

gentle-  
~~man's~~  
agree-  
ment in  
Iceland

Facilitated by **Erik DeLuca**, in collaboration with the 2024-25 Hamraborg Festival, this booklet and social practice accompaniment is about reimagining what a gentleman's agreement could be: a symbol of solidarity and justice between different people.

# — Conversation with Kristín Loftsdóttir

**A gentleman's agreement is a secret, legally non-binding understanding between people upheld through codes of honor. These agreements are often utilized to quietly oppress people to avoid attracting attention or scrutiny. In the U.S., these agreements have frequently been used to uphold racial segregation in various contexts, from Major League Baseball to real estate practices.**

**One of the most well-known examples of a gentleman's agreement in international relations occurred in 1907 when Japan limited emigration to the U.S. in exchange for the cessation of segregation of Japanese children in San Francisco schools. During a 1969 meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and U.S. President Richard Nixon, a gentleman's agreement was established that is still in effect today. The U.S. tolerates Israel's possession of nuclear weapons as long as Israel does not publicly acknowledge or test them. This understanding allows Israel to maintain a policy of nuclear ambiguity.**

**In the following conversation, I speak with prolific Icelandic anthropologist Kristín Loftsdóttir<sup>1</sup> about a racialized gentleman's agreement in the historical context of Iceland that involves patriarchy, nationalism, and the "foreigner category":**

**Erik:** You have written extensively on Nordic exceptionalism in Iceland.

**Kristín:** Yes, Iceland has been a transnational place, as evidenced by the travel books and journals I have been researching from nineteenth-century Iceland. For example, in 1853 Ida Laura Pfeiffer published a book about her experience in Iceland, *Visit to Iceland and the Scandinavian North*. It is astonishing to see in these books how many people traveled to the island from continental Europe during that time.<sup>2</sup> However, when I was growing up in the seventies, the prevailing feeling was that Iceland was isolated and had been for centuries—an island floating in the sea with a small population, then of 240,000. Part of this narrative of disconnection is rooted in a sense of exceptionalism. Because Iceland was under Danish rule, there is a belief that we are not implicated in the history and effects of colonization, including racism. As a result, things that would be labeled as racism in other countries are often shrugged off as a "misunderstanding" here for a lack of experience and knowledge.

**E:** How did you get into this work?

**K:** I had an experience when I was a child. Someone said racist things to me about people from other parts of the world. I knew that what this person was saying was wrong, but I didn't have the language to reply. I wanted to be able to explain to this person that what they were saying was

<sup>1</sup> Kristín, with a PhD in anthropology from the University of Arizona, is a professor at the University of Iceland. Her writing on racism, colonialism, whiteness, immigration, and nationalism has been featured in many books and scholarly journals.

<sup>2</sup> Please see Kristín's forthcoming 2024 chapter, *Three Days From Civilisation: Scientific Imagination and Nineteenth Century Iceland* in "Margins of Empire."

incorrect and immoral. I've worked to build the language and knowledge to be able to correct people like that.

E: I was thinking about the power of language and its relationship to nationalism as I read through your chapter, "Still a Lot of Staring and Curiosity": Racism and the Racialization of African Immigrants in Iceland." One of the people you interviewed said, "In Iceland, you are really not a face unless you have a job, can speak the language, and can really understand." All at once, language has the power to dehumanize, liberate, and mark privilege.

Someone recently explained to me that, as recently as the late 90s, some Icelanders viewed themselves as more "refined" and would speak Danish on Sundays as a *sparitungumál* (fine language). On the other hand, I'm confused as to why Icelandic schools would still require its students to learn Danish after all these years of independence. If whiteness is an assumed privilege that bodies take on, perhaps the Danish language requirement in schools, and its usage as a *sparitungumál*, might tell a story of how Iceland became white.

K: Iceland was certainly white in the past, but whiteness didn't matter in the same way as it does today, and whiteness intersected with notions of civilization. The perception in the wider European context was that Iceland was uncivilized or semi-civilized. Icelanders saw themselves as inferior within the transnational system and feared that others did not recognize them as civilized and as belonging with

other European nations. This is reflected in the 1930 parliamentary festival in Iceland. Instead of celebrating 1000 years of parliament in Iceland, the festival was viewed as a "test of the nation," that was intended to show other nations that Iceland was modernizing. Dignitaries and leaders from other European countries came to Iceland for the festival and so the "test" was to show them that there were really "civilized" people living in Iceland. Often that meant fabricating what was showcased because it did not exist before. For example, an orchestra played at the festival—there was no orchestra in Iceland before that time.<sup>3</sup> I have been examining an even earlier period, an expedition to Iceland by Prince Napoleon, the nephew of Emperor Napoleon, to the northern part of Europe in 1856 that included Iceland. After visiting Iceland for a few days, he expressed relief at returning to Europe, describing the housing in Iceland as primitive. Some explorers who came to Iceland, like Ida Pfeiffer, referred to the living conditions as worse than those of "savages" in Greenland or Lapland.

The past marginalization of Iceland is interesting to examine. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Iceland's position changed significantly. Today, as a Nordic country within the current geopolitical context, Iceland is strongly associated with whiteness and holds a firm position there, even though we have a quite pluralistic society.

E: I want to discuss with you a faded 1963 declassified memo that I scanned recently from the U.S. National Archives in Maryland.<sup>4</sup> In the memo President John F.

3 See Kristin's 2019 book, *Crisis and Coloniality at the Margins of Europe: Creating Exotic Iceland* and her 2019 chapter with Kimberly Cannady in *Sounds Icelandic: Essays on Icelandic Music in the 20th and 21st Centuries*, "A Nation Without Music?": Symphonic Music and Nation-Building."

4 See a scan of this document on page 30 of this booklet.

Kennedy requests more information about a gentleman's agreement made between his administration and Iceland.<sup>5</sup>

K: I've only read about this document. It's different to see it.

E: Responding to pressure from civil rights activists in the U.S., Kennedy demanded that his staff disclose information about the prohibition of Black U.S. soldiers from performing military duties at the U.S. base in Keflavik.

K: There was a strong moral panic that foreign U.S. soldiers would "corrupt" Icelandic women and threaten the nationalistic efforts of the new Icelandic Republic. This concern involved not only issues of race and gender but also perceptions of the "foreigner category."

Iceland became an independent state in a personal union with Denmark in 1918 and declared full independence in 1944. The interpretation of Iceland's history as a struggle with foreign powers continued after independence, particularly during the occupation of Iceland by Great Britain and the United States during the Second World War. The continued presence of foreign militaries in the postwar period, so

soon after independence, raised concerns about its implications for Iceland as an independent country.

The Icelandic government demanded that the military base in Keflavik be sealed off to prevent Icelandic women from having sexual relations with foreigners and to maintain the presumed purity of the nation.<sup>6</sup> Objections to the military presence took racialized forms, as reflected in the gentleman's agreement that you mention by Icelandic politicians, that no Black soldiers be stationed in Iceland, a request to which the U.S. government reluctantly complied. In 1963, the U.S. government sent a Black representative from the U.S. Marines to Iceland to investigate the perception of Black people. His experience was that Icelanders were, for the most part, more curious than hateful, and it was unlikely that Black soldiers would suffer from racism; it was more likely that they would be harassed for their nationality. Black soldiers slowly began to be stationed at the Keflavik airbase beginning in 1963, which seemed to have prompted little reaction from Icelandic citizens.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of this example, we see very clearly that racism was part of Icelandic

5 I learned about this gentleman's agreement from historian Valur Ingimundarson's 2004 article, "Immunizing against the American Other: Racism, Nationalism, and Gender in U.S.-Icelandic Military Relations during the Cold War."

6 Soldiers were to abide by a strict curfew and were not permitted to leave the base between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. every day. The Icelandic government made an exception to the curfew for married soldiers whose families lived with them. This kind of curfew remained in effect until the end of the Cold War period.

7 Valur Ingimundarson further explains on the topic: "Even though the number of Black U.S. troops was proportionally smaller than that of whites in the early 1970s, this changed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the time the Cold War ended, the racial balance at Keflavik did not differ from that of U.S. military bases elsewhere in the world. Of the 3,133 soldiers stationed in Iceland in 1989, 15.3 percent were Black and 5 percent were classified as "other," most likely Filipino or Hispanic".

society at that time, as seen when browsing through various media, for example.

E: Is this history taught in schools today?

K: I have analyzed school books published up until the year 2000, focusing on what it means to be Icelandic and how race is discussed.<sup>8</sup> School books are not necessarily indicative of what is taught in classrooms, as teachers in Iceland can choose their curriculum. Therefore, I cannot definitively say what is being taught. I do know that when racism is discussed, it is often presented as something in the past, not as a structural problem relevant to the present. It is not framed as a current issue that people might be part of, regardless of their intent. There is also a notable lack of discussion on whiteness.<sup>9</sup>

A few years back, in 2019, I published a small book in Icelandic whose title can be roughly translated as “Racism - The short version” [in Icelandic: *Kynþáttafordómar - Í stuttu máli*]. This was my attempt to address the topic in clear language. I purchased many copies and sent them to high schools. The teachers were very grateful and thanked me for letting them know such a book existed. It was very

rewarding, because I envisioned young people like myself wanting to start learning about these issues.

E: I'd like to talk more about the “foreigner category” that is at the heart of the racialized gentleman's agreement that was made. I became interested in this topic after an experience I had. For a couple of years, I taught community-engaged, interdisciplinary courses at the Iceland University of the Arts across their departments: music, visual arts, performing arts, and design. During my second year of teaching, several colleagues informed me that the president of the university had expressed a desire to offer more interdisciplinary courses like the ones I was teaching. My colleagues suggested that I speak with the president about my approach. At the meeting, the first thing the president said to me when I sat down was, “Why are you here?” Before telling her about my curriculum, she interrupted me and asked, “Are you here to marry an Icelandic woman?”

Reflecting on this experience with the historical context of the gentleman's agreement we are discussing, I realized that this university president couldn't see me as a teacher but rather as a foreigner—albeit a very privileged one—only in Iceland to “steal” women. This experience made me aware of the subtle and overt ways in which foreigners are perceived

<sup>8</sup> See Kristin's 2010 chapter *Encountering Others in the Icelandic Schoolbooks: Images of Imperialism and Racial Diversity in the 19th Century* in “Opening the Mind or Drawing Boundaries?: History Texts in Nordic Schools.”

<sup>9</sup> During this conversation, Kristin discussed her analysis of the 2007 republication of the book *Negrastrákarnir* (“Negro Boys”) as a suitable pedagogical tool to engage Icelandic high school students in discussions about localized issues of race. The book is an Icelandic translation of the 1860 American nursery rhyme “The Ten Little Negroes,” which vividly reflects the racism towards Black people at that time. The 2007 republication, featuring the original Icelandic illustrations from the 1922 edition, sparked a public debate in Iceland. Kristin concluded that the public reactions to this book center on the image of Iceland as nonracist because they are isolated from the global history of racism. For a deeper understanding, refer to Kristin's 2013 analysis in “Republishing ‘Ten Little Negroes’: Exploring Nationalism and ‘Whiteness’ in Iceland.”

and treated in Iceland. How do you see the confluence of xenophobia, race, gender, nationalism, and the idea of homogeneous purity resonating in your country today with regard to the “foreigner category”?

