

The Declaration of Panama

“American Republics”

October 2, 1939

Source: U. S. Dept. of State Bull. I, Oct. 7, 1939

The republics of America, meeting in Panama, have solemnly ratified their position as neutrals in the conflict which disturbs the peace of Europe. But as the present war may reach unexpected derivations, which by their gravitation may affect the fundamental interests of America it is hereby declared that nothing can justify that the interests of belligerents prevail over the rights of neutrals, causing upsets and sufferings of peoples who, by their neutrality in the conflict and their distance from the scene of the happenings, should not suffer its fatal dolorous consequences.

During the World War of 1914–1918, the Governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador presented or supported individual proposals seeking in principle a declaration of American republics which entreated the belligerent nations to abstain from engaging in bellicose activities within a prudent distance from the American coasts.

Therefore, it is imperative as a formula of immediate necessity to adopt urgent dispositions based on such precedents, and in guarantee of these interests to avoid a repetition of the damages and sufferings experienced by the American nations and their citizens in the 1914–1918 war.

There is no doubt that the governments of the American republics ought to foresee these dangers as a means of self-protection and to insist upon the determination that in their waters and up to a reasonable distance from their coasts no hostile acts may be engaged in or bellicose activities carried out by participants in a war in which the said [American] governments do not participate. For these considerations the governments of the American republics resolve and herewith declare:

1. As a measure of continental protection, the American republics, as long as they maintain their neutrality, have the undisputed right to conserve free from all hostile acts by any belligerent non-American nation those waters adjacent to the American continents which they consider of primordial interest and direct utility for their relations, whether such hostile act is attempted or carried out by land, sea or air.

These waters described will be determined in the following manner:

All waters within the limits herewith specified, except the territorial waters of Canada, and of colonies and undisputed possessions of European countries within these limits.



Beginning at a point on the frontier between the United States and Canada at Passamaquoddy Bay, where the 44th degree 46 minutes and 36 seconds of North Latitude crosses the 66th degree 44 minutes and 11 seconds of West Longitude; from there, directly along parallel 44 degrees 46 minutes and 36 seconds to a point crossing 60 degrees West Longitude; from there directly southward to a point at 20 degrees North Latitude; from there by loxodromical line to a point at 5 degrees North Latitude and 24 degrees West Longitude; from there directly south to a point at 20 degrees South Latitude; from there by loxodromical line to a point at 58 degrees South Latitude and 57 degrees West Longitude; thence westward to a point at 80 degrees West Longitude; thence by loxodromical line to a point where the Equator crosses 97 degrees West Longitude; thence by loxodromical line to a point 15 degrees North Latitude and 120 degrees West Longitude; thence by loxodromical line to a point at 48 degrees 29 minutes and 38 seconds North Latitude and 136 degrees West Longitude; thence directly east to the termination in the Pacific Ocean, at Jean de Fuqua Strait, on the frontier between the United States and Canada.

2. The governments of the American republics agree to make an effort to seek observance by the belligerents of the dispositions contained in this declaration through joint representations to the governments actually participating in hostilities or those that may participate in the future.

This procedure will in no wise affect the exercise of the Individual rights of each State inherent in its sovereignty.

3. The governments of the American republics further declare that, whenever they consider it necessary, they will consult among themselves to determine what measures they can take individually or collectively for the purpose of obtaining fulfillment of the dispositions of this declaration.

4. The American republic, as long as there exists a state of war in which they themselves are not participating and whenever they consider it necessary, may carry out individual or collective patrols, whichever they may decide through mutual agreement or as far as the elements and resources of each one permit, in waters adjacent to their coasts within the zone already defined.