

OFFICE OF THE GEOGRAPHER AND GLOBAL ISSUES
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

GUIDANCE BULLETIN

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IRAQ/SYRIA: EUPHRATES SALIENT

Boundary alignment change. In coordination with the U.S. Embassies in Baghdad and Damascus and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, this Office requests that U.S. Government maps hereby amend the Iraq-Syria boundary segment northeast of the town of Husaybah as represented by the former curved course of the Euphrates River to a geodesic straight line between the termini located approximately* between 34°26'12"N 41°00'15.6"E in the north and 34°24'45"N 40°59'01"E in the south (Figure 1). This change represents, in effect, a shift from the 1932 *de jure* alignment to the present-day *de facto* alignment that is, in every likelihood, also *de jure*.

Background. In 1932, the League of Nations prepared a report on the Frontier Between Syria and Iraq that formed the basis of the present-day boundary of these two states. The treaty established twenty-three turning points from the boundary in the Tigris River in the northeast to the tripoint with Jordan in the southwest that with one exception were connected by straight-line segments. That one exception was a segment that followed the course of the Euphrates River as it flowed at the time of the Report (Figure 2).

Since that time, the Euphrates has changed course significantly in this section of the boundary. The old course silted in and became fertile farmland. Imagery analysis of the border indicates no evidence of a boundary within this silted-in oxbow. Instead, an almost straight-line Syrian-built sand berm flanked by parallel roads has been identified connecting the northern and southern termini of the Euphrates salient. U.S. Military have confirmed on the ground that Iraq and Syria consider this berm as their international border and patrol it accordingly. No documentary evidence, however, has been acquired from either country to confirm this realignment. The Iraqi press reported ratification in 2000 of certain border changes agreed to in 1995, which by inference may allude to this segment, since no other changes conflicting with the boundary's 1932 alignment have been observed.

Label and note. Where scale permits, this segment along the berm should be labeled "indefinite" to reflect that the United States Government understands the boundary has international status contingent upon receipt of documentary confirmation. Where scale and context allow, a marginalia note may also accompany the label stating that this segment reflects *de facto* alignment with *de jure* confirmation pending.

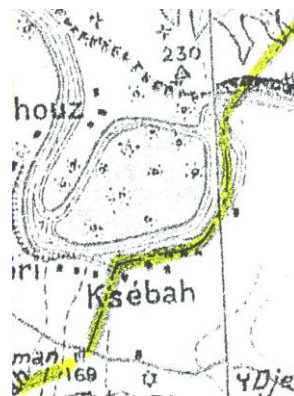


Figure 1: Berm line and old Euphrates channel Figure 2: 1932 League of Nations Report

Lee R. Schwartz, Geographer (Acting)
Office of the Geographer and Global Issues
U.S. Department of State
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*Coordinates were imagery/GIS derived from identified ground features. No official coordinates have been published for the boundary turning points.