K: The “foreigner category” has historically carried a potent meaning in an Icelandic context, describing somewhat hostile or invading forces and, furthermore, creating a dualistic division between “us,” the Icelanders, and “them,” the foreigners. Historically, a foreigner typically referred to people from Denmark, Norway, or continental Europe. Today when people talk about foreigners, they sometimes refer to tourists, but often they speak negatively about those who are immigrants or long-term residents from foreign backgrounds. Stark boundaries tend to be drawn between being Icelandic and being a foreigner, especially a non-white foreigner, which reflects how the category of the foreigner intersects with issues of racism while also shaped by gender and being heavily influenced by national origin. We see thus that there is a hierarchy of foreignness, with people from Eastern European backgrounds often placed at the bottom.<sup>10</sup>

With labor participation from abroad intensifying during the economic boom era when Iceland joined the Schengen states, the meaning of “foreigner” became synonymous with cheap labor. The perception of Eastern Europeans became particularly salient during the economic boom period when people from Poland and Lithuania arrived to work in low-paying, exploitative labor conditions. They began to be seen in a derogatory light, leading to racialized ideas about individuals from these countries. This

was, for example, reflected in discussions associating people from these countries with criminality.

E: Binary logics of colonizer/colonized and white/racialized can be distorted. This was the case for my grandmother. Facilitated by what I believe was the controversial Haavara (Transfer) Agreement, a collaboration between Nazi Germany, Zionist German Jews, and the British Mandate, she purchased a ticket in October 1935 to Jaffa Port, Palestine. She stepped off the steamship *Patria* as a refugee—without citizenship, with both parents in a Jewish ghetto and her sisters lost—and onto colonized Palestinian land. She was forced into being a refugee and a settler at once.

The International Court of Justice has deemed it “plausible” that Israel is committing acts of genocide, and the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has requested an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, stating that “Israel has intentionally and systematically deprived the civilian population in all parts of Gaza of objects indispensable to human survival.” As of this writing, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health, roughly 40,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel, though a study published in *The Lancet* suggests the death toll in Gaza could exceed 186,000. Since October 2023, two million Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced, and the majority of their infrastructure—including wastewater treatment plants, sewage pumps, hospitals, schools, higher education institutions, mosques, churches, homes, buildings, and cultural sites—has been destroyed. Meanwhile, a small number

<sup>10</sup> See Kristin's 2017 essay, “Being the ‘Damned’ Foreigner” in *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* and her 2023 introductory chapter to *Creating Europe from the Margins*.

of Palestinians have sought international protection or family reunification in Iceland since October 7th. Do you believe your government is doing all it can for Palestinian refugees at this moment, or do you see parallels to how Iceland and other Western powers, like the U.S., knowingly rejected Jewish refugees during the Holocaust?

K: In early January, a group of Palestinians and their allies camped peacefully outside the parliament, calling for the evacuation of family members who have been granted residence visas in Iceland on the basis of family reunification but are stuck in Gaza. Foreign Minister Bjarni Benediktsson harshly criticized this protest, which contrasts sharply with the substantial support for Palestinians among the Icelandic public.

I don't know if we can compare this situation to Iceland's treatment of Jewish refugees during the Second World War. The Icelandic government has recently taken a very harsh stance against all refugees. The prime minister has made misleading statements about "flows of refugees" coming to Iceland, conflating the number of people invited from Ukraine due to the war with an overall influx of refugees. This rhetoric, which often links refugees with criminality, takes the risk of mirroring the far-right discourse seen across Europe. This is enmeshed with a significant presence of Islamophobia in Iceland, as in other countries, which has not diminished.

E: The late historian Noel Ignatiev notes, "Whiteness is not a culture; it is a privilege that oppresses others." He co-founded the journal *Race Traitor* and authored the influential book *How the Irish Became White*, which explores the social construction of race and the historical

development of whiteness. Ignatiev advocated for the abolition of whiteness, arguing that dismantling racial categories and privileges was essential for achieving social justice and equality. To put it simply, Noel imagined a world without whiteness.

K: People like Ignatiev and anthropologist Faye V. Harrison approach whiteness as a historical and structural phenomenon. When I started discussing racism in Iceland after returning from my studies, I often felt alone in my efforts. In 2020, after George Floyd was murdered, there was a heightened focus on tackling racism. Many young Icelandic people—activists, immigrants, Black Icelanders, and people of color—stepped forward in the media to share their experiences of discrimination. This was powerful and eye-opening, as many people around me said they had never realized there was so much racism in Iceland. There was an atmosphere of resisting systemic privilege.



# 'Personnel Problems'

Scans from box 209 of the Politico-Military Policy Division, Naval History Records, U.S. National Archives, 1961-64

PERSONNEL PROBS - ICELAND

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JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

MANUDAGSBLADID NON-POLITICAL WEEKLY NEWSPAPER CARRIED  
ARTICLE IN ISSUE DATED MAY 10 BUT ONLY NOW AVAILABLE CHARGING  
THAT DEFENSE FORCE AT KEFLAVIK BASE HAS MADE QUOTE MAJOR MISTAKE  
UNQUOTE BY VIOLATING QUOTE AGREEMENTS UNQUOTE THAT NO NEGROES  
BE STATIONED AT KEFLAVIK. ARTICLE CONTINUS THAT ICELANDERS HAVE  
NEVER FACED RACIAL PROBLEMS AND DO NOT EXPECT TO IMPORT SUCH  
PROBLEMS FROM THE UNITED STATES. ARTICLE CLAIMS THAT QUOTE MANY  
NEGROES UNQUOTE HAVE RECENTLY ARRIVED FOR A TOUR OF DUTY AT  
KEFLAVIK BASE, OBSERVES THIS WILL HARM ICELANDIC VIEW TOWARDS NATO  
AND IMPLIES IMPAIRMENT AS WELL OF U.S.-ICELANDIC RELATIONS.

MANUDAGSBLADID HAS BAD REPUTATION AS HUGHLY INACCURATE  
SCANDAL SHEET WHICH FEW PEOPLE TAKE SERIOUSLY. ABOVE ARTICLE IS  
TYPICALLY INACCURATE AND MISLEADING. FACT IS THAT TWO NEGROES  
CURRENTLY ASSIGNED PERMANENTLY PLUS ONE OFFICER AND SEVEN  
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WITH AIRCRAFT UNITS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED AT KEFLAVIK ON SAME  
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INFO: CJCS-1 DJS-1 SJCS-1 J3-8 J5-2 SACS-4 NMCC-2 SECDEF-5 ASD/ISA-5  
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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER  
MESSAGE CENTER

SUMILAR ARTICLE WAS CARRIED ON MAY 7 IN THE EQUALLY DISREPUTABLE REYKJAVIK NON-POLITICAL WEEKLY NY-VIKUTIDENDI CONCERNING ALLEGED PROBLEMS ARISING FROM RELATIONS BETWEEN AMERICAN QUOTE MULATTOES UNQUOTE (PROBABLY REFERRING TO FILIPINOS OF WHOM THERE ARE SOME 49 AT KEFLAVIK) AND ICELANDIC GIRLS. ARTICLE LINKS ALLEGED PROBLEM WITH QUOTE AGREEMENT UNQUOTE WHICH UT STATES WAS MADE BETWEEN FORMER PRIMIN HERMANN JONASSON AND PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT THAT NO NEGROES WOULD BE SENT TO ICELAND.

EMB INCLINED BELIEVE THAT SINCE ARTICLES HAVE NOT PRODUCED ANY PUBLIC DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS OR PRESS TREATMENT PROABABILITY IS THAT MATTER WILL PROCEED NO FURTHER. HOWEVER IN

EVENT THAT IT DOES THUS COULD BECOME DIFFICULT AND EMBARRASSING PROBLEM EVEN THOUGH CURRENT PRESENCE OF NEGROES AT BASE HAS RAISED NO PROBLEMS PER SE.

EMB HAS DISCUSSED QUESTION WUTH CHIEF, DEFENSE DIVUSION AT FONMINISTRY WHO DOES NOT ANTICIPATE STORIES WULL HAVE ANY EMBARRASSING REPERCUSSIONS.

WE ASSUME THAT GUIDANCE IN DEPTTEL 174 OCT 2, 1963 REMAINS VALID AND THAT IF QUESTION RAUSED IN U.S. DEPT AND DOD WOULD RESPOND ALONG THOSE LINES. HOWEVER, FJRTHER PUBLUCITY ON SUBJECT WILL BE EMBARRASSING TO GOI AND EMB. THEREFORE RECOMMENDS THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO PLAY IT DOWN IN UNFORTUNATE EVENT IT ARISES.

COMUCEDEFOR CONKURS. GP-3 PENFIELD  
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PAGE 2 OF 2 PAGES

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*Hand carried to Mr. Jonasson  
15 June*

My Dear Senator Keating,

I am responding to your memorandum of 11 June 1964 regarding conditions in Iceland as protracted by one of your constituents on duty with the Icelandic Defense Force.

My letter to you under date of \_\_\_\_\_ noticed the reluctance with which the U.S. accepted restrictions placed on the Keflavik base as the price for obtaining important facilities and transit rights in Iceland. Further, it keynotes those same limitations and the efforts being made, both diplomatically and militarily, to relax Icelandic regulations deleterious to Service personnel morale which your constituent redundantly itemizes.

I hasten to add that the Department of ~~Sixx~~ Defense is justly proud of the improvements U.S. Service personnel have made in People-to-People relations with the Icelanders and as a result of their continued patience many Icelandic concessions have been made.

In conclusion may I reassure you that every possible effort is being made to improve the habitability of U.S. personnel in Iceland.

Honorable K. B. Keating  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C.

*Iceland  
Contact  
Personnel*

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State, ISA and OP-613 agree;

1. letter is not accurate - OPNAV instruction does not state proportions.

2. Assignment of Quarters is business of CAPM Dine and all should stay out of it.

OFFICIAL-~~INFORMAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

3. no reply will be made by any of above. <sup>to V. R. King</sup> <sub>June 11, 1964</sub>

Dear Dick:

A situation has recently arisen here which I think bears reporting to you, and perhaps some discussion with ISA, although I doubt that anything very effective can be done about it. By OPNAV Instruction 11101.13D of 17 April 1962 it was decreed that official quarters would in the future be occupied in the ratio of 25 percent for officers and 75 percent for enlisted men. The ratio at Keflavik was approximately 49 percent officers and 51 percent enlisted men. The IDP had a long and bitter argument with the Navy about the application of the new percentages at Keflavik, but has finally succeeded only in obtaining a relaxation to a proportionate 50 percent officers to 70 percent enlisted men. This proportion is now being achieved by attrition. It has meant that the so-called "key billet" jobs have been practically decimated. This means that a great number of officers who would normally be coming here with families for a 2-year tour will now leave their families at home rather than attempt to live off base for many months before getting on-base quarters. That is, they will take a 1-year tour with family separation rather than a 2-year tour with the disadvantages of off-base living for a large portion of a 2-year tour.

This situation has two results with political implications. First, the considerable increase in a 1-year tour will cause a commensurate decrease in continuity and an increase in the potential for misunderstandings due to lack of background in handling local problems, with, of course, an increase in the Embassy's hand-holding and peace-making responsibilities. Second, experience has demonstrated that an officer with family is generally much more balanced in his views and is a much more constructive participant in and influence on community relations.

As you may know, additional on-base quarters are planned, but even when they are constructed, the number of quarters available for officers will rise only to the level at which it has been until recently.

I think that even though nothing may come of it, it would be appropriate and desirable to put these points on the record with ISA.

