

The Republic of Nicaragua v. The Republic of Colombia

This case was filed 6 December 2001. The Court fixed a deadline of 28 April 2003 for the filing of the memorial of the Republic of Nicaragua and a deadline of 28 June 2004 for the counter-memorial of the Republic of Colombia. Each having met the time limit, the memorial of the Republic of Nicaragua and the preliminary objections to jurisdiction filed by the Republic of Colombia are as follows:

The Republic of Nicaragua Memorial of the Applicant¹

Introduction

1. The Republic of Nicaragua (Nicaragua) applied 6 December 2001 to remove the legal uncertainties regarding sovereignty over the islands of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia and the maritime boundary demarking the exclusive economic zone appertaining to Nicaragua and the Republic of Colombia (Colombia) respectively. The dispute between Nicaragua and Colombia, particularly the presence of the Colombian navy in the disputed region, has disrupted the livelihood of coastal Nicaraguans and other lawful businesses in the region. Nicaragua submits this case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to determine the legality of Nicaragua's claims under the principle of *uti possidetis juris* and the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention and to ask for the Court's assistance in demarking a single maritime boundary between the exclusive economic zones of Nicaragua and Colombia based upon equitable principles and relevant circumstances recognized by general international law.
2. In this memorial, Nicaragua outlines four sections of interest – the history of the issue, the competence of the court, the international law involved, and our prayer of relief.

Section One – History

§1. Independence from Spain – San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia

In 1821, independence from Spain caused the Provinces that had originally formed the Captaincy General of Guatemala to become the Federation of Central American States. By the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, sovereignty over all islands under the former jurisdiction of the Captaincy devolved onto the newly independent Federation by virtue of an original title in the colonial era. The groups of islands and keys of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia are part of the group of islands that originally belonged to the Captaincy by a colonial title and in 1821 became part of the newly independent Federation of Central American States. With the dissolution of the Federation in 1838, these same islands and keys became part of the sovereign territory of Nicaragua. Nicaragua considers that the document known as the 1928 Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty, upon which Colombia rests its claim to the aforementioned islands, lacks legality as an instrument of delimitation and therefore does not provide sufficient claim upon the

¹ Agent of the Republic of Nicaragua. "Application of the Republic of Nicaragua." 2001. http://212.153.43.18/icjwww/idocket/inicol/inicolororder/inicol_order_iapplication_20011206.html

islands. The basis for this invalidity rests in the state of Nicaragua's government at the time of signing of this treaty; Nicaragua's government was under the influence of the United States and the treaty must therefore be considered invalid because the Nicaraguan interest was not well represented in the negotiation of this treaty.

§2. The keys of Roncador, Quitasueño, Serrana and Serranilla

Nicaragua lays claim to these keys that lie to the north of the Archipelago of San Andres under the provisions of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention that recognize and confirms the sovereign rights of coastal states to explore and exploit the resources of the continental shelf along with their right to an exclusive economic zone 200 miles in breadth. In accordance with this convention, the Nicaraguan Constitution, as early as 1948, has extended its sovereignty toward the continental platform on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Additionally, the Decrees of 1958 regarding the exploration and exploitation of natural resources including petroleum, along with a 1965 decree of a "national fishing zone" 200 nautical miles seaward on both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, made it clear that the resources of both the continental shelf and the surrounding regions belonged to Nicaragua.²

§3. Colombian Ambition

Citing the 1928 Barceñas-Esguerra Treaty, which Nicaragua does not consider legally valid, Colombia has continuously encroached upon the islands and the exclusive economic zone under Nicaraguan sovereignty. A recent official Colombian map, which was duly protested by Nicaragua, showed Colombia claiming maritime territory that more than halved Nicaragua's own maritime claims in the Caribbean Sea. To protect their alleged claims, the Colombian navy has been stationed east of the 82° meridian and harasses fishing boats that venture near this area. The Nicaraguan navy is unable to defend its fishing boats against the vastly more powerful Colombian navy, and this situation has greatly endangered the livelihood of coastal Nicaraguans who depend upon the natural resources of the sea. Colombian ambition has injured the livelihood of the Nicaraguan people as well as legitimate businesses operating in the exclusive economic zone authorized by the Nicaraguan government. It is against this background that the government of Nicaragua seeks the Court's aid in removing the legal uncertainties that still exist in this area and thus enhance the legal security of those seeking to go about their lawful business in the region.

