



FINDING INTERNATIONAL TREATIES TO WHICH THE UNITED STATES IS A PARTY

What are international treaties?

Treaties are formal, legally binding international agreements concluded between governments of countries who become the "parties" to a treaty. Treaties may be *bilateral* (if only two parties are involved), or *multilateral* (if more than two parties are involved).

The word "treaty" may or may not be part of a treaty's name. Instead, the formal designation may be: "agreement," "alliance," "convention," "exchange of letters," "memorandum," "protocol," etc. The name has no legal significance and no bearing on research.

What information about a treaty is important for the researcher?

Treaty research shares certain common characteristics with statutory research.

Each treaty has a unique formal (and sometimes popular) *name*, and a *date* when it was "*done*," by signing, exchange of notes or other concluding acts. This date is usually different from the date when a treaty *entered into force*. If the treaty is multilateral, the date when a treaty entered into force may be different for different parties to the same treaty.

The *place* where a treaty was "*done*" is also an identifying element and is frequently used as part of popular name. For example, "Maastricht Treaty" is used for the *Treaty on European Union done at Maastricht, February 7, 1992*.

Countries may join multilateral treaties with *reservations, declarations*, or other statements, which may alter the scope, interpretation, or geographic application of the treaty in relation to that country. A treaty is binding only on its parties, and, if it is amended, the new text will bind only those countries which expressly accept the change.

Treaties are published in a variety of official and unofficial sources. Finding a citation to a source where the text may be found is the first step in treaty research.

How can I find a U.S. treaty if I know the citation?

The official version of a signed and ratified U.S. treaty is first published as an individual pamphlet in Treaties and other International Acts Series (cited as TIAS, followed by a consecutive number). TIAS [JX235.9 A32] is kept in boxes on the 5th Floor South and is also available in PDF format on HeinOnline and the [U.S. State Department website](http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/tias/) (<http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/tias/>).

After some time, treaties appearing in TIAS are published in bound volumes in another official publication, United States Treaties and other International Agreements (cited as UST). Official citations to treaties include a UST volume and page number, with a parallel reference to the TIAS number, e.g. *23 UST 3227; TIAS 7502*. Be aware that the publication of UST volumes is about 20 years behind. UST [JX235.9 A34] is kept on

the 5th Floor South, and can also be found on HeinOnline.

Before 1950, U.S. treaties were published in United States Statutes at Large (cited as Stat) [KF50 U5, 4th Floor North]. Pre-1950 treaties are also available in a convenient, semi-official source called Treaties and other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949, a 13-volume set edited by Charles I. Bevans (cited as Bevans) [JX236 1968, 5th Floor South]. Statutes at Large and Bevans are also available in PDF format from HeinOnline.

How can I find a U.S. treaty if I don't know the citation?

To find the citation for a U.S. treaty, you must consult one or more treaty indexes. The official index to current U.S. treaties, published by the U.S. State Department, is Treaties in Force [JX236.5.G84 in Foreign Reference]. The latest version is available electronically on the U.S. State Department's [Treaty Affairs website](http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/index.htm) (<http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/index.htm>) and on LEXIS, Westlaw, and HeinOnline. Some additional references and access points are provided in the Guide to the United States Treaties in Force [JX236.5 G84 in Foreign Reference; also on HeinOnline].

Be aware that some treaties concluded during the last 8-10 years are not yet officially published, and Treaties in Force will list them but not provide any citation. For official updates on treaties recently concluded or just coming into force, check the State Department's treaty website. Information on very recent treaties can also be found in Current Treaty Index / comp. & ed. by Igor Kavass [JX236.5 C87 in Foreign Reference; also on HeinOnline].

Finally, the University of Minnesota maintains a useful index of [frequently-cited treaties](http://library.law.umn.edu/frequently-cited-treaties) ([http://library.law.umn.edu/](http://library.law.umn.edu/frequently-cited-treaties)

[researchguides/most-cited.html](http://library.law.umn.edu/researchguides/most-cited.html)), organized by subject.

Other Online Sources for U.S. Treaties

U.S. treaties from 1778 to present are available on WESTLAW in the database U.S. Treaties and Other International Agreements (USTREATIES).

LEXIS has two important treaty files to search: US Treaties on LEXIS (USTRTY) and US Treaties in Force (USTIF). The former includes most treaties currently in force, plus historical, superseded and abolished treaties. USTIF reproduces the contents of Treaties in Force and provides hot links to most of the treaties indexed in UST.

In addition to the official U.S. sources and finding aids discussed above, HeinOnline's Treaties and Agreements Library includes frequently-cited semi-official publications such as International Legal Materials (cited ILM) [JX58.I5 in Foreign Reference and on 5th Floor South] and guides on how to conduct treaty research, all in PDF format.

Among the many research guides available on internet, the [ASIL Guide to Electronic Resources for International Law: Treaties](http://www.asil.org/treaty1.cfm) (<http://www.asil.org/treaty1.cfm>) is the most consistently updated. Chapter II.2: Governments starts with an extensive section on U.S. treaty research. It contains links to online sources for governmental, although not official, publications. It also links to the sites tracking the progress of treaties which require congressional action.

Research Help

Please note that U.S. treaties may also be found in other, non-U.S. specific sources. For additional help with these and other foreign and international law questions, please visit the Foreign and International Reference Office (Room T412), or call 215-898-7442.