Sincerely yours,

James K. Penfield

Richard D. Geppert, Esquire  
Officer in Charge  
Swedish-Icelandic Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

PLEASE RETURN TO OP-613

*Iceland Embassy Personnel*

b1  
b1B  
b1C

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Authority AND 69621

*\* CONFIDENTIAL (Personnel)*  
N.Y. TIMES 24 MAY  
NATO BASE ISSUE  
FADES IN ICELAND  
Iceland and on to the Faeroe Islands, near Britain. There has been noticeable improvement in the Icelanders' treatment of American servicemen since 1956, when Parliament adopted but did not press a resolution asking their ouster. But progress is slow. The Icelandic coalition Government, which is pro-Western, has only a two-vote majority in Parliament and so does not feel able to ease the restrictions further. The Government fears that Communists and other foes of the base might succeed in provoking a new outcry by exploiting both the Icelanders' inherent dislike of militarism and their desire to preserve their culture. Thus most of the restrictions set up in 1951, when Iceland agreed as her contribution to NATO to allow Americans to be based at Keflavik, still remain. Unmarried American servicemen are still discouraged by a complicated pass system and a curfew from taking the 30-mile ride into this capital city of 80,000. Married men whose families are with them in Iceland are relatively free of restrictions when accompanied by their wives. There are about 280 such North American Continent men.

24 May 64



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Authority ANO 69621

**NAVY**

14610

OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

INDICATE:  CONTACT  
 CHANGE TO

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*Confidential  
para*

58

Orig  
SS  
Info

ACTION: Embassy HELSINKI ROUTE 162

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27 3 49 PM '63

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM AMSTERDAM

LOOSE DISSEMINATION S/S

(Subject your telegram 149) under review consideration here

and publicity imminent because of Congressional inquiry about  
Air Force directive. Directive likely be rescinded soon insofar  
as it applies Iceland, and we suggest you confidentially inform  
Icelanders accordingly. Letter being pouched. END

*068D  
69pen*

O. S. D.	
DISTRIBUTION	2P-
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D.C.A.	15
O.C.D.	15B
J.C.S.	16
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BALL

ACTION: A  
INFO: XIR:ISA (Cavestro):Jdd 9/27/63  
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DOD/ISA - Capt. Weymouth (ubstardgs)A

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DS-322

*R3*

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Authority ANO 69621



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

*61  
6132  
613 H  
B.2  
23 SEP 1963*

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

In reply refer to:  
I-12890/63

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. NORMAN PAUL

In a recent discussion relating to the personnel problems  
of U.S. forces in Iceland, Ambassador Penfield suggested  
that you might find it worth your time to visit there  
and asked that his invitation be formally extended to you.

The Department of Defense does have special problems  
arising from the presence of its personnel in Iceland. With  
justification, service there is classified as hardship duty.

An overnight stop combined with a half working day would  
provide a reasonable orientation to personnel conditions in  
Iceland, and afford you an opportunity to gather related  
Icelandic attitudes in person. Such a stop could easily be  
adapted to a European trip.

Would you let us know your reaction?

STAMP

Frank K. Sloan  
Deputy Assistant Secretary

Copy for Capt Hershey, OP613.

RETURN TO OP 613

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Authority *ANNO 69621*

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

17-31

CONFIDENTIAL

Action:

EUR

Info

SS NNNN115EUB102REC120  
PP RUEMCR  
DE RUDINS 086 20/1240Z  
P 201225Z ZEA  
RMR FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC  
STATE GRNC  
BT

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015270

1963 SEP 20 AM 10 24

C O N F I D E N T I A L

PRIORITY (149) SEPT 20, 12 NOON

REDEPTEL 144

61 ADMIRAL BUIE AND I AGREE IT WOULD BE MUCH PREFERABLE CONTINUE PRESENT  
61B NAVY PROGRAM UNTIL ITS LOCAL IMPACT CAN BE EVALUATED. AT SAME TIME WE  
61S RECOGNIZE IMPORTANT REASONS FOR CANCELLATION AIR FORCE DIRECTIVE.  
611  
611B I ASSUME, ON BASIS SEPTEMBER 6 DISCUSSION WITH ISA AND AIR FORCE REPRESENTATIVES, THAT EFFECT SUCH CANCELLATION WOULD PROBABLY BE BUILDUP  
611C OF COLORED AF PERSONNEL OVER THREE YEAR PERIOD TO TOTAL OF PERHAPS 30  
612 (LESS THAN OVERALL SERVICE PROPORTION OF 8 PERCENT OF PRESENT TO RPT TO  
612B CEN 149 20 12 144 " ISA 30 8  
612C  
615  
613B  
613C  
614 PAGE TWO RUDINS 086 C O N F I D E N T I A L  
614B OF 770 BECAUSE OF HIGH PROPORTION OF TECHNICAL BILLETS).  
614C  
614D THIS IS NOT REALLY QUESTION OF DISCRIMINATION. JUST AS NAVY POLICY OF  
615 NOT ASSIGNING WAVES TO SHIPS AFLOAT (OR FOR THAT MATTER, TO KEFLAVIK)  
615B IS BASED ON SUITABILITY FOR ASSIGNMENT RATHER THAN DISCRIMINATION  
616 AGAINST WOMEN, SO NON-ASSIGNMENT TO ICELAND OF PERSONNEL WHOSE PRESENCE  
616B IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN APPEARANCE HERE OF CHILDREN OF MIXED RACE INVOLVED  
616C SUITABILITY RATHER THAN DISCRIMINATION. IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT  
IP AF HAS NO MEANS OF SCREENING PERSONNEL FOR SUITABILITY IN LIGHT OF THIS  
OR OTHER CRITERIA APPLICABLE TO A SPECIFIC AREA OR BILLETS.

ADMIRAL BUIE POINTS OUT THAT AVAILABILITY ADDITIONAL ON-BASE HOUSING IS VITAL TO HIS CAPABILITY TO CONTROL SITUATION. NAVY DOES NOT HAVE COMPLETE POLICE JURISDICTION IN AGREED AREA AND KEFLAVIK IS INTERNATIONAL

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6024

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority *ANNO 69621*

CONFIDENTIAL

-2- 149 September 20, noon, from Reykjavik

CIVIL AIRPORT AS WELL AS MILITARY BASE. IT IS THEREFORE IMPOSSIBLE CONTROL PERSONNEL MOVEMENT ON BASE COMPLETELY AND DESPITE MOST CONSCIENTIOUS POLICING EFFORTS, GIRLS ARE OCCASIONALLY SMUGGLED INTO BARRACKS AND BOQ'S THUS, ONLY REAL PROTECTION AGAINST ICELANDIC OBSESSION WITH RACIAL PURITY IS TO HAVE THOSE WHO MIGHT BE A THREAT IN THIS CONNECTION MARRIED AND HOUSED IN FAMILY QUARTERS ON BASE.

AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, GOI VIEWS PROBLEM IN ESSENTIALLY SAME TERMS WE DO AND IF INFORMED OF CANCELLATION AF DIRECTIVE WOULD RAISE QUESTIONS CFN 770 BOQ'S GOI

PAGE THREE RUDINS 086 C O N F I D E N T I A L AND EXPRESS CONCERNS SIMILAR TO THOSE SUMMARIZED ABOVE. AGREE THAT IF CANCELLATION CONSIDERED NECESSARY WE MIGHT WELL DELAY INFORMING GOI RPT GO UNTIL DOD RLT DOD ORDER ISSUED. INITIAL REACTION WILL PROBABLY DEPEND IN LARGE PART ON WHAT DEPARTMENT CAN AUTHORIZE US TO SAY REGARDING

THESE CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS. LONG TERM REACTION WILL OF COURSE DEPEND ON SUCCESS WE HAVE IN AVOIDING INCIDENTS.

IF DIRECTIVE CANCELLED REQUEST MAXIMUM REASSURING DATA AND BACKGROUND FOR IPFIN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOI.

GP-3. PENFIELD  
BT  
CFN 3

NOTE: DEPTEL 144 REQUESTED COMMENTS ON LETTER SEPT. 11 TO AMBASSADOR

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SECRET

Op-613/cb  
10 SEP 1963

TALKING PAPER

Subj: Restrictions imposed on U.S. Forces in Iceland

*Iceland Personnel*

1. 6 SEP 1963 conference on subject restrictions included reps from STATE, OSD (Manpower), OSD (ISA), USAF, USN, U.S. Ambassador to Iceland.
2. Conference discussion: long history of restrictions, including those on liberty, wearing of uniform, customs, commissary buying, housing, and assignment of colored personnel.
3. Icelandic antipathy rooted in desire to retain purity of race and fear of economic and cultural absorption by West.
4. Restrictions founded in 1951 Defense agreement. Many detailed concessions made to Iceland in order to obtain agreement, which is based on defense of Iceland.
5. Ambassador Penfield's opinions: Gradual improvement expected except in areas affecting Icelanders' economic well-being -- e.g. customs, housing, commissary buying. Number of colored personnel can be increased gradually.
6. Significant conference developments:
  - a. USAF requests written instruction from OSD before rescinding reg barring colored assignment.
  - b. OSD (Manpower) to take lead in actions to remove restrictions.
  - c. Recognition by all that Iceland places onerous restrictions on U.S. personnel.

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DOD DIR 5200.10

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Authority AND 69021

*Secret*

DRAFT

Op-613/cb  
6 SEP 1963

*Ambassador*

*b1  
613 H  
6138 Seen*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Personnel Assignment in Iceland

1. I attended a meeting this date in the office of the Iceland <sup>US STATE DEPT.</sup> Desk Officer. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss problems of assignment of colored personnel in Iceland and restrictions on all Armed Forces personnel with respect to liberty, uniforms, and commissary buying. Present at this informal conference were Ambassador Penfield, U.S. Ambassador to Iceland; Mr. Ackerman, State Department; Capt. Loomis (OSD Man Power); Capt. Weymouth (OSD Regional Desk Officer for Iceland and Scandinavia); Mr. Owen (State Department Desk Officer for Iceland) and Mr. James Goode, civilian, (Office of the Secretary of the Air Force.)
2. Ambassador Penfield reviewed the background of restrictions in the assignment of Armed Forces personnel in Iceland. He stated that from 1951 to 1960 conditions remained static, with virtually no improvement in Icelandic-U.S. relations. However, the past two or three years there has been slow but steady improvements in the attitude of the Icelanders toward accepting the presence of foreigners, and especially in their attitude toward colored personnel. He pointed out that relations have improved immeasurably since the assignment of RADM Moore and RADM Buie. He said that the Icelandic person most responsible for these improvements is the Foreign Minister. Paradoxically, he is also the Icelandic spokesman for retaining certain restrictions on Armed Forces personnel. The Ambassador pointed out that the areas which would affect the

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economic well-being of the Icelanders were the areas where we could expect very slow improvement. This pertains particularly to the restrictions on commissary buying by U.S. personnel quartered off the Base.

3. Improvement in the housing situation will be slow for two reasons:

- a. There simply are not enough houses for Icelanders and additional Americans, and
- b. The Icelanders will not countenance the saturation of the city by Americans.

The Ambassador stated that in general there is little or no antipathy toward Americans and also there is little feeling against colored personnel by the populace, however political leaders still harbor suspicions of our people. He stated that Icelandic-U.S. relations are the best since 1951 and that the base tenure is as solid there as any place in the world.

4. The Air Force representative, Mr. Goode, presented the case for retaining U.S. Air Force's regulations against assignment colored personnel in Iceland. The Ambassador pointed out the political disadvantages to this regulation and asked that it be rescinded. Mr. Goode said that he needed some written directive from the office of the Secretary of Defense before the Air Force would consider rescinding the regulation.

