Nations mandatory power for Syria, the Sanjak of Alexandretta (present-day Turkish province of Hatay) was transferred to Turkey on July 23, 1939.

Syrian independence was proclaimed as early as September 29, 1941. However, an agreement signed between representatives of the French National Committee of Liberation and of Syria on December 27, 1943, gave most of the mandate powers exercised by France to Syria on January 1, 1944. On February 22, 1958, Syria was united with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic. Syria withdrew from the United Arab Republic on September 28, 1961.

### III. ALIGNMENT

The alignment of the Syria - Turkey boundary is given in four sectors: (1) between Maydan Ikbiz (Meidan-Ekbes) and Cobanbey, (2) between Cobanbey and Nusaybin, (3) between Nusaybin and the Iraqi tripoint, and (4) between Maydan Ikbiz and the Mediterranean.

The first sector is delimited by a Franco - Turkish convention of May 30, 1926.<sup>3</sup> It extends between boundary pillar 213 near the Maydan Ikbiz railway station and the station of Cobanbey. Pillar 312 was erected as part of the boundary demarcation between Cobanbey and the Mediterranean prior to the transfer of the Sanjak of Alexandretta to Turkey. The protocol of May 19, 1939, stated that pillar 312 was about one kilometer northwest of the Maydan Ikbiz station.

From the vicinity of Maydan Ikbiz, the delimitation of the first sector by the convention of May 30, 1926, is as follows:

[The boundary follows a straight line] in a marked west - east direction and joining the old Hadjilar Meidan-Ekbez railway track at the point where it crosses the track leading to the Hassa cemetery from Danadji Huyuki (stone 340);

- (16) From the above-mentioned crossing by the old Hadjilar Meidan Ekbez railway track as far as the point where it meets the Hassa - Islahiya road, the axis of the track forming the frontier line;
- (17) By a straight line running in a marked west - east direction between the above-mentioned crossing and the summit of the Boz-Tepe hill;
- (18) By a straight line running from the summit of the Boz-Tepe hill to the railway bridge over the Kure Dereci;
- (19) From the above-mentioned bridge by the actual course of the Kure Dereci almost as far as its junction with the Kotchanli thalweg;
- (20) By the Kotchanli thalweg from its junction with the Kure Dereci as far as the highest point of the crest;
- (21) From the highest point of the crest by a line running about 500 metres east of the line of heights (950) and leaving in Syria the Alikar Bey Obaci Pendir road;
- (22) From a point situated one kilometre north of Alikar, the frontier will run in the direction of Beuyuk Darmik (point 1250) and will extend eastwards as far as point 805 on the ridge between Bali Keuy (S) and Pertekli (T);
- (23) From point 805 by a straight line meeting the Bali Keuy Saadli track at its junction with the Kotchanli track;
- (24) From the above-mentioned junction by a straight line to point 661;
- (25) From point 661 by a straight line to point 682;
- (26) From point 682 by the crest line as far as the junctions of the two thalwegs proceeding from point 682 eastwards;

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<sup>3</sup> Franco - Turkish Convention. Angora, May 30, 1926. *League of Nations Treaty Series*, Vol. 54, Treaty No. 1285, pp. 195 - 229.