Section Two – Jurisdiction

§1. Definition of jurisdiction

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has jurisdiction, in accordance with the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogotá), Article XXXI, and with the ICJ Statute, Article 36, Section 2, in any of the following cases:

- a) *the interpretation of a treaty;*
- b) *any question of international law;*
- c) *the existence of any fact which, if established, would constitute a breach of an international obligation;*

² Ibid.

- d) *the nature or extent of the reparation to be made for the breach of an international obligation.*³

§2. This case involves the interpretation of a treaty

By presenting a case on the grounds of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, Nicaragua is asking the Court to interpret a treaty.

§3. The relevance of the treaty

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is a multilateral treaty that governs the apportionment and regulation of maritime property. Interpretation by the Court of Part V of the Convention regarding exclusive economic zones is specifically pertinent to this case regarding the delineation of a single maritime boundary between the continental shelf and exclusive economic zones appertaining to Nicaragua and Colombia respectively.

§4. This case involves questions of international law

- a) the consideration of the principle of *uti possidetis juris* as custom, for the purposes of this trial, is one such question of international law.
- b) the implementation of the UNCLOS is another question of international law.
- c) judgment of the validity of the instrument known as Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928, in connection with the issue of title, also constitutes a question of international law and custom.

Section Three – International Law and Custom

§1. The principle of *uti possidetis juris*

- a) the national boundaries of former colonies correspond to the earlier administrative borders of the colonies, as stated by the principle of *uti possidetis juris*. As a Spanish colony, the Captaincy General of Nicaragua held administrative power over the islands of Santa Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia. With independence in 1821, the newly formed Federation of Central American States claimed these islands based on this principle of *uti possidetis juris*. With the dissolution of the Federation and the formation of Nicaragua, the principle still stands and the claim is still valid.
- b) the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, though not a formal law, is a custom recognized by the ICJ. In the 1992 “Land, Island and Maritime Frontier Dispute” case between El Salvador and Honduras, the court decided, based on the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, that “it was the application of this principle which provided States liberated from former colonial empires with internationally recognized borders” and moved to recognize the title deeds granted by the Spanish crown as valid entitlement.⁴ Such precedent proves the acceptance of *uti possidetis juris* as custom and its subsequent applicability to this dispute.

§2. The 1982 Law of the Sea Convention

³“American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogota).” XXXI. 1948.

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam09.htm#art31>

“Statute of the International Court of Justice.” 36, §2. 1945.

http://212.153.43.18/icjwww/ibasicdocuments/ibasictext/ibasicstatute.htm#CHAPTER_II

⁴ World Court Digest. “Summaries of the Decisions: Land, Island and Maritime Frontier Dispute Case,”

<http://www.virtual-institute.de/en/wcd/wcd.cfm?dec0205.cfm>.

- a) Nicaragua submits the borders of its exclusive economic zones and continental shelves based on terms stipulated in the UNCLOS.
- b) Part V, Article 57 of UNCLOS states the breadth of the exclusive economic zone of a coastal state:

*The exclusive economic zone shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.*⁵

The Nicaraguan exclusive economic zone is exactly 200 nautical miles seaward on both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, in accordance with the stipulations of this treaty. The Colombian objective, as shown from an official Colombian map, would deprive Nicaragua of over 50,000 square kilometers of maritime space and the islands of Providencia and San Andres.

