

EDICT OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE USSR SUPREME SOVIET CONCERNING THE  
CONTINENTAL SHELF\*

[Adopted February 6, 1968]

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decrees:

1. The USSR shall exercise sovereign rights over the continental shelf adjacent to the outward boundary of the territorial sea of the USSR for the purposes of exploring and exploiting its natural resources.

The continental shelf of the USSR shall be the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas adjacent to the coast or to islands of the USSR, but outside the area of the territorial sea, to a depth of 200 meters or, beyond that limit, to where the depth of the superadjacent waters admits of the exploitation of the natural resources of these areas.

The seabed and subsoil of depressions situated in the continuous mass of the continental shelf of the USSR, irrespective of their depth, shall be part of the continental shelf of the USSR.

2. In those instances when it is adjacent to the shelf of other states the boundary of the continental shelf of the USSR shall be determined by agreements with those states. In the absence of such agreements and unless a different boundary line is justified by special circumstances:

a) the median line, every point of which is equidistant from the nearest points of the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured, shall serve as the boundary of the continental shelf of the USSR with states whose coasts are opposite the coasts of the USSR;

b) the boundary of the continental shelf of the USSR with a state whose shelf is adjacent shall be determined by application of the principle of equidistance from the nearest points of those baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea of the USSR and the corresponding state are measured.

3. The natural resources of the continental shelf shall be in the state ownership of the USSR. Exploration and exploitation of these resources, as well as any research on the continental shelf, shall be carried out on the basis of prevailing legislation of the USSR and union republics.

The natural resources of the continental shelf consist of mineral and other non-living resources of the seabed and subsoil,

---

\*[Translated for International Legal Materials by William E. Butler of the District of Columbia Bar. The official text was published in Vedomosti verkhovnogo soveta SSSR (Gazette of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR), No. 6, item 40 (1968).]

as well as living organisms belonging to sedentary species, that is, organisms which, at the harvestable stage, either are immobile on or under the seabed or are unable to move except in constant physical contact with the seabed or the subsoil. A list of species of living organisms which are natural resources of the continental shelf of the USSR shall be approved by the Ministry of Fisheries of the USSR and shall be published for general information.

4. For the purposes of exploring and exploiting the natural resources of the continental shelf, the competent authorities of the USSR shall issue a permit for the construction of installations and other devices, and also shall create safety zones around such installations which may extend to a distance of 500 meters from the installations or devices, measured from any point of their outer edge. The construction of such installations and devices, as well as the creation of safety zones, shall be announced in Izveshchenia moreplavateliam [Notices to Mariners], published by the Hydrographic Administration of the Ministry of Defense of the USSR.

These installations and devices and the safety zones encircling them shall not be situated where interference may be caused to the use of recognized sea lanes essential to international navigation.

The said installations and devices, and the safety zones around them, shall be under the jurisdiction of the USSR.

The entry of foreign vessels within the limits of safety zones may occur only by the special authorization of competent Soviet authorities.

Organizations responsible for the maintenance and operation of the said installations and devices must provide for their protection, for the maintenance of permanent means for giving warnings of their presence, and also undertake measures in the safety zones for the protection of the living resources of the sea from harmful wastes. Installations or devices whose operation has finally terminated must be entirely removed.

5. Foreign individuals and juridical persons shall be prohibited from conducting research, exploration, and exploitation of natural resources and other work on the continental shelf of the USSR with the exception of instances when this has been expressly provided for by an agreement between the USSR and an interested foreign state or by a special permit issued by competent authorities of the USSR.

6. Persons who are guilty of violating the present Edict shall be subject to fine by a court of up to 10,000 rubles or to deprivation of freedom of up to one year or to both, unless this violation entails a more severe punishment under legislation of the USSR and union republics.

7. In instances of violation of Article 5 of the present Edict the vessel, all implements and instruments used by the violator, as well as everything illegally extracted, shall be subject to confiscation.

8. Protection of natural resources of the continental shelf of the USSR shall be entrusted to fishery supervision agencies, which in fulfilling their tasks shall be guided by prevailing legislation of the USSR and union republics and by agreements of the USSR and union republics with other states.

The border guard shall, when necessary, render assistance to the aforementioned agencies in their activity pertaining to the protection of natural resources of the continental shelf of the USSR.

9. Control over the propriety of exploitation of mineral and other non-living resources of the continental shelf of the USSR shall be entrusted to the State Mining-Technical Inspection Agencies of the USSR, which shall be guided by prevailing rules, instructions, and other normative acts concerning the protection of natural wealth.

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet  
of the USSR

N. Podgornyi

Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet  
of the USSR

M. Georgadze