- (27) From the above-mentioned junction by the thalweg as far as the Saboune-Souyou river;
- (28) From the above-mentioned point by the course of the Saboune-Souyou as far as the confluence of that river and the thalweg situated 1,500 metres south-east of Hai Oghlou;
- (29) From the above-mentioned confluence by the thalweg as far as the Merdanli - Chiltah track;
- (30) From the above-mentioned point by the Chiltah track as far as its junction with the Akabe track, passing by the foot of Djeran Tepe;
- (31) From this junction by the Akabup to track Afrin-Souyou;
- (32) From the above-mentioned point by the course of the Afrin-Souyou as far as the confluence of the Iki Dam Deressi;
- (33) From this confluence by the Iki Dam Deressi as far as its meeting-place with the Karrebi-Iki Dam track;
- (34) From this junction by the crest line curving south-eastwards and ending in summit point 702;
- (35) From the above-mentioned summit to the point where the Egri-Kane ravine intersects the straight line 702 - 731;
- (36) From this point up the Egri-Kane ravine to its head;
- (37) From this point as far as the head of the ravine separating the Mihrab Daghi from the Kara Tach;
- (38) From this point following the aforesaid ravine as far as its junction with the north - south path from Tibil (T) to Tahtali (T);
- (39) From this point to the crest line ending at the summit of the Tchagla Tepe;
- (40) By the straight line running between the summit of the Tchagla Tepe to a point situated 200 metres south of Utch Evler;
- (41) From this point by a straight line running north - south and ending at the summit of Sakar Maya;
- (42) By the straight line running west - east from this summit as far as the cross-roads 500 metres south - east of Kara Kouyou;
- (43) By the Kara Kouyou - Tibil (T) road as far as the cross-roads about one kilometre east of Yazı Baghi;
- (44) From this point by the road running north - south as far as the cross-roads about one kilometre south;
- (45) From this point by a line following the steepest gradient and ending on the Azaz - Killis road at the point situated 800 metres south of Tibil;
- (46) From this point by the Azaz - Killis (T) road northwards as far as the culvert 600 metres north-west of Armoudja;
- (47) From this point northwards up the Killis road (T) as far as a point situated 400 metres north of the aforesaid culvert;
- (48) From this point by a line running in a marked east - west direction as far as the meeting of this road with the stream flowing towards Chamrin and Bretche;
- (49) From this point by the bed of the aforesaid stream as far as its meeting with the paths from Chamrin and Tel-es-Cham;

- (50) From this point by the path running from Tel-es-Cham in a marked north-easterly direction as far as its meeting with the path between Kafer Tchoch and Killis;
- (51) From this point by the Kafer Tchoch path as far as the hill 700 metres south-west of Kafer Harim;
- (52) By a straight line running south-east from this hill to a point situated in the ravine of Kafer-Harim one kilometre south of this village;
- (53) From this point by a line running approximately straight in a north-easterly direction as far as the cross-roads about 700 metres west of Saive;
- (54) From this point descending eastwards by the Suep stream as far as the point where it bends southwards;
- (55) From this bend by a line running west - east as far as the Saive (T) Hamili (T) road;
- (56) From this point following the Saive Hamili (T) road as far as the point about one kilometre south-east of Hamili;
- (57) From the above-mentioned point northwards by the Kara - Mezra - Hafsa path as far as a point situated 800 metres distant;
- (58) From this point by a straight line to a point situated 1,200 metres from Bigheidine on the track running from this village in a north-easterly direction;
- (59) From the above-mentioned point by a straight line as far as the point situated on the Kutchuk Bikir - Tathamos track 150 metres south of the stream which crosses this track;
- (60) From the above-mentioned point by a straight line to a point situated 300 metres south of Tchildiraba on the track running between this village and Tathamos;
- (61) From the above-mentioned point by a straight line as far as the meeting of the tracks 800 metres south-west of Salthan;
- (62) From the above-mentioned junction by a straight line as far as the rocky mound numbered 487;
- (63) From the above-mentioned mound by a straight line as far as the cross-roads 1,100 metres to the east;
- (64) From the above-mentioned cross-roads by the track running eastwards, the hill near the station of Choban-Bey and the station itself, the station being in Turkish territory and the town in Syrian territory.

The second section also is delimited by the Franco - Turkish convention of May 30, 1926. It extends between the station of Cobanbey and Nusaybin<sup>4</sup> as follows:

The frontier will follow the Baghdad Railway, of which the track as far as Nisibin will remain in Turkish territory.

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<sup>4</sup> Turkiye - Suriye Hududunun, İkinci kısmı, Cobanbey - Nusaybin (Turkish - Syrian Frontier, second sector, Cobanbey and Nusaybin). Turkish - Syrian Boundary Delimitation Commission; April 25, 1929; 14 sheets; scale 1:50,000.



The stations and sidings in the section between Choban-Bey and Nisibin and all the existing installations employed in the working of the line will belong to Turkey as forming part of the railway track.

The gravel pits required for the working of this track, which will be fixed at the earliest possible date by the delegates of the Public Works Departments of both countries, will be considered as undertakings belonging to the railway.

Turkey and Syria will have joint use of the port of Jerablus and of the track connecting it with the Jerablus station. The territory bounded by the main line and the branch line connecting Jerablus station with the river port will be regarded as a free Customs zone.

An international river station will be established at the port of Jerablus.

