

Fisheries Dispute. - Continuation of Incidents between Icelandic Gunboats and British and West German Trawlers, March-July, 1973. - Further Unsuccessful Talks between U.K. and Icelandic Governments. - Naval Support for British Trawlers within 50-mile Limit. - British White Paper on Dispute. Related Developments.

The conflict between Iceland on the one hand and the United Kingdom and Western Germany on the other hand over the Icelandic Government's unilateral extension of the country's fishery limits from 12 to 50 miles[see 25234 A], which had continued throughout 1972 and early 1973,[see 25869 A], persisted during the period from March to July 1973. In early March Icelandic gunboats resumed their harassment of British and West German trawlers continuing to fish within the 50-mile limit, and in May the British Government decided to grant direct naval protection to British trawlers within the disputed limit. Meanwhile, a further round of ministerial talks between the British and Icelandic Governments failed to produce a solution to the dispute.

The Icelandic gunboats, which during the six weeks from Jan. 23 had been employed on rescue and salvage work in connexion with the eruption of the Helgafell volcano on the island of Heimaey, in the Westman Islands[see 25891 A], on March 5 resumed their harassment of British trawlers fishing within the 50-mile limit.

A total of eight incidents in which the warps of British trawlers were cut or damaged by Icelandic gunboats were reported on March 5–6, while on the night of March 5–6 the Icelandic gunboat *Aegir* fired two blank shots at the British trawler *Brucella*, which, it was claimed, was attempting to ram her; it was reported that shortly after the last-mentioned incident the British support tug *Statesman* severed the cutting gear of the *Aegir* and recovered it from the sea. A further warp-cutting incident occurred on March 7.

Lady Tweedsmuir of Belhelvie, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and principal British negotiator in the previous talks between the British and Icelandic Governments, formally protested on March 6 to the Icelandic Ambassador in London, Hr. Niels Sigurdsson, at this resumption of harassment, while these recent developments were also the subject of a statement in the House of Commons by Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, on March 7.

Sir Alec, who announced that the British Ambassador in Reykjavik was delivering a formal Note of protest to the Icelandic Government, said: "I am today sending a message to the Icelandic Foreign Minister reminding him of my proposal to him of Jan. 22 that discussions should be resumed, and I am asking him now to set a date for this, since it is obviously intolerable that the

present situation should continue. I am also reminding him that the British Government have all along made it clear that we are ready to take whatever action is necessary, including the use of the Royal Navy to protect British trawlers.”

Mr. Anthony Crosland (Lab.), M.P. for Grimsby, said: “This is a deplorable and extremely dangerous escalation of the cod war is particularly deplorable in the light of the repeated judgments of the International Court.... Those who[M.P.S] represent fishing ports have been very restrained about demanding the involvement of the Navy.... It has been our view that the Navy should go in only as a last resort.... We would like the tugboat solution to succeed.... If this peaceful and moderate attitude is to succeed[Foreign Secretary], the must now plan to bring in at least four or five more tugboats.”

Sir Alec, replying, said: “I will certainly consider the possibility of increasing the number of tugs.... I am sure that the policy of restraint has been right up to now. There is a limit to patience. The Icelandic Government had better know it.”

Hr. Hannes Jonsson, the Icelandic Government spokesman, stated on March 8, however, that Iceland had shown “great patience” with “piracy” by British trawlers fishing within the 50-mile limit, and declared that Icelandic vessels would continue to cut the trawl lines of British craft deemed to be fishing “illegally”.

Incidents continued to occur within the 50-mile limit throughout March and April and were the subject of repeated protests to the Icelandic Government by Mr. John McKenzie, the British Ambassador in Iceland. The most notable incidents are summarized below.

On the night of March 12–13 the Grimsby trawlers *Arsenal* and *Aldershot* collided, apparently while attempting to avoid the *Aegir*, which was trying to cut their trawl wires; no injuries were caused, although both trawlers were damaged. The British Trawlers’ Federation, which maintained that this was the first time an Icelandic gunboat had attacked the fishing gear of British trawlers by night, described the action of the *Aegir* as “a new and dangerous tactic”; the Icelandic Ambassador, however, denied that Icelandic patrol boats had been involved.