- c) within the exclusive economic zone, the sovereign coastal state is guaranteed, by Part V, Article 56 of UNCLOS:

*sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds.*⁶

Furthermore, under Part V, Article 58 of the same treaty,

*In exercising their rights and performing their duties under this Convention in the exclusive economic zone, States shall have due regard to the rights and duties of the coastal State and shall comply with the laws and regulations adopted by the coastal State in accordance with the provisions of this Convention and other rules of international law in so far as they are not incompatible with this Part.*⁷

Nicaragua considers the presence of Colombian naval forces within this zone as an affront to the sovereignty of the Nicaraguan government in the area. The naval forces stationed to the east of the 82nd meridian are a threat to Nicaraguan fishing boats, thereby imperiling the livelihood of the Nicaraguan people, particularly those who live off the Caribbean coast and are dependent upon the natural resources of the sea.

- d) the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is crucially pertinent to this case in the determination of the single maritime boundary between the special economic zone and continental shelf appertaining to Nicaragua and Colombia respectively. That Colombia has not yet ratified UNCLOS should not be a deterrent to

⁵ “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.” V, 56-58. 1982.
http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

its applicability, as the almost universal approval of this treaty accords it the status of international law.

§3. The Barceñas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928

Nicaragua believes this document lacks legal validity in providing a basis for Colombian title upon the Archipelago of San Andrés; due to the state of the Nicaraguan government at the time of the negotiation of this treaty, the current Nicaraguan government does not consider this document legally valid or binding as a treaty of delimitation.

Section Four – Prayer of Relief for the Applicant

The Republic of Nicaragua asks that the Court find the following:

- §1. That the ICJ has jurisdiction over this case under Article XXXI of the Pact of Bogotá and under Article 36, Section 2 of its statute.
- §2. That the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention and the principle of *uti possidetis juris* be considered applicable to this case.
- §3. That Nicaragua has sovereignty over the islands of Providencia, San Andrés and Santa Catalina and all the appurtenant islands and keys, and also over the Roncador, Serrana, Serranilla and Quitasueño keys (insofar as they are capable of appropriation).
- §4. In light of the determinations concerning title requested above, the Court is also asked to determine the course of the single maritime boundary between the areas of continental shelf and exclusive economic zone appertaining respectively to Nicaragua and Colombia in accordance with equitable principles and relevant circumstances recognized by general international law as applicable to such a delimitation of a single maritime boundary.
- §5. Nicaragua reserves the right to claim compensation for unjust enrichment consequent upon Colombian possession of the disputed territory as well as for interference with fishing vessels of Nicaraguan nationality or vessels licensed by the Republic of Nicaragua.

The Republic of Colombia Counter-Memorial of the Respondent

Introduction

- §1. The Republic of Colombia (Colombia), on 28 June 2004, submitted its memorial to the Court in opposition to a suit unjustly filed against Colombia by the Republic of Nicaragua (Nicaragua). Colombia's claims to the territory in question are established in several bilateral agreements, one to which Nicaragua is a party.
- §2. In this memorial, Colombia outlines four sections of interest – a response to Nicaragua's history of the issue, arguments against the jurisdiction of the Court over this case, a discussion of the international law involved, and the prayer of relief of the respondent.

Section One – Reply to the Applicant's History

- §1. Independence from Spain – San Andrés and Santa Catalina and Providencia

Colombia does not dispute Nicaragua's claim to the groups of islands and keys of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia stemming from a colonial title that devolved onto the newly formed republic of Nicaragua in 1838. The Colombian claim to the aforementioned islands and keys is derived from the 1928 Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty, which granted Nicaraguan sovereignty over the Mosquito Coast in exchange for their recognition of Colombian sovereignty over San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia.⁸ Regardless of the state of the Nicaraguan government at the time of the negotiations, the current government cannot renege upon the ratification of the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty by a former Nicaraguan government.