The third sector was delimited in detail as published in the Franco - Turkish protocol of June 22, 1929. The line extends eastward from Nusaybin to Cizre on the Tigris and then follows the thalweg of this river to its confluence with the Habur Nehri.<sup>5</sup>

The alignment of the sector is given in Articles 1 and 3 as follows:

#### Article 1

The delimitation of the frontier which is already settled as regards the first and second sectors will be made for the third sector by the Delimitation Commission in accordance with the following line:

The frontier in the third sector takes its beginning at the point indicated by the Delimitation Commission in its meeting of October 28, 1927, as the starting point of the old road. (See Minutes No. 25, Paragraph IV, drawn up as follows:

"The Commission fixed unanimously as the starting point of the old road, the point east of the Jagh Jagh bridge, where the Kameshli track leaves off the road of Djezireh-ibn-Omar to run southwards".)

It will be then fixed as follows:

- (1) By the road (Turkish) from Nisibin to Guirhassin up to the spot where this road is crossed by a semi-permanent stream of a general north-east-south-west orientation running eastward of Guirhassin - a crossing situated on the aforementioned road at 400 meters east of Guirhassin.
- (2) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated at 200 meters south of Guirhassin.

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<sup>5</sup> Carte au 1:50,000 du 3<sup>eme</sup> Secteur de la frontiere Turco - Syrienne de Nissibin a Djeziret, ibn Omar levee par ordre de la Commission d'abornment (Map at 1:50,000 of the Third Sector of the Turkish - Syrian Frontier from Nissibin to Djeziret ibn Omar surveyed by the authority of the Delimitation Commission). November 1927, seven sheets.

- (3) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Guirhassin - Latifeh track 200 meters from Guirhassin.
- (4) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated 400 meters north of Latifeh.
- (5) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Nerkesli - Telziuaneh track 300 meters from Nerkesli.
- (6) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated at 800 meters north from Tel-Djihhan.
- (7) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Tel-Djihhan-Aznaour track 1000 meters from Aznaour.
- (8) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated 400 meters south of Aznaour.
- (9) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Aznaour - Hadjoulou (ruins) 400 meters from Aznaour.
- (10) By a road (Turkish) departing from this last point in the direction toward Derouna Agha (ruins) via Hadjoulou (ruins) and Bavord (ruins) up to a point situated on this road 700 meters east of Bavord (ruins).
- (11) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at the trigonometrical point side 667.
- (12) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at the crossing of the Baneh - Derouna Agha (ruins) and Alakamish - Badian tracks, which crossing is situated 500 meters south-east of Dinik (ruins).
- (13) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at the summit of Izzedin Dagh.
- (14) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated 300 meters south of Kharab Rازه.
- (15) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Kharab Rازه - Khergo (ruins) track 500 meters of Kharab Rازه.
- (16) By a straight line departing from the last point to end at the crossing of the Ain Ser - Delavikiran and Tel-lbel - Delavikiran tracks, which crossing is situated at approximately 1,200 meters north - east of Delavikiran.

- (17) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at the Tel Afrit - Sarmsak (ruins) track at a point situated 300 meters south of Tel Afrit.
- (18) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at the junction of the Tel Afrit - Babil and Tel Afrit - Ayala (ruins) track, which junction is situated at approximately 1,500 meters east of Tel Afrit.
- (19) By the track Tel Afrit - Babil (Turkish) departing from the above indicated junction toward the mill (Turkish) situated on the crossing of the tracks Zergous - Karabreshk and Tel Afrit - Babil, which mill is situated at approximately 1,700 meters south-south-west of Kelani.
- (20) By a straight line departing from the last point to end at a point situated at the Babil - Tel Bagha track, 500 meters east-south-east of Babil.
- (21) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the stream which flows in a general direction toward north-south-east of Babil, which point is situated 500 meters south of Babil.
- (22) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Babil - Tel Bagha track, 500 meters east-south-east of Babil.
- (23) By a straight line departing from this last point in the direction of the center of the Domboulieh village up to a point situated on this straight line 600 meters south-west of Domboulieh.
- (24) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Domboulieh - Kaza Redjeb track 400 meters from Domboulieh.
- (25) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at a point situated on the Domboulieh - Kerdessi track 400 meters of Domboulieh.
- (26) By a straight line departing from this last point, continuing toward the north-east the line defined in the preceding paragraph up to a point situated south-east of the Domboulieh - Kanissippi track.
- (27) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at the point situated 400 meters south of Kanissippi.
- (28) By a straight line departing from this last point and at a point situated 400 meters east-south-east of Kanissippi on the semi-permanent stream markedly oriented toward west - east and flowing south of Kanissippi.