In an incident some 20 miles off the north-west coast of Iceland on March 18 the first live warning shots to be used in the “cod war” were fired across the bow of the *Statesman* by the gunboat *Odinn*. According to the Icelandic Coastguard, the two shots had been fired after the *Statesman* had “repeatedly tried to ram the patrol ship and ignored all international sailing rules”. Hr. Hafstein Hafsteinsson, a spokesman for the Coastguard, maintained on March 19 that the British trawlers had adopted” a new tactic of ramming, beginning about the middle of last week “, and described two further incidents which had allegedly followed the clash between the *Statesman* and the *Odinn* on March 18–19.

Mr. Julian Amery, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, maintained, however, in a statement in the House of Commons on March 19 that throughout the previous day the *Odinn* had been harassing a group of British trawlers fishing about 20 to 30 miles off the north coast of Iceland, while the *Statesman* had been engaged on her normal task of protecting the trawlers against harassment. *Odinn* had then fired two live rounds across the bows of the

Statesman, which was about half-way between the trawlers and the gunboat and steering a course parallel to the latter; at no time did she approach closer than about 100 yards to the *Odinn*. "I am satisfied," said Mr. Amery, "that there is no foundation for the Icelandic allegation that *Statesman* tried to ram the gunboat."

Live warning shots were also fired by the *Aegir* across the bows of the *Brucella* on March 25 and the support tug *Englishman* on April 2 after the British vessels had allegedly attempted to ram the Icelandic gunboat, while blank warning shots were fired on a number of occasions on March 26 and April 12 in the course of skirmishes after trawlers' wires had been severed or clipped.

The British Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on April 16 that the Government had chartered the *Lloydsman* (2,041 tons), described in press reports as Britain's largest, fastest and most powerful tug, to assist the *Statesman* and *Englishman* in protecting British trawlers within the disputed 50-mile limit. The *Lloydsman*, which like the other two support tugs is owned by United Towing of Hull, sailed from Hull on June 5.

A number of serious incidents occurred on April 23–24 in the course of clashes between Icelandic patrol boats and British trawlers off the south-west coast of Iceland.

According to the Icelandic Coastguard, the incidents began on the evening of April 23, when the *Arvakur*, the smallest vessel of the Coastguard fleet, with no mounted cannon, cut the trawl wires of a West German trawler, while the warps of a Fleetwood trawler were cut by the gunboat *Thor*. A fleet of 20 British trawlers fishing in the vicinity thereupon lined up in formation and attempted either to encircle the patrol vessels or to ram them. When the *Arvakur* was encircled its crew fired rifle shots, which, according to reports, hit the Hull trawlers *Portia* and *Brucella* without, however, causing any casualties. When the *Thor* came to the assistance of the *Arvakur*, firing five blank shots, the trawlers tried to ram the *Thor*; the *Brucella* and the Hull trawler *St. Leger* went at full speed at the *Thor*, and the *St. Leger* rammed the Icelandic vessel which, although badly damaged, was able to continue its patrol duties; after the incident, during which, it was reported, the *St. Leger* was holed in the bows, the *Thor* fired three non-explosive warning shells over the *St. Leger*. The Coastguard also claimed that during the melee the trawler *Macbeth* fired a distress rocket at an Icelandic Coastguard plane.

The Icelandic Foreign Minister, Hr. Einar Agustsson, protested against these incidents to the British Ambassador on April 24, while the latter made an oral protest against the continued cutting of trawl wires and delivered a formal protest against the latest developments to Hr. Agustsson on April 25.

Mr. Joseph Godber, British Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, announced on April 26 after a meeting with representatives of the British Deep.-sea Fishing Industry Joint Action Committee, which was also attended by Lady Tweedsmuir and Mr. Anthony Stodart, Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, that Britain had accepted an Icelandic invitation to hold another round of ministerial talks on an interim agreement in Reykjavik on May 3–4; the last snob round of talks had been broken off in deadlock in November 1972[see page 25873].