§2. The keys of Roncador, Quitasueno, Serrana and Serranilla

Colombian title over these keys stems from a 1986 maritime boundary agreement with the government of Honduras, which implicitly recognizes Colombian sovereignty over the islands and banks of the keys of Roncador, Quitasueno, Serrana and Serranilla. Colombia's *de facto* sovereignty over the keys of Quitasueno, Serrana and Serranilla is also recognized in a treaty with the United States signed 8 September 1972. As a third party, Nicaragua has no legal right to challenge either of these bilateral agreements.⁹

§3. Colombian Ambition

Colombia's actions in the Caribbean Sea have been in accordance with Colombian claims in the region, as reaffirmed by the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928 and subsequent bilateral agreements with the United States (1972) and Honduras (1986). A diplomatic note attached to the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty also affirms that Colombia will not claim any territory west of the 82° meridian, an agreement that the Colombian government has honored by limiting naval activities to the east of the 82° meridian.¹⁰ It is Colombia's assertion that its title in the Caribbean Sea is lawful and that it owes no compensation to Nicaragua for supposed damages sustained within Colombian territory.

Section Two – Reply to the Applicant's Jurisdictional Arguments

§1. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) does not have jurisdiction over this case. Nicaragua cites Article XXXI of the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogota), which enumerates the instances under which the Court has jurisdiction over a case. It is Colombia's assertion that Article II of the aforementioned treaty supersedes Article XXXI:

The High Contracting Parties recognize the obligation to settle international controversies by regional pacific procedures before referring them to the Security Council of the United Nations.

Consequently, in the event that a controversy arises between two or more signatory states which, in the opinion of the parties, cannot be settled by direct negotiations through the usual diplomatic channels, the parties bind themselves to use the procedures established in the present Treaty, in the

⁸ Pratt, Martin. "The Maritime Boundary Dispute Between Honduras and Nicaragua in the Caribbean Sea," <http://www.gmat.unsw.edu.au/ablos/ABLOS01Folder/PRATT.PDF>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

*manner and under the conditions provided for in the following articles, or, alternatively, such special procedures as, in their opinion, will permit them to arrive at a solution.*¹¹

Article XXXII of the said treaty further states:

*When the conciliation procedure previously established in the present Treaty or by agreement of the parties does not lead to a solution, and the said parties have not agreed upon an arbitral procedure, either of them shall be entitled to have recourse to the International Court of Justice in the manner prescribed in Article 40 of the Statute thereof. The Court shall have compulsory jurisdiction in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 1, of the said Statute.*¹²

Both articles indicate that a valid attempt at bilateral negotiation must be attempted first and that it must be the opinion of *both* parties that bilateral action has been ineffective in the dispute before jurisdiction over the disagreement can devolve upon an international body such as the ICJ. It is the Colombian opinion that bilateral negotiations, with Nicaraguan cooperation, can be effective and that matters have not reached a point as to require international intervention.

§2. This case does not involve interpretation of a treaty

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) treaty cited by Nicaragua has no bearing in this dispute. Due to its inapplicability, it need not be discussed. The UNCLOS is inapplicable because Colombia is not currently a signatory of the treaty and has not consented to be bound by it.

§3. This case does not involve questions of international law

- a) the principle of *uti possidetis juris* has no bearing on this case because Colombia's claim to the islands rests on a bilateral treaty signed after the liberation of the Nicaraguan republic. This principle can only prove Nicaragua's claim to the islands before 1928.
- b) since Colombia has deemed the UNCLOS inapplicable, it is also not applicable as an international law.
- c) the Barcenas-Esguerra treaty of 1928 has been upheld by Colombia since its implementation. This document is valid as a treaty as defined by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.¹³ The Nicaraguan government that signed this document is considered by Colombia, and by the rest of the international community, to have been a valid government; the current Nicaraguan government should therefore not be allowed to renege on the agreements made in this indisputably legal document known as the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928.

