

25 Years of Joint Israeli-Jordanian Boundary Making and Boundary Maintenance

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SUMMARY

Abstract

In 1994 Israel and Jordan signed a Peace Treaty, which included an innovative boundary delimitation, making use for the first time of orthophoto maps. It included boundary making procedures, regarding demarcation, monument placement and surveying, boundary documentation and maintenance. It also included maritime boundary delimitation. For these tasks the treaty formed a Joint Team of Experts (JTE) as part of the Joint Boundary Commission (JBC).

The boundary line passes on land (Ha'Aravah/Wady Araba Valley), in the sea (The Red Sea), through a lake (The Dead Sea), and along rivers (The Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers). For the last 25 years the JTE has fulfilled successfully all its tasks, solving all the challenging boundary issues.

These issues included reconstruction and placement of boundary pillars because of natural causes like seasonal floods and sea water erosion, as well as reconstruction and re-placement of boundary pillars due to artificial works along the boundary. It included delimitation of the maritime boundary and the boundary in the Dead Sea which keeps shrinking fast as a result of lowering of the sea surface, including its northern coastline, that moves southwards enforcing the elongation of the Jordan River for hundreds of meters creating a new situation regarding the boundary line (A boundary line in a lake is transformed to a boundary in a river in a different location). Other cases referred to cases in rivers, including natural changes in the river course of a boundary river, both slow natural changes due to accretion and sudden natural changes due to floods and collapse of river banks. Other cases referred to changes in the course of rivers due artificial activities.

The joint active cooperation of the JTE competed continuously with all these issues, sometimes

proactively in order to prevent or take measures before problems rise, and many times dealing with issues on the fly when problems are faced. The preparation of the JTE since 1994 to cope with the problems and its preparedness to react fast, to meet and to visit remote locations turned the JTE, which had been formed originally as a professional organ, to become the main joint organ that takes care for the practical boundary issues.

In order to cope with the situation, the JTE, which acts as the right hand of the JBC, has prepared Standard Operating Procedures, it holds annual reconnaissance along the boundary line and annual meetings. In addition, it holds many other meetings according to requirements. The members of the JTE keep close relations with other ministries on each side, and especially the defense authorities, as well as legal advisers and the liaison organizations on both sides. The chairs of the JTE report to the chairs of the JBC. The JTE includes active members of national mapping organizations on both sides as their working force and thus make use of most advanced technologies in surveying mapping and geo-information.