Mr. Godber, who said that there was unanimous agreement to accept the Icelandic invitation, stated: "We have had discussions with the industry on the understanding we shall urge harassment to stop in the interim. The industry has accepted this, and subject to the stopping of any further scandalous incidents of the type we had earlier this week, the firing of live ammunition, then they will leave in abeyance any request for the Navy to come in." He also announced that a further support tug, the *Irishman*, would be sent to the disputed waters.

Attempts to secure a resumption of talks at ministerial level had been renewed in March and continued in April.

Mr. McKenzie had been summoned to London for consultations on March 14, and on his return to Reykjavik had delivered a British Note to the Icelandic Government. Hr. Agustsson said on March 18

that Mr. McKenzie had given him "new information" on the attitude of the British Government, and after a meeting of the Icelandic Cabinet on March 20 it was announced that Hr. Agustsson would shortly meet Mr. McKenzie to discuss the resumption of the ministerial talks. Hr. Agustsson, together with Hr. Ludvik Josepsson (also spelt Josefsson), the Minister of Fisheries, and Hr. Magnus Olafsson, the Minister of Education, had talks on March 22 with Mr. McKenzie and two senior British officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Hr. Agustsson afterwards described the meeting as "useful", while Mr. McKenzie said that he was "hopeful" that full ministerial discussions would be resumed.

When Lady Tweedemuir on March 27 summoned the Icelandic Ambassador to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to protest at the incidents of March 25–26[see above], she informed him that, although the results of the talks in Reykjavik on March 22 were being studied in the hope of an early resumption of ministerial talks, "there can be no question of these taking place until harassment ceases". Such a resumption of talks was, however, suggested in a Note from Sir Alec Douglas-Home to Hr. Agustsson on March 30.

The new round of ministerial talks, which were held in Reykjavik on May 3–4, again ended in deadlock.

The British delegation was led by Lady Tweedsmuir and also included Mr. Stodart, Mr. Charles Hudson, president of the British Trawlers' Federation, and representatives of the trade unions and the Trawler Officers' Guild, while the Icelandic delegation was led by Hr. Agustsson and also included Hr. Jósepsson.

At a press conference after the talks, Lady Tweedsmuir, who accused Iceland of "not really negotiating" [see page 25870], said in respect of the annual British catch of cod: "As a gesture we offered a figure of 145,000 tons, which is roughly half-way between the Icelandic figure of 117,000 tons and the 170,000 tons to which the International Court has restricted the British catch. We regret to say that the Icelandic Ministers did not feel able to make any corresponding figure. They could suggest no figure higher than 117,000 tons."

It was reported that during the talks Britain, which had previously made an offer of limiting its catch to 156,000 metric tons, had offered to discuss a range of 117,000 tons to 155,000 tons and had premised to recommend to the British fishing industry the exclusion of its largest trawlers and freezing ships from Icelandic waters, provided that Iceland in return would increase its previous offer above the limit of 117,000 tons. The Icelanders in turn offered to divide the area between the old 12-mile limit and the new 50-mile limit into six pockets, keeping three open [previously they had offered two pockets opened and four closed—see page 25871.] at each time for British ships and three closed, but refusing to say at which time each pocket would be kept open. The British delegation also proposed that, if a satisfactory arrangement could be reached on a rotation of specific areas to be closed, the number of British vessels fishing in the disputed area should be reduced from 195 to 150.

Immediately after the talks, Lady Tweedsmuir delivered a strong protest to Mr. Olafur Johannesson, the Icelandic Prime Minister, against an incident on May 4 in which the Icelandic gunboat *Tyr* cut the trawl of the Fleetwood trawler *Wyre Victory*; the Icelandic Coastguard claimed that the trawler had been fishing over the lines of Icelandic boats and that during the incident another trawler, the *Crystal Palace*, had tried to ram the gunboat. Hr. Josepsson said on May 4: “Our gunboats will certainly arrest a trawler when they get the opportunity. I hope they will take one very soon.”

The breakdown of the negotiations was the subject of a statement to the House of Commons by Sir Alec Douglas-Home on May 7.

Sir Alec, after setting out the two sides’ positions, said that in the absence of agreement on the central question of tonnage it had been impossible to settle matters of restrictions on areas and vessels, although Iceland had agreed to study British proposals carefully. “Despite constant and dangerous provocation,” he declared, “the British Government have sought by every means to reduce tension. We shall continue to do so.”

