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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

Series A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 23

*STRAIGHT BASELINES: UNITED KINGDOM*

The Geographer  
Office of the Geographer  
Directorate for Functional Research  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

STRAIGHT BASELINES: UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom, by Order in Council, created on September 25, 1964 a series of straight baselines which join the Hebrides islands to the west coast of Scotland. The same Order in Council established the executive machinery for bay closing lines. The text of the Order is as follows:

AT THE COURT AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE  
The 25th day of September, 1964

Present,

THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY IN COUNCIL

Her Majesty, by virtue and in exercise of all the powers enabling Her in that behalf, is pleased, by and with the advice of Her Privy Council, to order, and it is hereby ordered, as follows:--

1. This Order may be cited as the Territorial Waters Order in Council 1964 and shall come into operation on 30th September 1964.

2.--(1) Except as otherwise provided in Articles 3 and 4 of this Order, the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea adjacent to the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man is measured shall be low-water line along the coast, including the coast of all islands comprised in those territories.

(2) For the purposes of this Article a low-tide elevation which lies wholly or partly within the breadth of sea which would be territorial sea if all low-tide elevations were disregarded for the purpose of the measurement of the breadth thereof and if Article 3 of this Order were omitted shall be treated as an island.

3.--(1) The baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured between Cape Wrath and the Mull of Kintyre shall consist of the series of straight lines drawn so as to join successively, in the order in which they are there set out, the points identified by the co-ordinates of latitude and longitude in the first column of the Schedule to this Order, each being a point situate on low-water line and on or adjacent to the feature, if any, named in the second column of that Schedule opposite to the co-ordinates of latitude and longitude of the point in the first column.

(2) The provisions of paragraph (1) of this Article shall be without prejudice to the operation of Article 2 of this Order in relation to any island or low-tide elevation which for the purpose of that Article is treated as if it were an island, being an island or low-tide elevation which lies to seaward of the baseline specified in paragraph (1) of this Article.

4. In the case of the sea adjacent to a bay, the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured shall, subject to the provisions of Article 3 of this Order--

- (a) if the bay has only one mouth and the distance between the low-water line of the natural entrance points of the bay does not exceed 24 miles, be a straight line joining the said low-water lines;
- (b) if, because of the presence of islands, the bay has more than one mouth and the distances between the low-water lines of the natural entrance points of each mouth added together do not exceed 24 miles, be a series of straight lines across each of the mouths drawn so as to join the said low-water lines;
- (c) if neither paragraph (a) nor (b) of this Article applies, be a straight line 24 miles in length drawn from low-water line to low-water line within the bay in such a manner as to enclose the maximum area of water that is possible with a line of that length.

5.--(1) In this Order--

the expression "bay" means an indentation of the coast such that its area is not less than that of the semi-circle whose diameter is a line drawn across the mouth of the indentation, and for the purposes of this definition the area of an indentation shall be taken to be the area bounded by low-water line around the shore of the indentation and the straight line joining the low-water lines of its natural entrance points, and where, because of the presence of islands, an indentation has more than one mouth the length of the diameter of the semi-circle referred to shall be the sum of the lengths of the straight lines drawn across each of the mouths, and in calculating the area of an indentation the area of any islands lying within it shall be treated as part of the area of the indentation;

the expression "island" means a naturally formed area of land surrounded by water which is above water at mean high-water spring tides; and

the expression "low-tide elevation" means a naturally formed area of drying land surrounded by water which is below water at mean high-water spring tides.

(2) For the purposes of this Order, permanent harbour works which form an integral part of a harbour system shall be treated as forming part of the coast.

(3) The Interpretation Act 1889 (a) shall apply to the interpretation of this Order as it applies to the interpretation of an Act of Parliament.

6. This Order shall be published in the London Gazette, the Edinburgh Gazette and the Belfast Gazette.

W. G. Agnew.

Article 3

SCHEDULE

POINTS BETWEEN CAPE WRATH AND THE MULL  
OF KINTYRE JOINED TO FORM BASELINES

	Co-ordinates of latitude and longitude of point						Name of Feature
	Latitude North			Longitude West			
1	58	37	33	5	00	00	Cape Wrath
2	58	31	14	6	15	46	Lith Sgeir
3	58	29	08	6	20	27	Dell Rock
4	58	18	16	6	48	18	Tiumpan
5	58	17	40	6	52	54	Mas Sgeir
6	58	17	06	6	55	31	Stac nam Balg
7	58	14	33	7	02	00	Gallan Head
8	58	13	56	7	03	00	--
9	58	10	38	7	06	58	Eilean Molach
10	57	59	03	7	17	50	Gasker
11	57	41	15	7	43	00	Haskeir Eagach
12	57	32	33	7	43	46	Clettan a Fer
13	57	14	25	7	27	24	Rudha Ardvule
14	57	00	46	7	31	36	Greian Head
15	56	57	21	7	33	43	--
16	56	56	56	7	34	19	Ard Caolas
17	56	56	00	7	34	51	Biruastil
18	56	49	16	7	39	32	Guarsay Point
19	56	48	00	7	40	00	Sron an Duin
20	56	47	07	7	39	37	Berneray Island
21	56	19	22	7	06	48	Skerryvore
22	56	08	00	6	38	03	Dubh Artach
23	55	41	36	6	32	03	Frenchman's Rocks
24	55	40	20	6	30	55	Orsay Island
25	55	35	19	6	20	12	Mull of Oa
26	55	17	57	5	47	52	Mull of Kintyre

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This Note is not part of the Order, but is intended to indicate its general purport.)

This Order establishes the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea adjacent to the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man is measured. This, generally, is low-water line round the coast, including the coast of all islands, but between Cape Wrath and the Mull of Kintyre a series of straight lines joining specified points lying generally on the seaward side of the islands lying off the coast are used, and where there are well defined bays elsewhere lines not exceeding 24 miles in length drawn across the bays are used.