5. Various schemes for getting rid of Icelandic restrictions on colored personnel were discussed. Capt. Hershey pointed out that two CPO's had been assigned and would arrive in Iceland in September or October, 1963. The Ambassador was queried as

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FROM : Ambassador REYKJAVIK

SUBJECT : Discrimination

REF : DEPCIRCTEL 120

DATE: July 26, 1963

COPY NO. 30  
1 Page, 55 Copies

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Discrimination arising from race, religion, or national origin is generally not an active question in Iceland, which is unusually homogeneous ethnically. Very few persons of non-Icelandic origin reside in Iceland and those who do encounter few problems in the above connection after they become acquainted with Icelanders and accustomed to their way of life. Such difficulties as non-Icelandic persons may encounter on first arrival in Iceland are due not to discrimination *per se* but rather to traditional suspicion of foreigners still found to some extent in many Icelanders and fear that foreigners may dilute local language and culture, about which all Icelanders are hyper-sensitive. Religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution and there is a State Church (Lutheran). Icelanders do not discriminate against the small number of Catholics and the scattered members of a few other denominations in Iceland. There are practically no colored people residing in Iceland.

For the Ambassador:  
*Valdemar H. L. Johnson*  
Valdemar H. L. Johnson  
Counselor of Embassy

RETURN TO OP 613

FORM DS-323 4-62

Drafted by: DCM: VNL/Johnson:cls 7/23/63

Contents and Classification Approved by: DCM: VNL/Johnson

Clearance: [ ] In [ ] Out

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Authority ANNO 69021

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OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum  
SECRET

Op	For	Initial
O6		
O6B		
O6A		<i>27/10</i>
O6A1		
C6S	18 JUL 1963	

TO : Op-06

DATE: 18 JUL 1963  
Op-613/cb  
Ser 001023P61

FROM : Op-61

SUBJECT: Assignment of Colored Personnel to Iceland (S)

1. LCDR G. I. Thompson, one of Navy's Negro officers, has visited Iceland in conjunction with the subject problem. He participated in interviews with Naval and Embassy officials and carried out visits to public establishments in Iceland.

2. LCDR Thompson reported that Negro entertainers have been in Reykjavik, appearing in local clubs, living in hotels or apartment houses, and visiting in private homes. He said that his own visit aroused curiosity, but not enmity. He verified that the housing situation is very poor, with some persons waiting 15 to 22 months for quarters. Availability off-Base housing has been clouded by an Icelandic Government request to reduce the number of personnel living off-Base by half, however, it appears that the Icelanders will not insist that this be carried out. (It was pointed out that the number of people living off-Base was less than previously reported).

3. LCDR Thompson concluded that:

- a. Conditions are favorable for assignment of colored personnel in Iceland.
- b. Antipathy would most likely be directed against nationality rather than race.
- c. Assignment of families rather than single men preferred. Best results would be obtained from assignment of a married junior officer with a small family, *initially*.
- d. Individuals assigned will face hardships, but not more than other of white race assigned.
- e. Personnel assigned will require careful counselling.

Very respectfully

*Richard S. Craighead*  
RICHARD S. CRAIGHEAD  
Director, Politico-Military Policy Division

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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

32  
Action

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2:12 p.m.

EUR  
Info

FROM: Reykjavik

TO: Secretary of State

SS

NO: 16, July 12

G

SP

H

INR

RMR

ACTION DEPARTMENT 16 INFORMATION COMICEDEFOR UNNUMBERED

LIMIT DISTRIBUTION

Reference DEPTTEL 400.

Discussed colored servicemen problem with Foreign Minister yesterday and found him relaxed on subject. Providing care exercised in selection of personnel, we do not anticipate difficulties or unfavorable repercussions.

- 61
- 61B GP-3
- 61S
- 611
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- 611C
- 612 LMS/14
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PENFIELD

*06/11*  
*06/12*  
*01*

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RETURN TO OP 613

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**SECRET**

CLASS ( )

ROUGH

Op-613B/pap  
24 June 1963

81  
618 *H*

*613 B Sam*

Dear Admiral Beakley,

*I talked with*  
Bill Leverton ~~called me~~ last Saturday in regard to fast-breaking developments in the assignment of colored personnel to Iceland. He asked that I send you a personal letter with the details, *since he is away this week, and I'm happy to do so.*

~~I won't go too deeply into the history of the problem, but~~ as you know, the Icelanders have been sensitive ever since the stationing of colored troops there in WW II. When the 1951 Defense Agreement was negotiated, they asked *orally* that we not assign them, and then again in 1957, when we asked for token assignment, the Icelanders reiterated their previous stand. They finally agreed, after prodding by State in 1961, to assignment of "3 or 4". Through it all, the Icelanders have not wanted it publicly known that the segregation policy is due to their wishes.

Early this year DOD (ISA), motivated by activities of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces, asked *for* Navy to implement the "3 or 4" formula. Admiral Smedberg pointed out the disadvantages of doing so, and the problem was reexamined in conference, with State, ISA, and the US Ambassador to Iceland, Mr. Penfield, *and* Admiral Schade participating. The consensus, endorsed by Mr. Korth, *on 28 May 63* was that we should continue the policy of deferring assignment, pending report of the Committee on Equal Opportunity.

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Ambassador Penfield briefed the Chairman of the Committee, who was "understanding" and predicted the situation would receive little mention in the first Committee report. *COMMITTEE REPORT*  
(The second *THE SUBJECT OF* on discrimination in US bases overseas, is due in the fall.)

We thought ~~we~~ had the problem whipped, but it reared its head again *on June 11* when <sup>US</sup> Congressman Diggs asked Secretary McNamara why our Icelandic garrison had no colored personnel assigned. ISA ~~prepared a response that explained the situation in general terms and that would have gotten DOD off the hook rather gracefully, but~~ Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Assistant to SECDEF, considered that the letter was not responsive and the policy was wrong. He ~~thereupon~~ *with STATE* coordinated a reversal of the policy and *with Sec. Korth who* ~~was~~ directed to send ~~two~~ *some* married colored servicemen and their families *Adm. Smedberg* to Iceland ASAP. Admiral Smedberg was requested *ALSO* to brief Congressman Diggs, which he did.

The reversal of position resulted in a number of messages to and from State and Ambassador Penfield. Several of these were ~~the~~ screened for President Kennedy, who inquired into the entire matter late last week. The President wanted to know the nature of any "gentlemen's agreement" between the US and Iceland, who authorized it, and when. He said we should reopen discussions with Iceland with the objective of sending a few Negro personnel there. He was informed Saturday that Defense was going ahead with sending several married Negro personnel to Iceland. Larry O'Brien,

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Presidential Assistant for Congressional Relations, ~~will~~ <sup>was to</sup>  
ask Congressman Diggs to avoid making any statements on  
the subject.

Admiral Smedberg has ~~dispatched~~ <sup>SENT</sup> LCDR Thompson, ~~one of~~  
~~our Negro officers~~, to Iceland to brief Admiral Buie, to  
examine the racial situation, and to report. ~~The colored~~  
~~settlers we will order to Iceland, are to be given no pre-~~  
~~ference on the housing list.~~ <sup>They</sup> Thompson will look into the  
off-base housing situation.

*See the memorandum to Smedberg*

How this will all turn out is anybody's guess. The  
Administration is caught in the middle. <sup>Containing the non-assignment policy</sup> ~~Inaction will~~  
~~result in airing the subject in the papers, which would~~  
~~constitute a major political blunder since we would have to~~  
~~admit that Iceland's wishes are the cause of our segregated~~  
~~assignment policy.~~ <sup>By the other hand, assignment of colored personnel there</sup> ~~This over-~~ <sup>then</sup> ~~move would make neither political~~  
~~nor military sense and stand to cost us hard-won rapport~~  
~~with the Icelanders.~~

*might well*

On the hopeful side, the Icelanders are developing a  
more worldly outlook on life. The prospective new members  
of their community may be accepted more readily than antici-  
pated. Toward this end, assigning married personnel will  
help.

However, on the dark side, the new broad outlook may  
also lead the Icelanders to decide that other NATO members  
could take over defense responsibilities the US is now  
carrying, enabling them to shed the US and its integrated  
forces. A related subject is the recurring attempts by the

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~~• Air Force to remove the 57th Interceptor Squadron which  
is currently being proposed by <sup>SECDEF</sup> McNamara to reduce the  
flow of gold. The JCS have held that removal is neither  
politically nor militarily sound, and I hope will reiterate  
this stand. A vast array of other factors would complicate  
the Icelanders' decision, but it is possible that they  
will ask us to leave.~~

~~The good relations between Iceland and the US are  
finely balanced. I hope that the assignment of only a  
few servicemen does not upset the balance, <sup>I</sup> but intend to  
watch the indicators we have most closely.~~

Sincerely,

*We will watch the situation  
closely and keep you informed  
of pertinent developments.  
With best regards,  
Sincerely*

*W A Wallace M. Peadar  
Deputy Commander in Chief,  
Atlantic Fleet  
70480  
New York, NY*

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6. 53

Request from General Clifton, action required June 22 prior to President's departure -

Reference is made to a State Department incoming telegram #427 dated June 19 from Reykjavik, Iceland. There is also a Department telegram, number believed to be 346 or the Ambassador Only. Subject matter of the exchange is the restricted racial policy with respect to U. S. personnel, and specific reference is made to a "gentleman's agreement" which appears to have been entered into between this Government and the Government of Iceland.

The President wants to know:

- (1) What is the nature of this "gentleman's agreement"?
- (2) Who authorized that it be made? When was it made?

In addition to getting this information, the President wants the U. S. to reopen discussions with the Government of Iceland, with the objective of sending at least a small number of Negro troops to that country.

Apparently there is some reference in a document, possibly one of the cables, to the effect that a high BOD official informed Congressman Diggs that this policy was imposed by Iceland unilaterally. This is apparently not in accord with the facts. General Clifton will pass this information on to Larry O'Brien, with the request that he ask the Congressman to avoid making any statements until this matter is cleared up.

Norman S. Paul

(26 Jul. 1951)

