

SAINT-PIERRE-ET-MIQUELON (SPM)

The Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon (SPM) archipelago is located less than 9.5 nautical miles west and southwest of Newfoundland's Burin Peninsula. Negotiations between Canada and France on the delimitation of the continental shelf off Newfoundland and SPM began in 1967. In 1978, after the two sides had extended their fishing zones to 200 miles, the negotiations were expanded to include fisheries jurisdiction as well.

The French position since 1978 has been that SPM is entitled, in principle, to a full 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and that the maritime boundary with Canada is to be determined on the basis of equidistance measured from the nearest coasts of SPM and of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. This would result in a total maritime zone for SPM of approximately 13,500 square nautical miles (s.n.m.).

Canada's position has been that France is entitled in law to no more than a 12-mile territorial sea.

After four unsuccessful rounds from 1978 to 1981, negotiations were suspended. They resumed in 1983 with the last session having been held in Paris in October of 1985.

The boundary negotiations have been complicated by the fact that any agreement regarding Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon's EEZ could have a significant impact on Canadian fisheries allocations to France and because of the possibility of exploiting hydrocarbons in portions of the disputed area.

Since January 1984 there has been agreement that, in order to maintain a favourable atmosphere for the boundary negotiations, both countries would exercise mutual restraint and would forego the boarding and inspection of the other's vessels in the disputed area.