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664. TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION

Of the several categories listed in 18 U.S.C. § 7, Section 7(3) is the most significant, and provides:

The term "special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States," as used in this title, includes: . . .

(3) Any lands reserved or acquired for the use of the United States, and under the exclusive or concurrent jurisdiction thereof, or any place purchased or otherwise acquired by the United States by consent of the legislature of the State in which the same shall be, for the erection of a fort, magazine, arsenal, dockyard, or other needful building.

As is readily apparent, this subsection, and particularly its second clause, bears a striking resemblance to the 17th Clause of Article I, Sec. 8 of the Constitution. This clause provides:

The Congress shall have power. . . *To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, be Cession of particular States, and the acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings.*

(Emphasis added.) The constitutional phrase "exclusive legislation" is the equivalent of the statutory expression "exclusive jurisdiction." See *James v. Dravo Contracting Co.*, 302 U.S. 134, 141 (1937), citing, *Surplus Trading Co. v. Cook*, 281 U.S. 647, 652 (1930).

Until the decision in *Dravo*, it had been generally accepted that when the United States acquired property with the consent of the state for any of the enumerated purposes, it acquired exclusive jurisdiction by operation of law, and any reservation of authority by the state, other than the right to serve civil and criminal process, was inoperable. See *Surplus Trading Co. v. Cook*, 281 U.S. at 652-56. When *Dravo* held that a state might reserve legislative authority, e.g., the right to levy certain taxes, so long as that did not interfere with the United States' governmental functions, it became necessary for Congress to amend 18 U.S.C. § 7(3), by adding the words "so as," to restore criminal jurisdiction over those places previously believed to be under exclusive Federal legislative jurisdiction. See H.R. Rep. No. 1623, 76th Cong., 3d Sess. 1 (1940); S. Rep. No. 1788, 76th Cong., 3d Sess. 1 (1940).

Dravo also settled that the phrase "other needful building" was not to be strictly construed to include only military and naval structures, but was to be construed as "embracing whatever structures are found to be necessary in the performance of the function of the Federal Government." See *James v. Dravo Contracting Co.*, 302 U.S. at 142-43. It therefore properly embraces courthouses, customs houses, post offices and locks and dams for navigation purposes.

The "structures" limitation does not, however, prevent the United States from holding or acquiring and having jurisdiction over land acquired for other valid purposes, such as parks and irrigation projects since Clause 17 is not the exclusive method of obtaining jurisdiction. The United States may also obtain jurisdiction by reserving it when sovereign title is transferred to the state upon its entry into the Union or by cession of jurisdiction after the United States has otherwise acquired the property. See *Collins v. Yosemite Park Co.*, 304 U.S. 518, 529-30 (1938); *James v. Dravo Contracting Co.*, 302 U.S. at 142; *Surplus Trading Co. v. Cook*, 281 U.S. at 650-52; *Fort Leavenworth R.R. Co. v. Lowe*, 114 U.S. 525, 526-27, 538, 539 (1885).

The United States may hold or acquire property within the borders of a state without acquiring jurisdiction. It may acquire title to land necessary for the performance of its functions by purchase or eminent domain without the state's consent. See *Kohl v. United States*, 91 U.S. 367, 371, 372 (1976). But it does not thereby acquire legislative jurisdiction by virtue of its proprietorship. The acquisition of jurisdiction is dependent on the consent of or cession of jurisdiction by the state. See *Mason Co. v. Tax Commission*, 302 U.S. 97 (1937); *James v. Dravo Contracting Co.*, 302 U.S. at 141-42.

State consent to the exercise of Federal jurisdiction may be evidenced by a specific enactment or by general constitutional or statutory provision. Cession of jurisdiction by the state also requires acceptance by the United States. See *Adams v. United States*, 319 U.S. 312 (1943); *Surplus Trading Co. v. Cook*, 281 U.S. at 651-52. Whether or not the United States has jurisdiction is a Federal question. See *Mason Co. v. Tax Commission*, 302 U.S. at 197.

Prior to February 1, 1940, it was presumed that the United States accepted jurisdiction whenever the state offered it because the donation was deemed a benefit. See *Fort Leavenworth R.R. Co. v. Lowe*, 114 U.S. at 528. This presumption was reversed by enactment of the Act of February 1, 1940, codified at 40 U.S.C. § 255. This statute requires the head or authorized officer of the agency acquiring or holding property to file with the state a formal acceptance of such "jurisdiction, exclusive or partial as he may deem desirable," and further provides that in the absence of such filing "it shall be conclusively presumed that no such jurisdiction has been acquired." See *Adams v. United States*, 319 U.S. 312 (district court is without jurisdiction to prosecute soldiers for rape committed on an army base prior to filing of acceptance prescribed by statute). The requirement of 40 U.S.C. § 255 can also be fulfilled by any filing satisfying state law. *United States v. Johnson*, 994 F.2d 980, 984-86 (2d Cir. 1993). The enactment of 40 U.S.C. § 255 did not retroactively affect jurisdiction previously acquired. See *Markham v. United States*, 215 F.2d 56 (4th Cir.), cert. denied, 348 U.S. 939 (1954); *United States v. Heard*, 270 F. Supp. 198, 200 (W.D. Mo. 1967).

COMMENT: In summary, the United States may exercise plenary criminal jurisdiction over lands within state borders:

- A. Where it reserved such jurisdiction upon entry of the state into the union;
- B. Where, prior to February 1, 1940, it acquired property for a purpose enumerated in the Constitution with the consent of the state;
- C. Where it acquired property whether by purchase, gift or eminent domain, and thereafter, but prior to February 1, 1940, received a cession of jurisdiction from the state; and
- D. Where it acquired the property, and/or received the state's consent or cession of jurisdiction after February 1, 1940, and has filed the requisite acceptance.

[cited in [JM 9-20.100](#)]

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