

DEFENSE

Agreement concluded by exchange of messages July 1, 1941

Entered into force July 1, 1941

Ratified by Icelandic Regent in Council July 10, 1941

Terminated by agreement of October 7, 1946¹

55 Stat. 1547; Executive Agreement Series 232

Message from the Prime Minister of Iceland to the President of the United States, July 1, 1941

In a conversation of June 24th, the British Minister explained that British forces in Iceland are required elsewhere. At the same time he stressed the immense importance of adequate defense of Iceland. He also called my attention to the declaration of the President of the United States to the effect that he must take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the Western Hemisphere—one of the President's measures is to assist in the defense of Iceland—and that the President is therefore prepared to send here immediately United States troops to supplement and eventually to replace the British force here. But that he does not consider that he can take this course except at the invitation of the Iceland Government.

After careful consideration of all the circumstances the Iceland Government, in view of the present state of affairs, admit that this measure is in accordance with the interest of Iceland, and therefore are ready to entrust the protection of Iceland to United States on the following conditions.

1. United States promise to withdraw all their military forces, land, air and sea, from Iceland immediately on conclusion of present war.

2. United States further promise to recognize the absolute independence and sovereignty of Iceland and to exercise their best efforts with those powers which will negotiate the peace treaty at the conclusion of the present war in order that such treaty shall likewise recognize the absolute independence and sovereignty of Iceland.

3. United States promise not to interfere with Government of Iceland neither while their armed forces remain in this country nor afterwards.

4. United States promise to organize the defense of the country in such a way as to ensure the greatest possible safety for the inhabitants themselves and assure that they suffer minimum disturbance from military activities;

¹ TIAS 1566, *post*, p. 1185.

these activities being carried out in consultation with Iceland authorities as far as possible. Also because of small population of Iceland and consequent danger to nation from presence of a numerous army, great care must be taken that only picked troops are sent here. Military authorities should be also instructed to keep in mind that Icelanders have been unarmed for centuries and are entirely unaccustomed to military discipline and conduct of troops towards the inhabitants of the country should be ordered accordingly.

5. United States undertake defense of the country without expense to Iceland and promise compensation for all damage occasioned to the inhabitants by their military activities.

6. United States promise to further interests of Iceland in every way in their power, including that of supplying the country with sufficient necessities, of securing necessary shipping to and from the country and of making in other respects favorable commercial and trade agreements with it.

7. Iceland Government expect that declaration made by President in this connection will be in agreement with these premises on the part of Iceland, and Government would much appreciate its being given the opportunity of being cognizant with wording of this declaration before it is published.

8. On the part of Iceland it is considered obvious that if United States undertake defense of the country it must be strong enough to meet every eventuality and particularly in the beginning it is expected that as far as possible efforts will be made to prevent any special danger in connection with change-over. Iceland Government lays special stress on there being sufficient airplanes for defensive purposes wherever they are required and they can be used as soon as decision is made for United States to undertake the defense of the country.

This decision is made on the part of Iceland as an absolutely free and sovereign state and it is considered as a matter of course that United States will from the beginning recognize this legal status of the country, both states immediately exchanging diplomatic representatives.

*Message from the President of the United States to the Prime Minister
of Iceland, July 1, 1941*

I have received your message in which you have informed me that after careful consideration of all the circumstances, the Iceland Government, in view of the present state of affairs, admits that the sending to Iceland of United States troops to supplement and eventually to replace the present British forces there would be in accordance with the interests of Iceland and that, therefore, the Iceland Government is ready to entrust the protection of Iceland to the United States on the following considerations:

[For terms of agreement, see numbered paragraphs in Icelandic message, above.]

You further state that this decision is made on the part of Iceland as an absolutely free and sovereign state and that it is considered as a matter of course that the United States will from the beginning recognize the legal status of Iceland, both states immediately exchanging diplomatic representatives.

I take pleasure in confirming to you hereby that the conditions set forth in your communication now under acknowledgment are fully acceptable to the Government of the United States and that these conditions will be observed in the relations between the United States and Iceland. I may further say that it will give me pleasure to request of the Congress its agreement in order that diplomatic representatives may be exchanged between our two countries.

It is the announced policy of the Government of the United States to undertake to join with the other nations of the Western Hemisphere in the defense of the New World against any attempt at aggression. In the opinion of this Government, it is imperative that the integrity and independence of Iceland should be preserved because of the fact that any occupation of Iceland by a power whose only too clearly apparent plans for world conquest include the domination of the peoples of the New World would at once directly menace the security of the entire Western Hemisphere.

It is for that reason that in response to your message, the Government of the United States will send immediately troops to supplement and eventually to replace the British forces now there.

The steps so taken by the Government of the United States are taken in full recognition of the sovereignty and independence of Iceland and with the clear understanding that American military or naval forces sent to Iceland will in no wise interfere in the slightest degree with the internal and domestic affairs of the Icelandic people; and with the further understanding that immediately upon the termination of the present international emergency, all such military and naval forces will be at once withdrawn leaving the people of Iceland and their Government in full sovereign control of their own territory.

The people of Iceland hold a proud position among the democracies of the world, with a historic tradition of freedom and of individual liberty which is more than a thousand years old. It is, therefore, all the more appropriate that in response to your message, the Government of the United States, while undertaking this defensive measure for the preservation of the independence and security of the democracies of the New World should at the same time be afforded the privilege of cooperating in this manner with your Government in the defense of the historic democracy of Iceland.

I am communicating this message, for their information, to the Governments of all of the other nations of the Western Hemisphere.