*2x  
Thompson -  
to see O Lake  
Hope  
Pinkin*

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority AWO 69021

Op-613/gsb  
20 June 1963

**SECRET**  
SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subj: Personnel Problems in Iceland (U)

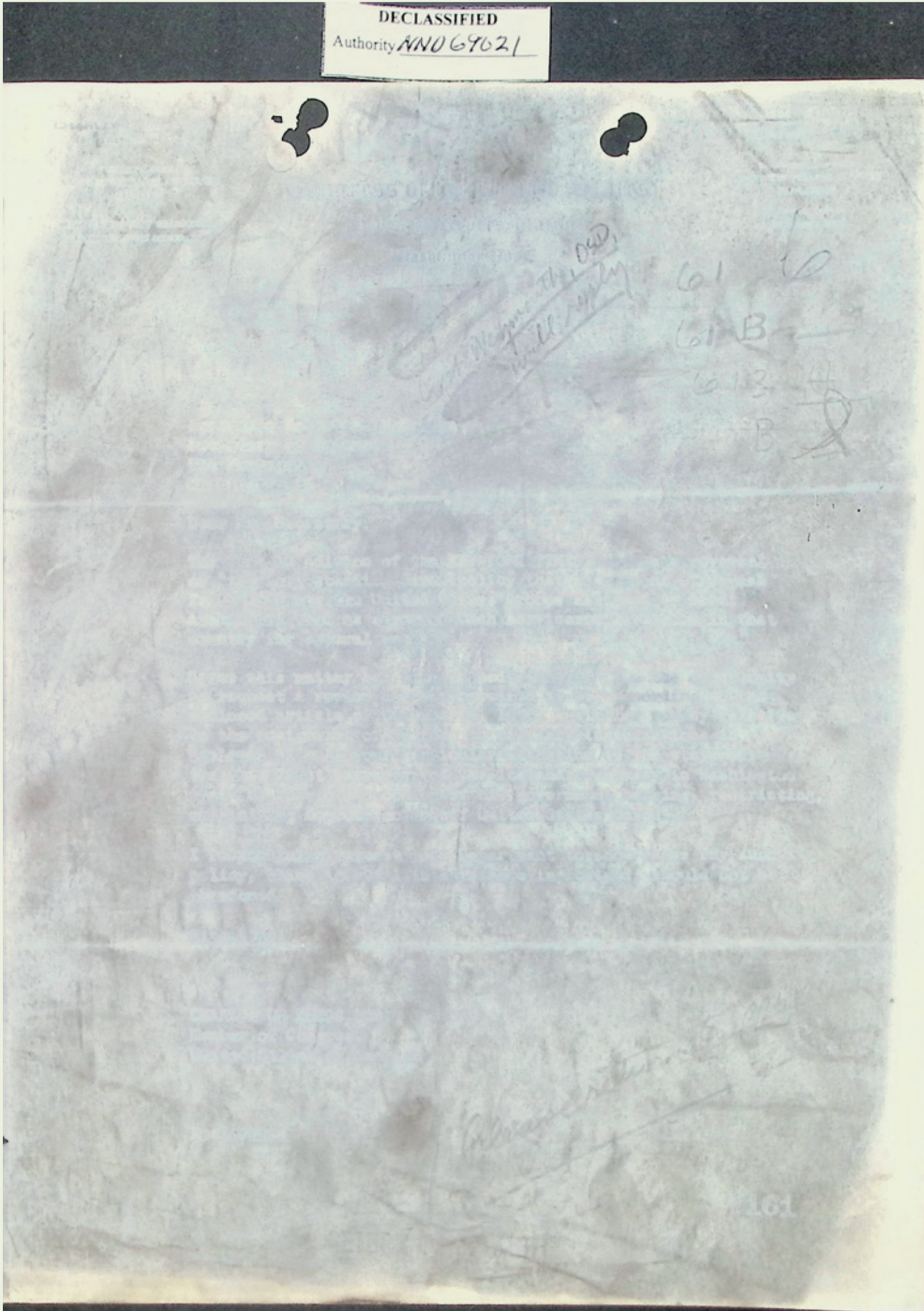
1. The subject of the assignment of colored personnel in Iceland, which you will remember was discussed last month, has arisen again. A letter from U.S. Congressman DIGGS (Attach A) invites SECDEF to show cause why Negroes have not been assigned in Iceland.
2. On 19 June, Capt. Weymouth, OASD(ISA), drafted a reply explaining to Mr. DIGGS the delicate situation that obtains in Iceland; however, the draft was not acceptable to Mr. Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Asst. to SECDEF.
3. Capt. Weymouth explained the background (Attach. B with tabs) of the problem to Mr. Yarmolinsky, pointing out that the subject had received high level attention recently. (Mr. Korth's decision is Attach C). Attach D is the reply of U.S. Ambassador to Iceland, Mr. Penfield, to a State request for information which could be used in replying to Mr. Diggs. It generally supports the Navy's previous argument that deferral of assignment would be wise.
4. Later on 19 June, Capt. Weymouth was informed, and so informed Navy, that Mr. Burdette (Deputy Asst. Sec'y State), Mr. Gilpatric, Mr. Wm. Bundy, and Mr. Yarmolinsky had considered Mr. Digg's letter and had jointly agreed to assign 3 or 4 colored personnel now. Capt. Weymouth conferred with RADM Craighill to discuss the feasibility of VADM Smedberg's communicating verbally with Mr. Diggs to satisfy the requirement of replying to Mr. Digg's letter. The discussion was inconclusive, with Capt. Weymouth returning to OASD(ISA) for guidance.

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SECRET

Op-613/pap  
24 May 1963

SECRET

TALKING PAPER

Subj: Assignment of Colored Personnel in Iceland (C)

BACKGROUND

1. Subject sensitive since stating of US troops in WW II.
2. 1951 - During Defense Agreement negotiations, Iceland requested non-assignment colored personnel. (Tab A)
3. 1957 - Iceland reiterated stand in responding to US request for token assignment. (Tab B)
4. FEB 1961 - AsstSecState Kohler asked US Ambassador to reopen question. Suggested that if Iceland disagreed, US would announce that US policy on non-assignment is based on Iceland's wishes. (Tab C)
5. AUG 1961 - Iceland orally agreed to assignment of "3 or 4" carefully selected colored personnel.
6. FEB 1963 - Defense (ISA), noting that agreement to assign had not yet been carried out, requested Navy delay further, until after June 1963 elections. (Tab D)
7. May 1963 - BuPers letter to CNO asked reconsideration of decision to assign coloreds to Iceland. (Tab E)

POINTS

8. Iceland's longstanding, oft-repeated antipathy toward coloreds. (Filipinos acceptable) Icelandic public opposed; incidents inevitable (steward incident). RADM Buie recommends against.
9. Iceland pressured into accepting "3 or 4".
10. US Ambassador has advocated assignment married coloreds, on base, however, 12 months wait for base housing. Merale problems if coloreds given preferential treatment on housing priority.
11. Off-base housing not practicable - 50% reduction off-base housing asked by Iceland. Icelanders probably would not want to coloreds. Commissary not available to off-base personnel, except quarterly.
12. Assignment would work hardship on coloreds.

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AND DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULES

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Op-613/pap  
24 May 1963

13. Public relations - US and Navy now have good rapport, carefully cultivated over long period. Introduction of coloreds would be viewed as breach of good faith.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

14. 17 May 1963 - Conference: US Ambassador Penfield, State, OSD (ISA), Navy (RADN Schade). Summary:

a. Ambassador sympathetic to Navy. Good rapport with Buie. Fears US press will force US announcement that segregation policy is based on Iceland's wishes. This would be US political blunder.

b. OSD (ISA) stated pressure to assign coloreds originated with President's Committee for Equal Opportunity in Armed Services. Committee met Air Force regulation on Iceland prohibiting assignment coloreds in Iceland. (Navy has no such regulation.)

c. Consensus: Continue present policy if US pressures allow.

15. 22 May 1963 - Ambassador met with Chairman of Committee to persuade him to soft-pedal or omit Iceland issue in report to President. Results: Chairman's attitude was "understanding" however said he could not speak for whole Committee. Predicted issue would receive little mention in Committee's first report (due 1 or 2 months). Said second report due in November and will address "problems abroad" and might spotlight the issue.

RECOMMENDATION

16. Delay implementation of the agreement with Iceland to assign colored personnel to Iceland pending results of Committee's first report. Monitor activities of Committee closely for signs of interest in Iceland.

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Op-613/pap  
Ser 00988P61

17 MAY 1963

Op-06

Op-61

Assignment of Colored Personnel in Iceland; memorandum of conference with US Ambassador to Iceland (S)

1. On 16 May RADN Schade and Capt. Henshey met with the US Ambassador to Iceland, Mr. Penfield, and officials of State and OSD to discuss the assignment of colored service personnel in Iceland.

2. The Ambassador discussed the problem forthrightly, pointing out that it was indeed a sensitive subject. He stated that the Government of Iceland had been frank and aboveboard in their dealings with him, and that while they would rather not have colored personnel there, they would not object to three or four families if they were carefully selected. He emphasized the point that we should not allow ourselves to get into a situation where the US press would announce that segregation in Iceland was due to GOI insistence on non-assignment of colored personnel, even though this is very nearly the case. He affirmed that he and RADN Buie (COMICEDEFOR) enjoyed excellent rapport and that in general their views coincided on the colored personnel assignment problem.

3. RADN Schade summarized the Navy case by stating that this is a political problem, and that the Navy is prepared to carry out whatever decision is made; however, the discomfort to the personnel assigned as well as the public relations problems of the military services should be considered. He explained that the limited housing available necessitates an average waiting period of twelve months for enlisted personnel who have requested quarters. He pointed out that preferential assignment of quarters to colored personnel to ensure that they would be housed on the base would cause acute morale problems, and that off-station housing, currently being reduced by 50% at Iceland's request, probably would not be made available to colored people.

4. Mr. Lang (ISA) explained that the reason that Defense was exploring the possibility of implementing the informal Iceland-US agreement to assign three or four colored personnel to Iceland at this time was that the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Services had listed the Iceland

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Op-613/pap  
Ser 00988P61  
17 MAY 1963

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Authority: ANU 67021

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segregation policy as an item to be given further attention. The report of the Committee will probably be presented to the President before Icelandic elections and thus could be an Icelandic election issue as well as a government-to-government issue if the US press contends that Iceland insists on segregation. Moreover, such airing by the US press would be construed by Iceland as evidence of bad faith on our part, after they had consented, in frank discussion with Embassy representatives, to token assignment of colored personnel in their country. The Committee particularly had noted that the Air Force has a written regulation forbidding assignment of colored personnel to Iceland. RADM Schade stated that to the best of his knowledge the Navy had no such regulation. This has subsequently been confirmed.

5. The consensus of the conference was that, considering Icelandic desires in the matter, the policy of not assigning colored personnel to Iceland should be continued insofar as US domestic integration pressures will allow. Since the present instrument for these pressures is the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Services, it was agreed that a frank discussion of the situation between Ambassador Penfield and the Chairman of the Committee might be profitable. The object of this discussion would be the acceptance by the Chairman that, at least for the time being, continuation of the present personnel assignment policy is wise and that this item should not be a part of the Committee's report to the President. (This report will probably receive press coverage.) Ambassador Penfield discussed the possibility of rescinding the Air Force Regulation on non-assignment of personnel in Iceland as a quid-pro-quo. ISA will investigate and report to him on this matter.

6. Ambassador Penfield will meet with the Chairman of the Committee during the week of 20-24 May and will discuss the results of the meeting with OSD/ISA. A course of action will then be formulated.

7. It is recommended further Navy action relative to this problem be withheld pending the report by Ambassador Penfield on his discussion with the Chairman of the Committee for Equal Opportunity.

D C LYNDON  
Acting Director, Defense Military Policy Division

ORIG: CAPT M M HERSHEY, USN  
Op-613 X 76444  
17 May 63 pa powell

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Op-613/pap  
Ser 00988P61  
17 MAY 1963

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OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10  
5010-104  
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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Memorandum

Op	For	Initial
O6		
O6B		5/17
O6A		5/17
O6A1		
O6S		5/17

TO : Op-06

FROM : Op-61

DATE: 17 MAY 1963

SUBJECT: Assignment of Colored Personnel in Iceland; memorandum of conference with US Ambassador to Iceland (S)

- On 16 May RADM Schade and Capt. Hershey met with the US Ambassador to Iceland, Mr. Penfield, and officials of State and OSD to discuss the assignment of colored service personnel in Iceland.
- The Ambassador discussed the problem forthrightly, pointing out that it was indeed a sensitive subject. He stated that the Government of Iceland had been frank and aboveboard in their dealings with him, and that while they would rather not have colored personnel there, they would not object to three or four families if they were carefully selected. He emphasized the point that we should not allow ourselves to get into a situation where the US press would announce that segregation in Iceland was due to GOI insistence on non-assignment of colored personnel, even though this is very nearly the case. He affirmed that he and RADM Buie (COMICEDEFOR) enjoyed excellent rapport and that in general their views coincided on the colored personnel assignment problem.
- RADM Schade summarized the Navy case by stating that this is a political problem, and that the Navy is prepared to carry out whatever decision is made; however, the discomfiture to the personnel assigned as well as the public relations problems of the military services should be considered. He explained that the limited housing available necessitates an average waiting period of twelve months for enlisted personnel who have requested quarters. He pointed out that preferential assignment of quarters to colored personnel to ensure that they would be housed on the base would cause acute morale problems, and that off-station housing, currently being reduced by 50% at Iceland's request, probably would not be made available to colored people.
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DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS  
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Ser 00988P61

17 MAY 1963

segregation policy as an item to be given further attention. The report of the Committee will probably be presented to the President before Icelandic elections and thus could be an Icelandic election issue as well as a government-to-government issue if the US press contends that Iceland insists on segregation. Moreover, such airing by the US press would be construed by Iceland as evidence of bad faith on our part, after they had consented, in frank discussion with Embassy representatives, to token assignment of colored personnel in their country. The Committee particularly had noted that the Air Force has a written regulation forbidding assignment of colored personnel to Iceland. RADM Schade stated that to the best of his knowledge the Navy had no such regulation. This has subsequently been confirmed.

