



How the Gulf of Mexico's Renaming Affects Maritime Contracts

By: Amanda Ross, Esq.



On January 20, 2025, President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America. This decision, while controversial, is common for geographic locales within a country's own jurisdiction. Historically, there have always been differences among countries as to what a body of water may be called, including the Sea of Japan (East Sea) and the Persian Gulf (Arabian Gulf).

What Does "Gulf of America" Mean for Maritime Contracts?

This name change will have far-reaching implications for various industries, especially those dealing with maritime law, trade and insurance policies. The next steps include:

- The official government repositories of geographic names will reflect the change.
- Each federal agency and office will incorporate the new terminology into official documents, regulations and policies.

The Executive Order directs federal agencies to comply with the change, stating:

"The Secretary shall subsequently update the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) to reflect the Gulf of Mexico's new designation as the Gulf of America. All federal agencies must ensure that maps, contracts, and official communications align with this directive."

Steps for Maritime Businesses and Legal Compliance?

If your maritime contracts, insurance policies, or shipping agreements specify jurisdiction within the Gulf of Mexico, you should:

1. Review policy language and communicate with your carrier to ensure "Gulf of Mexico" and "Gulf of America" are recognized as the same.
2. Confirm coverage with your insurer to prevent disputes or denied claims based on outdated terminology.
3. Update contracts and legal documents to reflect the official name change where necessary.

Bottom Line

While the name change does not alter territorial waters or legal rights, it may cause confusion in commercial and legal contexts. Maritime businesses, vessel owners and insurers should take proactive steps to ensure compliance and avoid any disruptions in operations.

For more details, you can view the Presidential Executive Order [here](#). If you have questions about how this impacts your maritime contracts or legal rights, please feel free to contact me to schedule a consultation.

About the Author



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Florida Maritime Lawyer Amanda Ross is a stockholder at Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, P.A., where she advises yacht and vessel owners on legal matters ranging from purchase and sale transactions to compliance with state and federal maritime regulations.

With a deep understanding of admiralty law, she helps clients navigate issues such as registration and documentation, vessel insurance, and pre-purchase surveys.

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