¹¹ "American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogota)." II. 1948
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam09.htm#art2>

¹² "American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogota)." XXXII. 1948.
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam09.htm#art32>

¹³ "Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties." 1969. <<http://www.un.org/law/ilc/texts/treaties.htm>>

Section Three – Reply to the Applicant’s Arguments on International Law and Custom

§1. The principle of *uti possidetis juris*

- a) the principle of *uti possidetis juris* grants a newly formed nation sovereignty over its colonial lands. Colombia does not dispute that this principle would grant Nicaragua sovereignty of the islands of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia after the dissolution of the Captaincy and the establishment of the new Nicaraguan republic; however, this claim only lasted until 1928 when Nicaragua formally recognized Colombia’s sovereignty over these islands in the Barcenas-Esguerra treaty. This passing on of sovereignty thus supersedes the importance of the principle of *uti possidetis juris* and places the islands of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia under the legal sovereignty of Colombia.
- b) the principle of *uti possidetis juris* has been upheld by the ICJ as a custom for delineating the borders of a newly liberated state. This principle should not supersede existing international documents that grant sovereignty to Colombia. Nicaragua may once have owned these islands, but the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty conferred sovereignty over these islands to Colombia in exchange for Colombia recognition of Nicaragua’s sovereignty over the Mosquito Cays, which Colombia has maintained to this day. The principle of *uti possidetis juris* simply confirms that Nicaragua had a right to the islands previously and also had the right to transfer this sovereignty to Colombia. This principle can only uphold the legality of Colombia’s claim to these islands under the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928.

§2. The 1982 Law of the Sea Convention

- a) once again, because Colombia has not ratified UNCLOS, Colombia cannot be bound by the stipulations of said treaty. The treaty is simply inapplicable to Colombia’s maritime rights.
- b) Nicaragua cannot submit its borders under the stipulations of UNCLOS because UNCLOS recognizes that existing bilateral treaties supersede UNCLOS stipulations, as stated in Article 331, §2 of the UNCLOS treaty:

*This Convention shall not alter the rights and obligations of States Parties which arise from other agreements compatible with this Convention and which do not affect the enjoyment by other States Parties of their rights or the performance of their obligations under this Convention.*¹⁴

The Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928 complies with UNCLOS in extending Colombia’s maritime boundary to the 82° meridian, which is 12 nautical miles beyond the coast of the islands of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia, the legal territory of Colombia under said treaty. That Colombia has remained eastward of the 82° meridian is a sign of good faith in the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty and does not affect Nicaragua’s enjoyment of rights and performance of obligations within its maritime boundaries.

¹⁴ “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.” V, 56-58. 1982.
http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm

- c) Nicaragua's current exclusive economic zone extends exactly 200 nautical miles eastward toward the 82° meridian. Colombia has respected this by remaining east of the meridian and recognizing Nicaraguan sovereignty west of the boundary. Nicaragua's claims east of the 82° meridian lie in its claim to the islands and keys of San Andres and Santa Catalina, Providencia, Roncador, Quitasueno, Serrana and Serranilla. These islands, as Colombia has already indicated, are under Colombian sovereignty through bilateral treaties with Nicaragua and Honduras. The area east of the 82° meridian is therefore also Colombian territory and cannot be disputed under the Law of the Sea Convention because of the existence of prior treaties already stating established borders to which all parties have agreed upon.
- d) Colombia has remained true to the stipulations of the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty by remaining east of the 82° meridian and declining to claim rights west of said meridian according to a diplomatic note attached to the treaty. Colombia does not believe that there has been any territorial violation of Nicaragua's sovereignty in this region because the Colombia navy has remained east of the 82° meridian.

§3. The Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928

It is Colombia's assertion that the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty of 1928 is a valid and legal document granting Colombia sovereignty over the islands of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia. The definition of a "treaty", as internationally recognized and defined in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties is:

*...an international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by international law, whether embodied in a single instrument or in two or more related instruments and whatever its particular designation;*¹⁵

The Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty falls under this description and should be considered a valid instrument that grants legal sovereignty over the islands in question to Colombia.