Mr. James Callaghan, Labour spokesman on foreign affairs, said that it was important to make it clear to Iceland that Britain intended to work for a renegotiated agreement and could not accept a *fait accompli*. If there was a danger of British trawlers being arrested, or of an armed attack, it was Sir Alec’s responsibility to take personal charge of the negotiations. While the Opposition would support Sir Alec in doing everything possible to reduce tension, “we would not support any lack of action if there were an armed attack on a British trawler to which there was no response”.

Sir Alec, replying, said that if there were an armed attack on a trawler which could not be “repelled by the means that we have there now”, there would be “no alternative but to send in the Navy”. He stated that there was “no point in my taking charge of the negotiations until the Icelanders are ready and willing to begin, at any rate, the process of negotiation”, and in conclusion repeated that if the situation should deteriorate badly “we would be prepared to send in the Navy, but we want an agreed settlement”.

When **Mr. James Johnson** (Lab.), M.P. for Kingston-upon-Hull West, asked if in the event of a capture of a fishing vessel by Iceland the Foreign Secretary would “send in the Navy”, **Sir Alec**

replied: “Were the Icelandic Government to be so foolish as to take that kind of action, I cannot see any response other than to send in the Navy to protect our vessels. I profoundly hope that it will not happen, but I must make this clear....”

The British Government on May 19 ordered the Royal Navy to provide protection for British trawlers against further harassment within the 50-mile limit, the British trawler fleet having on May 17 withdrawn from the disputed waters in protest against the lack of naval protection.

During the weekend of May 13–14 a number of incidents involving the *Thor* and British trawlers had been reported; in one of these, according to the Icelandic Coastguard, *Thor* had fired blank warning shots at the *Englishman* and *Irishman* in order to deter them from ramming her as she was preparing to cut the trawl wires of the *Crystal Palace*.

It was also reported that during this same weekend Hr. Johannesson had taken a decision whereby the gunboat captains would be allowed a free hand within the 50-mile limit; whereas previously they had had to radio for permission to Hr. Johannesson, in his capacity as Minister of Justice, before they could attempt to cut the trawl wires of a British ship, they could now take whatever action they considered necessary, including attempting an arrest.

On the night of May 14–15 a group of 24 British trawlers chased the gunboats Tyr and Thor after the skipper of the Hull trawler Lord Alexander had radioed that she was about to be arrested by a boarding party from the Tyr—a claim strongly denied by the Icelandic Coastguard. In the course of the incident the Tyr fired shells across the bows of the Hull trawler Macbeth and the Grimsby trawler Northern Jewel when they went to assist the Lord Alexander; the skipper of the Northern Jewel subsequently denied a claim by the Icelandic Coastguard that he and the other skippers had tried to ram the gunboats.

Lady Tweedsmuir, in a statement on the incident in the House of Lords on May 16, said that in this case an Icelandic attempt to arrest a British trawler had been successfully repelled and the two shots fired appeared to have been warning shots, and not an armed attack; it had not been necessary to use the Navy, and the fishing industry as a whole had not yet requested naval protection. Answering a question by Lord Hoy (Lab.), she said: “Our understanding is that the skippers would like naval protection, the owners and the deck-hands do not at this time want protection. Therefore it is not the considered view of the industry that they would like naval protection now.”

Following a day of intense harassment by Icelandic gunboats, the trawler skippers on the evening of May 16 sent an ultimatum to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that if no naval protection was sent within 12 hours they would leave the disputed waters; when this demand was not met the British fleet of more than 40 trawlers sailed outside the 50-mile limit before dawn on May 17.

This development was discussed in London on May 17 at a meeting of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee and later at a meeting of the full Cabinet. After Mr. Godber had flown to Hull on the same day to meet representatives of the Deep-sea Fishing Industry's Joint Action Committee and announced a government pledge that the Navy would go to the aid of the trawlers

“within an hour”, the Committee decided to ask the trawler skippers to re-enter the 50-mile limit without naval protection. Several of the trawlers were reported to have returned to the disputed waters on May 18; the Foreign Office stated on that date that two *Wasp* helicopters from the Royal Navy frigates H.M.S. *Cleopatra* and H.M.S. *Plymouth* on station just outside the 50-mile limit had been operating over the area since May 16.

