



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



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Law of the Sea Convention

"As the world's preeminent power, the U.S. Navy will benefit from the support the Law of the Sea Convention provides our operations, especially the broad navigational rights guaranteed on the high seas and inside the exclusive economic zones of other nations."

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert, on Law of the Sea Convention Ratification

National Interest

- The [Law of the Sea Convention](#) supports implementation of the [National Security Strategy](#), provides legal certainty in the world's largest maneuver space, and preserves essential navigation and overflight rights for the U.S. military.
- As a [party to the Convention](#), the U.S. can best protect the navigational freedoms enshrined in the agreement and exert the level of influence that reflects our status as the world's foremost maritime power.
- The Convention is in the [national interest](#) of the U.S. military. Specifically, it:
 - Establishes stable maritime zones, including a maximum outer limit for territorial seas;
 - Works against "jurisdictional creep" by preventing coastal nations from expanding their maritime zones;
 - Codifies innocent passage in territorial waters; [transit passage through international straits](#) (surface, air and subsurface), including the approaches to those straits; and the archipelagic sea lanes passage rights;
 - For our ships and aircraft, recognizes and preserves the freedom to:
 - conduct military activities in foreign exclusive economic zones;
 - conduct military surveys;
 - [approach and visit](#) vessels suspected of engaging in piracy and suspected stateless vessels;
 - Reinforces sovereign immunity of warships, other vessels operated by the government on non-commercial service, and government aircraft.
- Relying on customary international law as the basis for maritime rights and freedoms is an unwise and unnecessary risk. Our service members put their lives on the line to preserve the rights and freedoms codified in the Convention; they deserve to be on the firmest legal ground possible as they go into harm's way; they deserve the legal certainty that accrues from treaty-based rights.

Additional Considerations

- For 30 years, the U.S. Navy has implemented, complied with, and used to our advantage the provisions of the [Law of the Sea Convention](#) addressing the traditional uses of the oceans. U.S. Navy officers were instrumental in every step of the ten-year negotiations that resulted in very robust provisions enabling our global mobility to meet national security challenges. We need to capitalize on that success by joining the Convention we depend on every day.

Key Messages	Facts & Figures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Law of the Sea Convention will ensure the access the U.S. Navy needs to operate forward. • The Convention will provide a consistent framework to peacefully settle maritime disputes. • The Convention will help ensure we remain consistent with our principles and will enhance multi-lateral cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 161 nations and the European Union are currently parties to the Convention, including the vast majority of our partners and allies. • All other permanent members of the U.N. Security Council are parties. • All other Arctic nations are parties.