- (29) By a straight line departing from this point to end at the junction of the track situated 1,900 meters approximately north-north-east of the village Kasr Dib (northern village) 2,800 meters approximately north-east of Kanissipi.
- (30) By a straight line departing from this last point to end at the crossing of the Andivar - Arnabat track by a semi-permanent stream having a general orientation toward south-west - north-east and flowing at approximately 800 meters north-west of Andivar west. This point is situated approximately 2,600 meters east-north-east of the Arnabat village and at 1,100 meters approximately north-west of the Andivar village.
- (31) By a straight line markedly directed toward north-east and reaching the crest line which dominates the course of the Saklan. The crossing point of the straight line and that of the crest above-indicated lies at approximately 1,600 meters north-north-west of the Andivar village west.
- (32) From the above point on the crest line which at first dominates the course of the Saklan and later on continues between two semi-permanent rivulets having a general orientation toward south-west-north-east flowing toward the Saklan and ending finally at the crossing point of the Andivar - Djezireh-ibn-Omar road by the Saklan course - a junction situated at approximately 1,000 meters east-north-east from the Djeidt mill.
- (33) From the above-indicated junction by the road Andivar - Djezireh-ibn-Omar (Turkish) up to the point situated 350 meters north of the foregoing.
- (34) From the above-indicated point, by the crest line passing close by the isolated tree situated at approximately 700 meters north-east from the foregoing point and joining the Tigris at approximately 750 meters south-east of the mouth of the small Tigris arm which encircles the city of Djezireh-ibn-Omar to the south.
- (35) By a straight line directed toward the north-east departing from the above-indicated point and reaching the Thalweg of the Tigris.

### Article 3.

The frontier on the Tigris will be determined by the Thalweg of that river from the point defined in paragraph 35 of Article 1, up to the confluence of the Khabur.

The fourth sector was demarcated by a Franco - Turkish commission during 1938 - 39.<sup>6</sup> From pillar 312 of a previous demarcation (pillar 1 of the demarcation of 1938 - 39), the line extends westward to the Karasu and then follows the thalweg of this river downstream

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<sup>6</sup> Hatay - Suriye Hududu (Hatay - Syria Boundary), April 15, 1939. Published by Turkey in 1942, seven sheets; scale 1:50,000.

for about 21 kilometers (13 miles). It then continues southward and forms a large semi-circle on the plains east and southeast of Amik Golu, following the thalweg of the Afrin Suyu for a short distance. The boundary next follows the thalweg of the Orontes (Nahr al 'Asi) for about 30 kilometers (19 miles) and then turns westward across mountainous topography to the Kara Dourane. The line follows the thalweg of the Kara Dourane to the Mediterranean Sea.

The protocol of May 19, 1939, not only made reference to the erection of supplementary boundary pillars in addition to 448 pillars placed initially in numerical order, but it stated that the line followed the thalwegs of the Karasu, Afrin Suyu, and the Orontes.

Several changes were made in the alignment of the boundary by an agreement between France and Turkey signed at Ankara on June 23, 1939.

Article 1. Insofar as it is concerned, France agrees that the boundary described by the Protocols of May 30, 1926, June 22, 1929, and May 3, 1930 be rectified:

- a. From the point where the Kara-Su crosses the current border to monument No. 230 in order to coincide with the boundary marked out on the ground as recorded in the protocol signed at Antioch on May 19, 1939, with the understanding that the village of Guemid between monuments Nos. 17 and 20 shall be totally awarded to Turkey and that from monument No. 221 the boundary shall join monument No. 230 directly, leaving the road from Yenishehr to Antioch in Turkish territory;
- b. And from monument No. 419 leading northeasterly to a point approximately 1,200 meters southwest of Askorane, from that point passing east of Anskorane [sic] and Godja-Qairaq, then running north to a point located about one kilometer northeast of Godja-Qairaq.

From that point the boundary shall extend west to a point located about one kilometer north of the ruined castle then southwesterly to hill 1010 (west of the ruined castle); next southwesterly along the floor of the ravine north of Rachourte which comes out near the Kara-Dourane River and then following the river to the sea.

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

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