Further British trawlers returned within the 50-mile limit on May 19, closely followed by the *Cleopatra* and *Plymouth*, while a third frigate, H.M.S. *Lincoln*, remained stationed just outside the 50-mile limit, waiting to be relieved by H.M.S. *Jupiter*—which, like the *Cleopatra* and the *Plymouth*, carries a *Wasp* helicopter. The frigates were joined in their protection of the trawlers on May 19 by two long-range *Nimrod* aircraft of the Royal Air Force.

The British Ambassador received a protest at the intervention of the Navy. from the Icelandic Prime Minister on May 19, and in the same connexion the Icelandic Ambassador in London called on Sir Alec Douglas-Home on May 21 both to protest orally and to deliver a diplomatic Note which stated that the Icelandic Government considered the British action in sending in the Navy as “a hostile act taken against an ally which is defending its vital interests by protecting its main natural resources”. The Ambassador was recalled to Reykjavik “for consultations” on the same day, and Hr. Johannesson said also on May 21: “There is no possibility of further talks while the Navy is in Icelandic waters. Our patrol boats will carry on exactly as before, pushing the trawlers out and cutting their Wires.”

The Icelandic Government has on May 20 banned RAF aircraft from landing in Iceland in retaliation against the “act of aggression” by Britain in sending in the Royal Navy; it was noted in press reports that this ban applied in particular to landings by RAF reconnaissance aircraft at the NATO base at Keflavik, which is used for refuelling during flights over the Atlantic. Following an alleged lengthy intrusion into Icelandic airspace on May 23 by a *Nimrod* anti-submarine aircraft, the Icelandic Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Communications extended this ban to cover all British military aircraft, owned or leased, which were forbidden to land at any Icelandic airport or to fly over Icelandic airspace, which extends four nautical miles from the coastline.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home on May 21 made a statement in the House of Commons on the decision to send the Navy into the disputed waters.

Sir Alec said that, despite repeated warnings and although negotiations were in progress, the Icelandic Government had continued and intensified their harassment of British trawlers, and it had become clear that they were making a determined effort to drive British vessels from the area by force. “A critical situation was reached on May 14,” he continued, “when there was an unsuccessful attempt to board a trawler and live ammunition was used by a Coastguard vessel[see above].

“After consultation with the industry the Government concluded that it was no longer possible for British vessels to fish in safety without protection. Naval vessels were therefore ordered into the area on May 19. They will take only such defensive action as is necessary to protect British trawlers exercising their lawful rights to fish on the high seas. British naval vessels are, of

course, fully entitled in international law to operate freely in this area of the high seas. They will, however, be withdrawn at any time if the Government of Iceland will cease harassment of British trawlers.

“It is still the Government's desire to settle this dispute by negotiation. Pending such a settlement, we shall, however, authorize trawlers to catch up to the limit of 170,000 tons indicated by the International Court. We shall also pursue substantive proceedings before the Court and shall continue to seek longer-term solutions in the [1973-74] Law of the Sea Conference.”

Mr. Crosland said: “The Government's decision has our full support, and has of course been warmly received in all the fishing ports. Both the Government and the industry have been behaving with exemplary patience in the face of growing provocation from the Icelanders....” In answer to questions by Mr. Crosland, **Sir Alec** said that the Government would not insist that fishing should be carried out in tight boxes”, and that the Government would” take every opportunity in every international organization to tell the truth about this matter, which is... to continue objecting to harassing.”

Mr. Jeremy Thorpe (the Liberal leader) said that, while “many of us believe that there will be no lasting settlement save through negotiations and an agreed settlement. on both sides”, it was a fact that the Navy are “protecting trawlers In a section of the ocean unilaterally annexed by Iceland... in breach of international law”.

Asked by Mr. Thorpe if the Government were willing to submit the legality of its action to the International Court, *Sir Alec* replied: “We are certainly trying to submit this to the International Court. The Icelanders have said that they do not accept its jurisdiction, although the International Court of Justice does have jurisdiction in this matter.... A convention has been in force between two willing parties which Iceland registered under the Treaty in 1961[see 1809 A].”.

