



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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September 23, 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Icelandic Protest Regarding Leif Erikson  
Day Proclamation

Iceland's Ambassador Haraldur Kroyer lodged a formal protest with the Department on September 23 about the characterization of Leif Erikson as "Norwegian" in this year's Presidential Leif Erikson Proclamation. Iceland has long claimed that Leif Erikson is an Icelander, and the people of Iceland believe that the United States acknowledged this claim as being valid in 1930 when the Congress presented to the people of Iceland a statue of the explorer which identifies him as an Icelander. Ambassador Kroyer noted, however, that the Norwegians and the Icelanders have developed a formula which allows both nations to claim Erikson as a forebearer by using the term "Norse" or "Viking" when referring to Erikson, rather than ascribing him to either country.

The Ambassador pointed out that a similar problem occurred in the proclamation of 1964 which had serious repercussions in Iceland where Leif Erikson is very much a matter of national pride to each individual Icelander.

The Ambassador noted that it was now too late to do anything about the already-issued Presidential proclamation for this year. He asked, however, that measures be taken immediately to see to it that any proclamations being made by state governments this year avoid the same error. The Department assured the Ambassador that although it could give no guarantees, it would do what was possible to meet his request.

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The Department will communicate the Ambassador's request on behalf of his Government to the concerned states through its office of Liaison with the Governors. The NSC may wish to note this problem for future reference and to take whatever steps it sees fit to help meet the Icelandic concerns.

*for/* *John M. Schriber*  
George S. Springsteen  
Executive Secretary

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