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6. Ambassador Penfield will meet with the Chairman of the Committee during the week of 20-24 May and will discuss the results of the meeting with OSD/ISA. A course of action will then be formulated.

7. It is recommended further Navy action relative to this problem be withheld pending the report by Ambassador Penfield on his discussion with the Chairman of the Committee for Equal Opportunity.

Very respectfully,  
D. G. Lyndon

D G LYNDON  
Acting Director, Politico-Military Policy Division

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Op-06

Op-61

Op-613/sg  
Ser 00907P61

16 May 63

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Authority: ANU 69021

## Assignment of Colored Personnel to Iceland (U)

1. Assignment of colored personnel to Iceland has long been a highly sensitive subject.

2. The Icelandic Government requested at the time of the negotiation of the 1951 Defense Agreement that colored personnel not be assigned in Iceland. In 1954, the Iceland Defense Force Commander reported that it was of utmost importance to continue the U.S. policy of assigning Caucasian personnel only. In 1957, the Icelandic Foreign Minister, in response to the US Ambassador's query as to introduction of token representation of Negro personnel, reiterated his government's desire to avoid any policy change which would lead to difficulties.

3. In February 1961 Asst Sec State Kohler asked Ambassador Thompson to discuss the question of including Negro personnel in the forces in Iceland. Mr. Kohler said if Iceland's position remained unchanged, the US might announce that US policy of not assigning colored personnel in the Defense Force was based on the wishes of the Icelandic Government.

4. In August, 1961, Ambassador Penfield reported that the Foreign Minister had orally agreed to "three or four" colored servicemen in the Defense Force. In October 1961 Defense acknowledged this information and said that in the normal course of events, three or four colored personnel would be assigned.

5. In February 1963 Defense noted that colored personnel had not yet been assigned in Iceland and asked Op-613 to advise Navy assignment personnel that it would be inadvisable to send colored personnel to Iceland until after the parliamentary elections in June 1963.

6. Defense (ISA) points out that domestic pressures for integration must be weighed against the desirability of continuation of the present policy which satisfies the Government of Iceland.

7. In preparing a reply Op-613 conferred with CAPT Weymouth, OSD/ISA, who stated that since Amb. Penfield was to be in Washington this week (13-17 May), arrangements would be made for Op-613 and CAPT Weymouth to attend his briefing. Amb. Penfield will be queried as to his views on the problem. The briefing is scheduled for 1430, 16 May.

ORIG: CAPT W. W. WYMOUTH, USN  
Op-613 X-76444  
16 MAY 63 S-0611a

A. E. Schade

SECRET

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Authority ANNO 69621

CLASSIFICATION OF CONTROL FORM

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DATE RECEIVED: 8 MAY 1963

DATE: 7 MAY 63

REPLY ONE BY: CO-RB

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**SECRET**

Op-613/sg  
Ser M00932P61  
7 FEB 1963

**SECRET**

**MEMORANDUM FOR CAPTAIN A. G. ESCH, DIRECTOR POLICY DIVISION (PERS A 2)**

Subj: Assignment of Colored Personnel to Iceland (U)

Encl: (1) Copy of ltr from Burdett to Bundy of 11 AUG 61 (SEC)  
(2) Copy of ltr from Williams to Burdett of 3 NOV 61 (SEC)  
(3) Copy of ltr from Burdett to Williams of 9 JAN 62 (SEC)

- The enclosed letters which set forth the policy considerations governing the assignment of colored personnel to duty in Iceland are forwarded for your information and appropriate action.
- Although the relaxed policy was approved over a year ago it is understood that no Navy action has been taken to implement this policy to date. Since Parliamentary elections are scheduled for this June and since initial assignment of colored personnel might create some domestic political controversy in Iceland, it is suggested that it would be in the best interests of the U.S. if no colored personnel arrived in Iceland until July.

Very respectfully,

15/ J. B. WAYNE  
Captain, U.S. Navy  
Head Western Hemisphere Branch  
Politico-Military Policy Division

*Iceland received by [Signature] 2/7/63*

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To:

Subject:

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3D 769

We propose that if queried, our response would be that the US, in recognition of the small (180,000) and homogeneous population of Iceland, has endeavored in assignment to insure that assignment of military personnel to Iceland would have the minimum disruptive impact on the Icelandic population. Accordingly military personnel assignments have been made in this light. Colored personnel have ~~been~~ been assigned to duty in Iceland perhaps not in the same percentage as existing generally throughout the service.

CDR Collins: We believe that you should stick to the information contained in the letter to Mr. Bendeth. The above statements can lead to trouble.

R. J. Small

However, recently the 601 has recently indicated that the assignment of a few colored personnel would be keeping behind the Iceland small homogeneous population.

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Authority AN069021

**NAVAL MESSAGE**      **SECRET**      **NAVY DEPARTMENT**

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		011D-012-012B-012C-012D-015-013B		
		014-014B-014C-014D-014E-015-015B		

R 171209Z  
FM COMNAVICE  
TO CNO

ACTION

//SECRET//

A. YOUR 141927Z

1. INFO AIR FORCE PERSONNEL REQUESTED REF. A ONLY AVAILABLE FOR PAST 6 MONTH PERIOD.

A. ORIENTAL 6 (ENL 3, CIV. MALE 1, CIV. FEM. 2)  
B. FILIPINO NONE

2. NO LOCAL RECORDS ARMY PERSONNEL. SUGGEST BEST SOURCE CWO GLEN T. CASEY W902885, FORMER PERSONNEL OFFICER 2ND BCT NOW ASSIGNED DCS PERS. DEPT OF ARMY WASHINGTON.

*Army assigned out only negroid personnel or dark skinned people - 30-40 Puerto Ricans were assigned but only one oriental*

ACTION

06...01...FLAGPLOT...BFR...

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**NAVAL MESSAGE**      **CONFIDENTIAL**      **NAVY DEPARTMENT**

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ROUTINE	(INFO)			

R 272330Z  
FM CINCLANTFLT  
TO CNO

ACTION

INFO COMSERVANT BUPERS

*Is ok.*

*Island troops*

//CONFIDENTIAL//

NAVY MESSSES IN ICELAND

1. A POTENTIAL PROBLEM EXISTS IN THE PROPOSED STAFFING OF NAVAL MESSSES IN ICELAND WITH NON-CAUCASIANS.

2. NO WRITTEN AGREEMENT EXISTS WITH RESPECT TO THIS PROBLEM BUT IT HAS BEEN CONTROVERSIAL IN THE PAST.

3. REQUEST YOU (A) FURNISH TO STATE DEPARTMENT A FACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE HISTORY AND NAVY POLICY ON STAFFING OF NAVY MESSSES WITH NON-CAUCASIANS, (B) REQUEST STATE TO DETERMINE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT REACTION THERETO AND (C) PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON WHICH CINCLANTFLT CAN PROCEED WITH PLANNING.

*This is sensitive subj. by below 3/3/61. You may want not to announce by msg and you CINCLANTFLT to remain circumspect regarding discussing this subj. - State DOD & AF all agree there is no problem re Filipinos. They have an plan to send them and integrate to operations.*

06...09...09B...01...10...03...06...FLAGPLOT...

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201

NO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

7408 56311/12.560

FROM : AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK 170  
TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON December 5, 1960  
REF : *34827 office of info-1 WAFI S/P-1*

*Progrs*

*FOR*

*12/13 01A-10 050-5 Navy-4 OOD-2, Saclant!*

SUBJECT: Navy Approach to Personnel Policies at the Keflavik Base

61 61B 61B1 61S 611 611B 611C

611D 612 612B 612C 612D 613 613B

614 614B 614C 614D 614E 615 615B

During the week of *614 614B 614C 614D 614E 615 615B* team surveyed the United States Armed Air Base at Keflavik, Iceland, preparatory to Navy assumption of command tentatively scheduled for July 1, 1961.

On December 1 three representatives of the team called at the Embassy to inform the Ambassador of several personnel policies which the team tentatively expects to recommend and which might have a bearing on United States-Icelandic relations.

Icelandic Personnel

The team will recommend that all Icelandic personnel be retained on the pay rolls with changes in assignments to be held to the minimum compatible with the new organization. Any reductions in force are to be accomplished through normal attrition. It is possible that Navy organization, differing from the Air Force, will require an overall increase in the employment of Icelanders.

American Civilian Personnel

The tentative policy with respect to American civilian personnel is not quite as clear because of the implications arising from the President's directive of November 16. Of the 170 American civilians presently employed approximately 50 fall into the "homesteader" category-- people who have established such strong personal or family ties in Iceland as to preclude their easy transfer to the United States or to another overseas facility. In general, the Navy team believe the skills held by American civilians presently employed at the Base will continue to be required by the new organization. These skills are not readily available on the Icelandic market.

Copies sent to: *USO SACLANT NOFORN FOR COLLINS FOR INFORMATION*

ATTACH A

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority ANO 69021

Page 2 of

End. No. 170  
Desp. No. 170  
From Reykjavik

*Mr. Proctor - Col 1876  
AF Man 35-4  
77764-78861*

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
(Classification)

Filipinos

*Mr. Proctor 71576  
Desp. No. 170  
New CO  
Capt. Thompson  
New CO  
Capt. Thompson  
offer to Enlist*

Throughout the world, Navy officers' closed messes are staffed with Filipinos and colored United States citizens. The Navy team expects to recommend that such messes at Keflavik be staffed with Filipinos. The number is tentatively set at 25 to 30.

The Department and the Navy are well aware of the potential problems faced by non-Caucasians in Iceland. The Embassy recommends that it be instructed to inform the Foreign Office that the Navy plans to use Filipinos to staff such messes. A factual explanation covering the history and experience of such employment would be helpful in discussing this with the Foreign Office. In the Embassy's opinion this subject should be first broached with the Foreign Office rather than with the Defense Council. It is not possible to predict in advance what the reaction of the Icelandic Government will be.

Labor Situations at the Base

*Mr. Remont 5-3785*

Labor relations at the Base have been relatively tranquil primarily because of organizational arrangements which place a Wage Committee and the Defense Council as buffers between the Defense Force and the individual labor unions. The three-man Wage Committee is composed of representatives of the Icelandic Employers Association, the Icelandic Federation of Labor, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. This protection from harassment should be safeguarded in every way possible.

The Embassy believes it would be helpful if the Navy initiated assurances to Icelandic personnel on the various payrolls at the Base and to the Defense Council that its assumption of command and host service responsibilities will be accomplished with the least possible disruption of present employment practices. Given the present labor situation and the possibility of strikes throughout Iceland during the first quarter of 1961 in connection with the Government's economic stabilization program, such assurances should be given sooner rather than later.

