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LETTER DATED 18 FEBRUARY 1976 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I. OF
THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE
UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the letter, together with its annex, which the Permanent Representative of Iceland addressed to the President of the Council on 23 January (S/11944) concerning the incident which took place between British and Icelandic vessels on 11 December.

The United Kingdom Government have considered these documents. Nothing they contain causes the United Kingdom Government to wish to alter anything in the statement which the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom made in the Security Council on 16 December 1975.

The documents circulated at the request of the Permanent Representative of Iceland cannot obscure the basic facts of the incident which are as follows. The British vessels had been sheltering from a storm and transferring water immediately before the incident. They were all unarmed. They were fired on by the Icelandic coastguard vessel. They did not provoke the incident in any way. The collisions were caused by the manoeuvring of the coastguard vessel at a time when the British vessels were making for the open sea.

With regard to the intimation made to the British Embassy in Reykjavik that it might be represented at the Inquiry (p. 28 of the Annex to the Icelandic Permanent Representative's letter of 23 January), the suggestion was declined in accordance with the general policy of the United Kingdom Government with regard to such proceedings before foreign courts. It will in any event be observed that the stated purpose of the Inquiry ("to inquire into the ramblings of the coastguard vessel 'Thor' by the British tugboats 'Star Aquarius' and 'Lloydsman'") prejudged the disputed issues of fact.

The reference, on page 6 of the Annex to "the British underwater minefield" relates to mines laid by Britain in the 1940s but cleared by her after the war.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) James MURRAY
Chargé d'Affaires