On the evening of May 24 an attack was made on the British Embassy in Reykjavik by several hundred rioters, mainly youths, following a protest demonstration in the city centre at which Hr. Josepsson had condemned what he called the “British military invasion” of Iceland; windows in the Embassy were smashed and the building daubed with paint, but no injuries were caused. An official apology for the incident was personally conveyed to the British Ambassador by Hr. Ingvi Ingvarsson, Secretary at the Icelandic Foreign Ministry,

Following the direct intervention of the Royal Navy within the 50-mile limit, few warp-cutting incidents involving British trawlers were reported, but a number of clashes occurred between Icelandic gunboats and British frigates and support tugs.

The first serious incident occurred on May 26 when the Grimsby trawler *Everton*, which had become detached from the main fleet of trawlers fishing with the naval escort, refused to heave-to when called upon to do so by the *Aegir*. The *Aegir* at first fired blanks, but when the trawler continued to steam on fired six or eight live shots, which holed the *Everton* both in the forecastle and below the waterline, causing the vessel to shipwater; the engagement ended when the *Everton* reached a group of British trawlers fishing near the island of Grimsey.

The British Ambassador in Reykjavik delivered a strong protest at the incident to the Icelandic Prime Minister on May 26. The latter, however, speaking on Icelandic radio on May 27, said of the engagement: "I would like to point out that this is completely in accordance with the policy I have stated. In future we shall continue to protect our limit with every possible means at our disposal."

The *Arvakur* was holed on June 1 in a series of collisions with British trawlers and the *Irishman*; while the Icelandic Government claimed that the British vessels had "ganged up" on the *Arvakur* and repeatedly rammed her and left her sinking, the Foreign Office maintained that the Icelandic Government had given "maliciously misleading" information about the incident.

According to the Icelandic Coastguard, the *Irishman* had rammed the *Arvakur* and holed her above the waterline on the starboard side; had then, together with the Grimsby trawler *Vivaria* and the frigate H.M.S. *Scylla*, tried to foul the *Arvakur's* propeller; and had later rammed the *Arvakur* by backing into the latter's starboard side. A spokesman for the British Foreign Office, however, maintained that the *Irishman* had scraped and dented the *Arvakur* on the port side during an attempt to prevent harassment of the *Vivaria*; while trying to pick up the *Arvakur's* warp-cutting gear it had caused a further superficial dent, and later, after the *Arvakur* had cut the warp of the trawler *Gavina*, there had been another collision with the *Irishman* and the *Vivaria*, while the *Arvakur* had also rammed the Grimsby trawler *Belgaum*.

Further incidents in June and July included the following:

In the first incident between a British frigate and an Icelandic gunboat, a collision occurred on June 7 between the *Aegir* and H.M.S. *Scylla* off the north-west coast of Iceland. The Icelandic Coastguard claimed that the *Scylla* had come too close to the *Aegir* when overtaking, resulting in a collision due to the action of the *Scylla* which had been behaving "unlawfully". According to the British Embassy in Reykjavik, the gunboat had deliberately tried to ram the frigate; damage was slight, however, and no casualties were caused.

On June 21 a collision occurred off the north-west coast between the gunboat *Odinn* and the *Lloydsman*. According to the Icelandic Coastguard the *Lloydsman* had carried out a "deliberate ramming attempt", had manoeuvred dangerously and had violated the rules of navigation. It was reported that both vessels were damaged and that the frigate H.M.S. *Leopard*, which was in the vicinity, had offered the *Odinn* immediate assistance and escorted her to the 12-mile limit.

The Icelandic Coastguard claimed on July 7 that the *Leopard* had earlier that day, off the north-west coast, threatened to open fire on the *Aegir* after the latter had fired a blank shot across the bows of a West German trawler which had continued fishing after it had been ordered to pick up its nets. The British Ministry of Defence, however, maintained that although the *Leopard* was at action stations she had not trained her guns on the *Aegir* and had taken no part in the incident. A Royal Navy spokesman said on July 8 that the *Leonard*, in an attempt to calm the situation, had warned the *Aegir* by radio that her fire was dangerously close and that if *Leopard* was fired upon she had the authority to return the fire.

