

**TITLE 18 - CRIMES AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE**  
**PART I - CRIMES**  
**CHAPTER 53 - INDIANS**

**§ 1151. Indian country defined**

Except as otherwise provided in sections 1154 and 1156 of this title, the term “Indian country”, as used in this chapter, means

- (a) all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and, including rights-of-way running through the reservation,
- (b) all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state, and
- (c) all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 757; May 24, 1949, ch. 139, § 25, 63 Stat. 94.)

**Historical and Revision Notes**

1948 Act

Based on sections 548 and 549 of title 18, and sections 212, 213, 215, 217, 218 of title 25, Indians, U.S. Code, 1940 ed. (R.S. §§ 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146; Feb. 18, 1875, ch. 80, § 1, 18 Stat. 318; Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, §§ 328, 329, 35 Stat. 1151; Mar. 3, 1911, ch. 231, § 291, 36 Stat. 1167; June 28, 1932, ch. 284, 47 Stat. 337).

This section consolidates numerous conflicting and inconsistent provisions of law into a concise statement of the applicable law.

R.S. §§ 2145, 2146 (U.S.C., title 25, §§ 217, 218) extended to the Indian country with notable exceptions the criminal laws of the United States applicable to places within the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States. Crimes of Indians against Indians, and crimes punishable by tribal law were excluded.

The confusion was not lessened by the cases of *U.S. v. McBratney*, 104 U.S. 622 and *Draper v. U.S.*, 17 S.Ct. 107, holding that crimes in Indian country by persons not Indians are not cognizable by Federal courts in absence of reservation or cession of exclusive jurisdiction applicable to places within the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States. Because of numerous statutes applicable only to Indians and prescribing punishment for crimes committed by Indians against Indians, “Indian country” was defined but once. (See act June 30, 1834, ch. 161, § 1, 4, Stat. 729, which was later repealed.)

Definition is based on latest construction of the term by the United States Supreme Court in *U.S. v. McGowan*, 58 S.Ct. 286, 302 U.S. 535, following *U.S. v. Sandoval*, 34 S.Ct. 1, 5, 231 U.S. 28, 46. (See also *Donnelly v. U.S.*, 33 S.Ct. 449, 228 U.S. 243; and *Kills Plenty v. U.S.*, 133 F.2d 292, certiorari denied, 1943, 63 S.Ct. 1172). (See reviser’s note under section 1153 of this title.)

Indian allotments were included in the definition on authority of the case of *U.S. v. Pelican*, 1913, 34 S.Ct. 396, 232 U.S. 442, 58 L.Ed. 676.

1949 Act

This section [section 25], by adding to section 1151 of title 18, U.S.C., the phrase “except as otherwise provided in sections 1154 and 1156 of this title”, incorporates in this section the limitations of the term “Indian country” which are added to sections 1154 and 1156 by sections 27 and 28 of this bill.

**Amendments**

1949—Act May 24, 1949, incorporated the limitations of term “Indian country” which are contained in sections 1154 and 1156 of this title.

---

*NB: This unofficial compilation of the U.S. Code is current as of Jan. 4, 2012 (see <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/uscpri.html>).*

---

### **Short Title of 1976 Amendment**

Pub. L. 94-297, § 1, May 29, 1976, 90 Stat. 585, provided: “That this Act [amending sections 113, 1153, and 3242 of this title] may be cited as the ‘Indian Crimes Act of 1976’.”