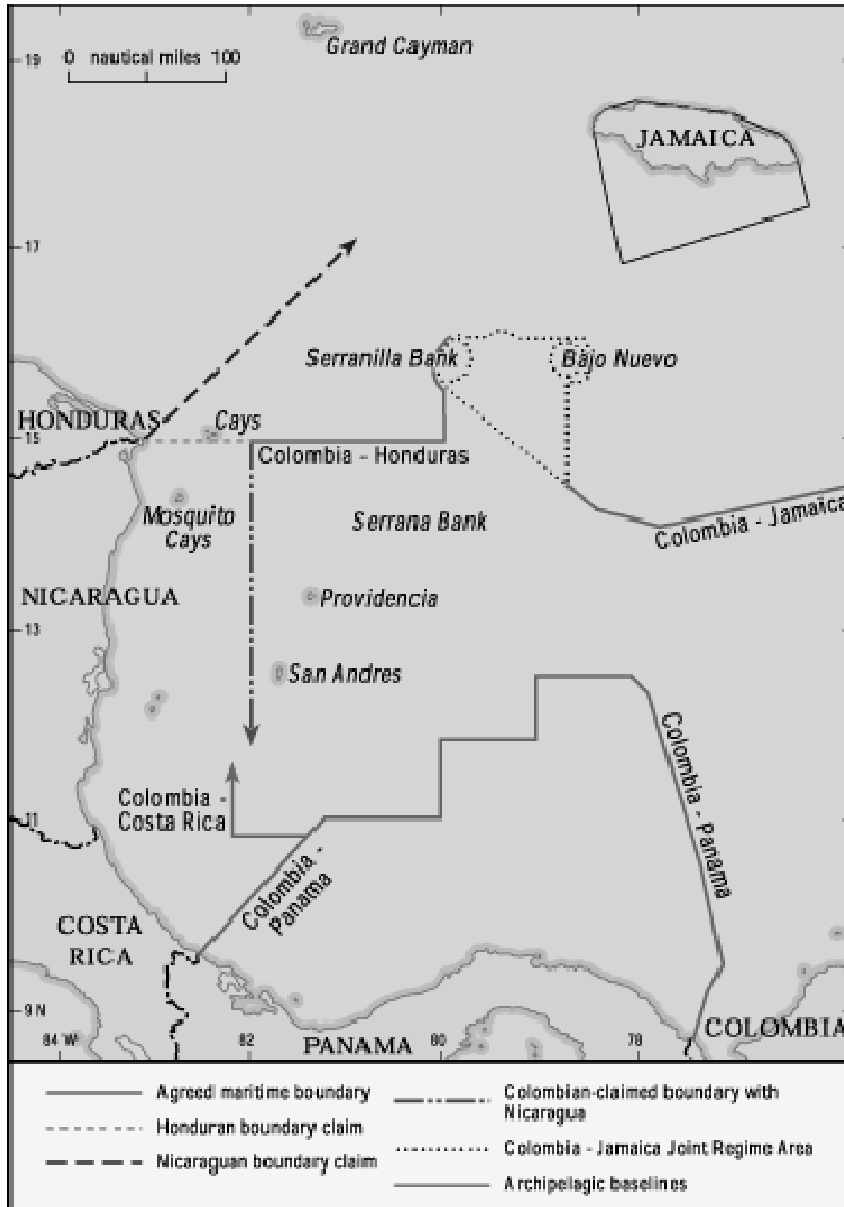
Section Four – Prayer of Relief for the Respondent

The Republic of Colombia asks that the Court find the following:

- §1. That the ICJ has no jurisdiction over this case.
- §2. That the treaties and principles in question be deemed inapplicable.
- §3. That, should the Court determine it has jurisdiction, Colombia be exonerated from all charges.
- §4. That Colombia has legal sovereignty over the islands of San Andres and Santa Catalina and Providencia and the keys of Roncador, Quitasueño, Serrana and Serranilla, along with a maritime boundary with Nicaragua at the 82° meridian and exclusive economic rights in that region under all, if any, laws the Court deems applicable.
- §5. That Colombia owes no compensation to Nicaragua.
- §6. That the Republic of Nicaragua be forbidden from ever filing complaint and pressing charges in relation to the disputed territory and the alleged actions therein.

