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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH OFFICE OF

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

FROM AmLegation, Reykjavik

MESSAGE CENTER

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

December 29, 1951
DATE

REF : Legtel 97, December 12, 1951.

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For Dept.	EUR	I N F O
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SUBJECT: FURTHER REACTION TO THREATENED USE OF ICELAND AS ATOMIC BASE

During the recent budget debates, the Communist leader, Brynjolfur Bjarnason, criticized the Government for ignoring the statement of Senator Edwin Johnson concerning the possibility of establishing an atomic base in Iceland. He stated that the Government had blindly refused to prevent Iceland from becoming the base of aggression in an atomic war.

The Foreign Minister brought this subject up during my call on him on December 19, 1951, to discuss another matter. The Foreign Minister said there was no reason to make great issue about this subject, but did express some concern when I informed him that I had not received a reply from Washington to my inquiry, he stated that it would be of great help to him if he could obtain some sort of assurance that nothing was known of such plans and that the Government could not be responsible for personal statements made by individual members of the Congress. He told me that he wished to avoid embarrassment which might arise if he could not report some sort of reply from the United States on a question which he is obliged to investigate. He added that of course no member of the present Government has any serious qualms on the matter, but he feared that the opposition members would attempt to make capital over it. He observed that quite naturally no one can prophesy what may arise in the future or what military steps the United States and other NATO members may be obliged to take. However, he did not feel that there was much likelihood of the United States needing to deposit atomic bombs in Iceland.

I told him that I would do what I could to get a reply from the Department as soon as possible. However, since the Althing had begun its Christmas recess, and would not resume its meetings until January 3, I did not expect that the question of the establishment of atomic bombs would be presented to the Minister in the immediate future.

The Department's reply dated December 21, reached the Legation on the 24th and I immediately attempted to convey the message to the Foreign Minister. He was not available because of the holidays

MNHughes/pm
REPORTER

DEC 29 1951

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Page _____ of
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and therefore on the 27th I called upon the Permanent Under-Secretary and gave him the gist of the Department's communication. The following evening I saw the Foreign Minister at dinner and had an opportunity to ask him if the assurances given were satisfactory. He replied that he was quite pleased with the response and while not completely reassuring for the future, he realized the position and considered that the information given him would enable him to answer his critics satisfactorily. He expressed his appreciation for our courtesy in providing him with all assurances that are possible under present circumstances.



Morris N. Hughes
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

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