During the night of July 13–14 an incident off the south-east coast of Iceland involving warp-cutting by the *Aegir* and alleged harassment of Icelandic trawlers by British trawlers was brought to an end when the frigate H.M.S. *Gurkha* ordered the trawlers away. In a similar incident on July 16, alleged harassment of Icelandic trawlers by British trawlers was halted only after the latter were warned by the *Englishman* that they would lose their protection if they went within the 12-mile limit, and after the *Aegir* had sailed to intercept them.

On July 17 in the same area, after two British trawlers had continued fishing under the protection of the frigate H.M.S. *Berwick* and the tugs *Englishman* and *Irishman*, the frigate *Lincoln* had, according to the Icelandic Coastguard, collided with the *Aegir* following repeated attempts to ram the Icelandic vessel.

After a collision between the *Odinn* and the frigate H.M.S. *Arethusa* on July 20, a spokesman for the Icelandic Coastguard said: “It is clear that the frigates have adopted a policy of trying to damage our patrol boats.”

As a result of the intervention of the Royal Navy within the 50-mile limit, Iceland protested both to NATO and to the U.N. security Council.

Britain had informed the NATO Council in Brussels on May 21 of her decision to send frigates into the disputed waters, but on May 28 the Icelandic Cabinet decided to call upon NATO to take “all necessary measures” to stop the Royal Navy from protecting British trawlers in their “illegal fishery operations” inside the 50-mile limit; the Cabinet also decided to press for a meeting of the U.N. security Council to discuss the fisheries dispute.

Both Britain and Iceland sent letters to the security Council on May 28–29, setting out their positions in the fisheries dispute.

The British letter maintained that Britain had acted with great restraint in the dispute and was willing to negotiate interim agreement, pending the outcome of the forthcoming U.N. Conference on the Law of the Sea; it accused Iceland, however, of ignoring the ruling of the International Court, and described the incident of May 26, in which the trawler *Everton* had been hit by the *Aegir*, as “the latest and gravest of a series of increasingly dangerous actions against British trawlers, carried out in disregard of the hazard to human life”. The Icelandic letter spoke of “serious acts of aggression” by Britain, and described the sending of Royal Navy ships into the area as “a hostile act”.

The Icelandic demand that the NATO Council arrange for the withdrawal of British warships from the “fisheries jurisdiction” of Iceland was made at a meeting of that body on May 29.

The Council subsequently approved a statement in which both sides were urged to take “all such measures which might contribute to a negotiated solution”; further discussions would be held in the Council in the next few days. “Meanwhile,” the statement continued, “the Secretary-General[Dr.Luns] is maintaining close contact with all the interested parties in order to further a speedy and amicable solution.”

The NATO Council debated the Icelandic demand on May 30, and after the debate Dr. Luns had separate meetings on the issue with Sir Edward Peck, British Ambassador, and his Icelandic counterpart, Hr. Thomas Thomasson. The Icelandic Government, however, told Hr. Thomasson to boycott the ministerial meeting of the NATO Defence Planning Committee, held in Brussels on June 7, as a protest against the continued presence of Royal Navy frigates in the disputed waters; in the course of this meeting Britain was reported to have rejected a plea by Norway and Denmark that the frigates should be withdrawn.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home said in reply to questions by Mr. Callaghan in the House of Commons on June 13 that the Government was willing for Dr. Luns to be an intermediary in the fisheries dispute, and that Dr. Luns was “trying to help in that direction”. Sir Alec and Hr. Agutsson met twice privately during the NATO Spring Ministerial Meeting, held in Copenhagen on June 14–15[see 25969 A], apparently without breaking the deadlock, and on June 22 the Icelandic Government sent a Note to NATO stating that Iceland was “very disappointed that NATO has not yet been able to assist in getting British warships away from Icelandic fishing grounds”, and repeating earlier demands “that the warships leave at once”.

Meanwhile, the Icelandic Government had in late May rejected an offer of good offices in the fisheries dispute made by the Norwegian Government; a spokesman for the British Foreign Office, however, welcomed the Norwegian Government's offer” in the hope that it may prove possible to arrange for the cessation of Icelandic harassment”.