¹⁵ "Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties." 1969. <<http://www.un.org/law/ilc/texts/treaties.htm>>

Appendix



Map of the disputed region including agreed maritime boundaries and Nicaragua's boundaries of dispute with Colombia and Honduras (see Map Key).¹⁶

Nicaragua and Colombia's maritime boundary claims are based upon ownership of the islands of San Andres and Providencia along with the Serranilla and Serrana Banks. According to UNCLOS stipulations, a country may claim an area extending 20 nautical miles out from its land territory as its sovereign property while also claiming an exclusive economic zone extending 200 nautical miles from its land territory. Therefore, sovereignty over the disputed islands and banks is very crucial to the establishment of each country's maritime countries and economic zones.

Key Terms

Uti possidetis juris: a concept of international law that defines new sovereign states based upon their previous administrative borders. The present concept is based upon the right to self-determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. With particular interest in Latin America, *uti possidetis juris* states that the borders of newly sovereign states will coincide with their former colonial borders.¹⁷

¹⁶ De Mar, Rebecca A. *Nicaragua-Honduras Territorial Dispute*. <http://www.american.edu/TED/ice/nicaragua-honduras.htm>

¹⁷ Hasani, Enver. "Uti Possidetis Juris: From Rome to Kosovo."

De facto: “Being such in effect though not formally recognized.”¹⁸ De facto powers or sovereignty are generally recognized by other states though they are not formally stated in international documents.

Timeline including key treaties

- 1821 Provinces of Captaincy General of Guatemala (including modern-day Nicaragua) gains independence from Spain and forms Federation of Central American States.
* Nicaragua claims that the principle of *uti possidetis juris* applies at this time to transfer all territorial sovereignty of the colonial Captaincy over to the new Federation
- 1838 Nicaragua gains its independence as a sovereign state upon the dissolution of the Federation of Central American States.
- 1928 Signing of the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty between Nicaragua and Colombia.
* From 1925 to 1932, Nicaragua was in a period of political upheaval. United States marines that had been deployed to back up a newly installed government in 1909 were withdrawn in 1925. However, a political civil war broke out in 1927 and the U.S. re-deployed the marines to secure the region. The marines then remained to oversee elections in 1928 and 1932.¹⁹ The current Nicaraguan government disputes the legitimacy of the 1928 government and the Barcenas-Esguerra Treaty that was signed then, citing the presence of the U.S. marines as an occupying force interfering with affairs of state.
- 1948 American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogota) entered into force.
- 1982 UNCLOS entered into force, standardizing maritime practices.
- 1986 Signing of the Caribbean Sea Maritime Limits Treaty between Honduras and Colombia.
* This treaty divided up 12,000 square miles of the Caribbean, including recognizing Colombia’s sovereignty over the keys and banks of Roncador, Quitasueno, Serrana and Serranilla.²⁰ Honduras’ right to hand over these keys was disputed by Nicaragua before the ICJ.
- 1999 Honduras ratifies the Caribbean Sea Maritime Limits Treaty. Nicaragua files a case against Honduras before the ICJ.
- 2001 Nicaragua files a case against Colombia before the ICJ.

<http://operationkosovo.kentlaw.edu/symposium/resources/hasani-fletcher.htm>

¹⁸ Merriam-Webster’s dictionary

¹⁹ “Introduction to Nicaragua.” <http://www.maclester.edu/courses/geog61/bharris/nicaragua.html>

²⁰ De Mar, Rebecca A. “Nicaragua Honduras Territorial Dispute.”
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