For the Ambassador:

*DP-10  
The 12/5/60  
Mr. Proctor  
Mr. Remont  
Mr. Collins*


Garrett H. Soulen  
Deputy Chief of Mission

ATTACH A

91120  
76444



DECLASSIFIED  
Authority ANNO 69021



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

IN REPLY REFER TO  
Op-613/gsb  
20 June 1963

**SECRET**

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subj: Personnel Problems in Iceland (U)

1. The subject of the assignment of colored personnel in Iceland, which you will remember was discussed last month, has arisen again. A letter from U.S. Congressman DIGGS (Attach A) invites SECDEF to show cause why Negroes have not been assigned in Iceland.
2. On 19 June, Capt. Weymouth, OASD(ISA), drafted a reply explaining to Mr. DIGGS the delicate situation that obtains in Iceland; however, the draft was not acceptable to Mr. Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Asst. to SECDEF.
3. Capt. Weymouth explained the background (Attach. B with tabs) of the problem to Mr. Yarmolinsky, pointing out that the subject had received high level attention recently. (Mr. Korth's decision is Attach. C). Attach. D is the reply of U.S. Ambassador to Iceland, Mr. Penfield, to a State request for information which could be used in replying to Mr. Diggs. It generally supports the Navy's previous argument that deferral of assignment would be wise.
4. Later on 19 June, Capt. Weymouth was informed, and so informed Navy, that Mr. Burdette (Deputy Asst. Sec'y State), Mr. Gilpatrick, Mr. Wm. Bundy, and Mr. Yarmolinsky had considered Mr. Digg's letter and had jointly agreed to assign 3 or 4 colored personnel now. Capt. Weymouth conferred with RADM Craighill to discuss the feasibility of VADM Smedberg's communicating verbally with Mr. Diggs to satisfy the requirement of replying to Mr. Digg's letter. The discussion was inconclusive, with Capt. Weymouth returning to OASD(ISA) for guidance.

**SECRET**  
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Authority ANNO 69021

No. 7 of 6 Copies, Series

February 23, 1961

Official - Informal

**SECRET**

Dear Tyler:

As you know, the policy of not assigning colored servicemen to the Iceland Defense Force has been a matter of continuing concern to us and the Department of Defense. The early change of IDF command and the transfer of most responsibilities from the Air Force to the Navy, with substantial shifts in the personnel, now makes it a problem requiring action.

We understand that the Icelandic Government request in 1951 that colored servicemen not be assigned to the IDF, which was stated only informally, was originally based on the grounds that such a policy would lessen the initial impact on the Icelandic public of the re-establishment of a foreign military garrison in Iceland. We also understand that the last time this was discussed with the Icelandic Government was in November, 1957, when Ambassador Muccio raised the possibility of "token" representation of Negro personnel in the Defense Force. In reply to this suggestion, Foreign Minister Gudmundsson expressed the hope that such a change be avoided since he thought it would lead to all sorts of complications and difficulties.

However, when the Icelandic Government's position appeared in the American press in December, 1959, the Charge of the Icelandic Washington Embassy told newsmen that he knew of no such policy on the part of his Government. A Defense Department spokesman had replied to press queries that no colored servicemen were assigned

as

The Honorable  
Tyler Thompson,  
American Ambassador,  
American Embassy,  
Reykjavik, Iceland.

**SECRET**

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SECRET

August 11, 1961

Dear Mr. Bundy:

On February 23, 1961, Assistant Secretary of State Foy D. Kohler wrote what was in effect a joint State-Defense letter to Ambassador Tyler Thompson regarding the policy of not assigning colored servicemen to the Iceland Defense Force in light of the expressed wishes of the Icelandic Government. The Ambassador was asked, unless he perceived over-riding objections, to reopen this question with the Foreign Minister.

Ambassador Thompson left Iceland shortly afterwards to become Director General of the Foreign Service and therefore did not have an opportunity to enter into such a discussion. However, his successor, Ambassador James K. Penfield, subsequently did raise the question with the Foreign Minister. In a letter to Mr. Kohler of July 18, 1961, the Ambassador reported that the matter had been discussed in the Icelandic Cabinet, and that the Foreign Minister had subsequently orally conveyed to him the new position of the Icelandic Government and had authorized him to pass it on to Mr. Kohler by informal letter. It is as follows:

"The Icelandic Government will have no objections to 'three or four' colored servicemen in the Defense Force but hope that they will be carefully chosen in light of the special conditions existing in Iceland. If there are congressional or other inquiries to which the Department must reply, the Icelandic Government will not object to a statement to the effect that because of the small population and

Mr. William F. Bundy,  
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense  
for International Security Affairs,  
Department of Defense  
Washington 25, D. C.

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--2--

and other special circumstances existing in Iceland, members of the Iceland Defense Command are especially picked but there are no racial or other restrictions and, in fact, Americans of all races are currently serving with the Command in Iceland."

This does not, of course, fully solve the problem, and we will continue our efforts as opportunities arise to have the restrictions completely lifted. However, I trust the Department of Defense will agree that the Icelandic Government's acceptance in principle of the assignment of colored personnel is an important step forward. Please advise me whether the arrangement as outlined above can be carried out. I suggest that, if you find this arrangement satisfactory, the responsible public relations officers in the Departments of State and Defense prepare statements which can be made in response to possible future congressional or press queries on this subject.

Sincerely yours,

William C. Burdett  
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for European Affairs

SECRET

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Authority ANNO 67021



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

IN REPLY REFER TO

7 MAY 63

SECRET

From: Chief of Naval Personnel  
To: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: Assignment of Colored Personnel to Iceland (U)

Ref: (a) OP-613 ltr ser MD0932P61 of 7 Feb 1963 (with encl)

1. Reference (a) forwarded for appropriate action policy considerations governing subject matter, under which three or four carefully chosen Negroes were to be assigned to duty in Iceland after June 1963. Measures were taken to accomplish this.

2. Meanwhile, Commander Barrier Force Atlantic, in a recent personal and secret letter to the Chief of Naval Personnel, reviewed the matter anew. His major conclusion is that it would be the greatest mistake to assign Negroes to Iceland under any conditions whatever. The considerations leading him to this were:

a. While the Icelanders realize that they cannot publically proclaim a policy of racial discrimination, they are agreed that public reaction would be violently opposed to the presence of Negroes and that incidents involving them would be inevitable.

b. A Navy Steward, for example, who never left the station, is reported to have been knocked down for dancing with an Icelandic girl at a station enlisted club by a member of an Icelandic band that was playing for the dance.

c. U. S. Ambassador Penfield presently views that it would be desirable for a few highly select married Negroes with their families to be quietly ordered in and assigned quarters on the station. This is thought to cancel the main objection to their presence (the boy girl problem). This course of action might work except for other serious morale problems which would arise. Preferential assignment of on-station housing to Negroes would certainly cause great resentment among those other naval personnel who cannot get housing at all, and among those who are living off station. There is a shortage of housing in Iceland. The Navy has already been asked to reduce off-station living by 50% by the next three years because of such shortage in the Keflavik area. The Icelandic Government has never granted duty free use of the Navy exchange and Navy Commissary by off-station personnel, except for limited privileges four times a year, and this in itself makes a vast difference in accommodation of our personnel between on and off-station families.

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Subj: Assignment of Colored Personnel to Iceland (U)

d. The presence of Filipino Navy personnel has made no great stir in Iceland, but the Icelanders would prefer that they not be there. Seemingly Filipinos are more acceptable on the rationale that oriental peoples have a culture which is centuries old.

e. Ordering Negroes to Iceland would impose large and prejudicial personal circumstances upon their lives by way of isolation and misunderstanding.

f. Icelandic criticism of the proposed action would be improperly directed against the U. S. Navy, rather than against political policy.

3. In the light of the strong views of Admiral Bais based upon his recent and discrete reassessment through experienced officers and pro-Western Icelanders (both cabinet ministers and private citizens), it is submitted that the proposed course of action should be reevaluated. Accordingly, it is requested that such reevaluation be made with a view to canceling the action contemplated in reference (a) for a period of at least three or four years. It does not appear necessary to cancel the inter-nation understandings, merely the implementation thereof. Were such determination made, it would clearly include the need for complete coordination with the Department of Defense and the Department of State.

S. R. BERKMAN, III

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

IN REPLY REFER TO  
28 May 1963

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subj: Assignment of Colored Personnel in Iceland (C)

1. On 28 May 1963, Vice Admiral Smedberg and Rear Admiral Schade met with SecNav to discuss subject problem. It was recommended to the Secretary that we delay implementation of the Agreement or "understanding" which would appear to permit the assignment of "3 or 4" colored servicemen to Iceland, until after the President's Committee for Equal Opportunity in the Armed Services has submitted its first report.
2. The Secretary concurred in the recommendation. Hence, BuPers will take no action to order Negro personnel to Iceland, pending developments following the issuance of the Equal Opportunity Committee report.
3. Rear Admiral Schade agreed to write Rear Admiral Buie to inform him of SecNav's decision and to suggest that Rear Admiral Buie keep a careful count of all Negro personnel who pass through Iceland on a transient basis or on board ships in the harbors.

*W. R. Smedberg, III*  
W. R. SMEDBERG, III

Copy to:  
OP-01  
OP-61

*for Probst*

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*613* *Orig*

29 May 1963

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PRIVATE AND PERSONAL

Dear Paul,

The subject of stationing colored personnel in Iceland has been given a thorough and high level going over in the last two weeks, stimulated in part by your letter to Admiral Smedberg. As you know, Iceland governmental authorities very reluctantly agreed orally in August of 1961 to the assignment of three or four carefully selected colored personnel. At the same time, they made it quite clear that they did not want any. They will not admit to racial prejudice, but if we take them at face value and assign even a minimum number it will probably be viewed by them as an act of bad faith. In February this year, Defense (ISA) noted that the agreement to assign "3 or 4" had not yet been carried out. They requested that the Navy delay further and take no action until after the June elections in Iceland.

As you are well aware, the motivating force behind the whole problem is the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Services. On 17 May, we held a conference in State Department at which Ambassador Penfield was present with representatives from State, OSD/ISA, and

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action until the first report of the Committee is out. Op-61 is to carefully monitor any reactions to the committee report and then the activities of the committee leading up to the second report.

It would be advisable, and possibly very helpful to us, if you would keep tally -- an on-board count -- of all colored and Filipino personnel who pass through Iceland, even for brief periods, over the next six months. I would count all the colored personnel on board ships who visit. This information we can turn to good advantage in any future inquiries by the Committee. We might be able to say, for example, that last month there were so many colored people on board for period of so many days.

I will be relieved by Dick Craighill in a couple of weeks but will make sure that he is fully briefed on this problem and that Op-61 keeps close track of what goes on.

With warm personal regards,

Most sincerely,

A. F. SCHADE  
Rear Admiral, USN

Rear Admiral Paul D. Buie, USN  
Commander, Iceland Defense Force

Armed with this information, Admiral Smedberg and I had a meeting with Secretary of the Navy Kerth. He agreed that the Navy should take no

Commander, Iceland Defense Force

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A. F. SCHADE  
Rear Admiral, USN

Rear Admiral Paul D. Buie, USN  
Commander, Iceland Defense Force

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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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31 Action

Control: 14459  
Rec'd: JUNE 18, 1963  
9:28 AM

EUR Info FROM: REYKJAVIK  
TO: Secretary of State  
NO: 420, JUNE 18, NOON

*Com Sec def for*

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ACTION DEPARTMENT 420, INFORMATION COMICEDFOR PRIORITY UNNUMBERED

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RE DEPTTEL 391

1. THERE WAS ONE NEGRO (ADMIRAL'S MESSMAN) STATIONED AT KEFLAVIK FROM JULY 1961 TO MARCH 1963. DURING PAST TWO YEARS THERE HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN NEGRO MEMBERS ON TRANSIENT PLANE CREWS TEMPORARILY IN KEFLAVIK. HOWEVER NUMBERS HAVE BEEN SMALL AND THE CONTACTS OF 24 HOURS OR SIMILAR SHORT DURATION.

2. SUGGEST REPLY TO CONGRESSMAN ALONG LINES WJDEZ-WILLIAM EXCHANGE INSOFAR AS FACTS WARRANT. IT MIGHT ALSO BE HELPFUL IF ADMIRAL SMEDBERG OR OTHER APPROPRIATE NAVY OFFICIAL COULD INFORMALLY EXPLAIN SITUATION TO CONGRESSMAN. I HAVE WARNED FONMIN THAT QUESTION HAS ARISEN BUT THAT NO PUBLICITY CONTEMPLATED UNLESS CONGRESSMAN RELEASES OR MAKES STATEMENT ON LETTERS.

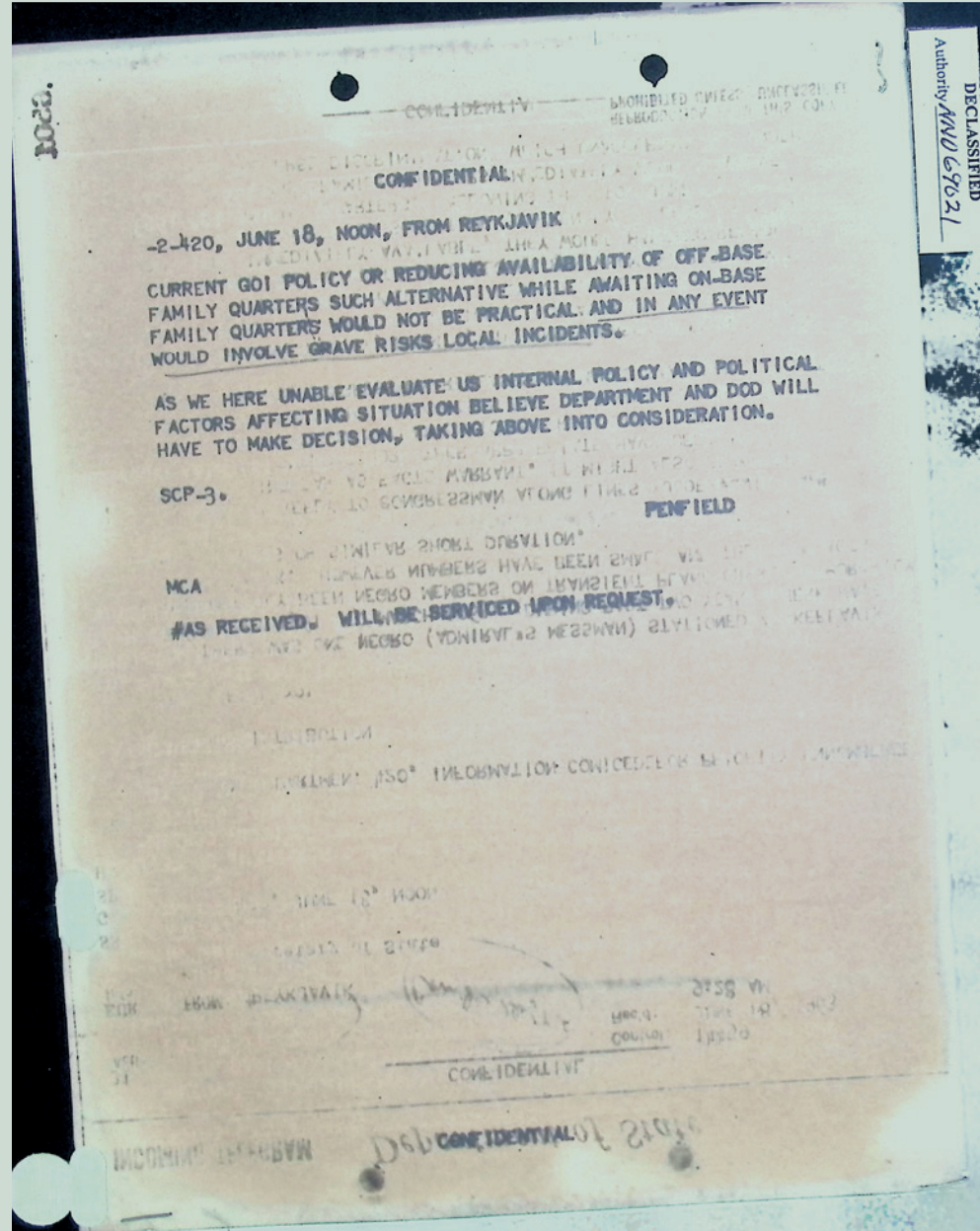
3. RE FUTURE POLICY, FONMIN, IDF AND EMBASSY ARE AGREED ON FOLLOWING. ANY NEGROES STATIONED KEFLAVIK SHOULD BE FAMILY UNITS RATHER THAN SINGLE MEN. HOWEVER, UNLESS THEY WERE IN VERY SMALL "KEY BILLET" OR CATEGORY FOR WHOM ON-BASE FAMILY QUARTERS IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE, THEY WOULD HAVE TO RESIDE IN BACHELOR QUARTERS FOR SOME TIME (CURRENTLY AT LEAST SIX MONTHS) AWAITING FAMILY QUARTERS. ALLOWING THEM TO "JUMP THE QUEUE" AND GET ON-BASE FAMILY QUARTERS IMMEDIATELY WOULD INVOLVE OBVIOUS "REVERSE DISCRIMINATION" WHICH UNACCEPTABLE. UNDER

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Op-06 Op-613/sg  
Ser 00987P61

Op-61

Assignment of Colored Personnel to Iceland (U)

1. Assignment of colored personnel to Iceland has long been a highly sensitive subject.
2. The Icelandic Government requested at the time of the negotiation of the 1951 Defense Agreement that colored personnel not be assigned in Iceland. In 1954, the Iceland Defense Force Commander reported that it was of utmost importance to continue the U.S. policy of assigning Caucasian personnel only. In 1957, the Icelandic Foreign Minister, in response to the US Ambassador's query as to introduction of token representation of Negro personnel, reiterated his government's desire to avoid any policy change which would lead to difficulties.
3. In February 1961 Asst Sec State Kehler asked Ambassador Thompson to discuss the question of including Negro personnel in the forces in Iceland. Mr. Kohler said if Iceland's position remained unchanged, the US might announce that US policy of not assigning colored personnel in the Defense Force was based on the wishes of the Icelandic Government.
4. In August, 1961, Ambassador Penfield reported that the Foreign Minister had orally agreed to "three or four" colored servicemen in the Defense Force. In October 1961 Defense acknowledged this information and said that in the normal course of events, three or four colored personnel would be assigned.
5. In February 1963 Defense noted that colored personnel had not yet been assigned in Iceland and asked Op-613 to advise Navy assignment personnel that it would be inadvisable to send colored personnel to Iceland until after the parliamentary elections in June 1963. Re
6. Defense (ISA) points out that domestic pressures for integration must be weighed against the desirability of continuation of the present policy which satisfies the Government of Iceland.
7. In preparing a reply Op-613 conferred with CAPT Weymouth, OSD/ISA, who stated that since Amb. Penfield was to be in Washington this week (13-17 May), arrangements would be made for Op-613 and CAPT Weymouth to attend his briefing. Amb. Penfield will be queried as to his views on the problem. The briefing is scheduled for 1430, 16 May.

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Op-613 X-76444  
16 MAY 63 - S.Golla

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Op-61

Personnel Problems in Iceland (U)

1. The subject of the assignment of colored personnel in Iceland, which you will remember was discussed last month, has arisen again. A letter from U.S. Congressman DIGGS (Attach. A) invites SECDEF to show cause why Negroes have not been assigned in Iceland.
2. Capt. Weymouth, OASD (ISA), drafted a reply explaining to Mr. DIGGS the delicate situation that obtains in Iceland; however, the draft was not acceptable to Mr. Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Asst to SECDEF. (Op-613 has seen Capt. Weymouth's draft letter, but a copy has not been made available.)
3. Capt. Weymouth explained the background (Attach. B) with tabs of the problem to Mr. Yarmolinsky, pointing out that the subject had received high level attention recently. (Mr. Korth's decision is Attach. C.) Capt. Weymouth's impression was that Mr. Yarmolinsky was not convinced that this decision was correct, that he (Mr. Y.) may recommend immediate assignment of coloreds to Iceland, and that if Navy desires otherwise, we must convince Mr. Yarmolinsky. The reply (Attach. D) of U.S. Ambassador to Iceland, Mr. Penfield, to a State request for information which could be used in replying to Mr. DIGGS, generally supports the Navy position and should be brought to Mr. Yarmolinsky's attention.
4. A meeting to give Navy a chance to present its case is tentatively set for Thursday, 20 June with Mr. Yarmolinsky, State, OSD and Navy attending. I recommend that Adm. Smedberg attend this conference, since he has been most intimately connected with this problem. Further, I recommend that Secretary Korth be apprised of the developments with regard to the DIGGS letter.

OTHER INITIAL

ORIG: CAPT M.M. HERSHEY, USN  
Op-613 X-76444  
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Op-613B/sg  
Ser 001021P61

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MEMORANDUM FOR CAPTAIN RALPH WEYMOUTH, USN, OSD/ISA/EUR

92 Subj: Assignment of Colored Personnel to Iceland (S)

93 1. LCDR G. I. Thompson, USN, special assistant to the Chief  
of Naval Personnel, made an official visit to Iceland 23 to  
25 June 1963 to investigate the problems of subject assignment.  
94 LCDR Thompson is one of the Navy's Negro officers.

95 2. LCDR Thompson reported several facts previously unknown.  
For example, Negro entertainers have been in Reykjavik,  
001 appearing in local clubs, living in hotels or apartment houses,  
and visiting in private homes. Communities near the Base are  
007 provincial and the reception of Negro personnel there might be  
008 questionable. Members of the Icelandic Communist Party might  
agitate should Negroes be stationed in Iceland, but it is  
01 difficult to assess how much resentment might thus be aroused.

03 3. Questions of obtaining Base housing for new personnel of  
any race were explored. The housing situation is very poor  
and some personnel have waited for Base housing for 15 to 22  
months. Only officers or senior petty officers have any chance  
of being assigned quarters within an eight to ten month period.  
04 The availability of off-Base housing has recently been clouded  
by a request from the Government of Iceland that the number of  
men residing off the Base be halved over a three year period.

05 4. LCDR Thompson made a number of personal contacts with  
Icelanders and reported a cordial reception. There were no  
remarks or undue questions. He noted no feelings other than  
06 curiosity.

61B 5. LCDR Thompson concluded that:

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07 a. Conditions are favorable for assignment of Negro  
personnel in Iceland.

b. Any incident which might occur would most likely be  
directed against the nationality of an individual rather than  
his race.

c. Assignment of families rather than single men would  
allay Icelandic fears of fraternization.

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Op-613B/sg  
Ser 001021P61

09D d. Individuals assigned will be the objects of curiosity  
and will have to be thick-skinned in this regard.

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92 e. Individuals assigned will face some hardships but  
little more than those faced by other personnel assigned to  
the area.

93 f. Best results would be obtained from assignment of a  
married junior officer with a small family.

94 g. There is no need to assign two families immediately.  
Assignment of a junior officer followed later by an enlisted  
family would serve the need.

001 h. Service men assigned must be counselled on the situa-  
007 tion in order to impress them that they are being given a  
008 mission.

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OTHER INITIAL

ORIG: LCDR W.A. PLATTE, USN  
Op-613B X-76444  
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