

● PSF

Greenland

1941-42

Op-12A-4-drc
(SC) EF22-2
Ser. 042812

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Memorandum for THE PRESIDENT.

Subject: Greenland.

1. The Navy Department has given particular attention to the possible uses of GREENLAND for naval purposes since the occupation of Denmark by Germany in April 1940. The numerous available reports of expeditions sent to Greenland by various nations for the purpose of investigating aviation operating conditions have been reviewed, and conferences have been held with individuals having knowledge of conditions in Greenland.
2. One of the attached charts shows the relative location of possible bases in Greenland and a mean track for convoys en route to the vicinity of Iceland. It also shows average ice conditions for the month of May. The distances from open ports to the convoy track are too great for profitable employment in convoy protection of aircraft operating from Greenland bases.
3. The other attached chart has been marked to show the periods when the various ports are usually open to navigation by small ships built especially for Greenland operations. The periods when twin screw naval vessels of light construction can operate are considerably shorter. It is to be understood that fields of drifting pack ice may be encountered at any time, either in the open sea or along the coast, depending on wind conditions.
4. It is quite well established as the result of the various expeditions which have attempted to locate sites for landing fields that the practicable sites are limited to those in the vicinity of SCORESBY SOUND and MACKENZIE BAY on the Northeast Coast, in the vicinity of SONDRESTROMFJORD on the West Coast, and to possible sites now under investigation on the Southwest Coast near JULIANEHAAB.

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DDP DIR. 6200.9 (9/27/58)

Date - 10 - 25 - 66

Signature - Carl L. Spicer

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5. All authorities *Carl I. Spruce* agree that it is possible to operate landplanes on skis on the ice cap to the extent that logistic support permits. Buildings and equipment left on the icecap become buried in subsequent snows and do not reappear. Snow houses are used on the ice cap and they must be renewed each three months to avoid burial in the snow.

6. Flying conditions in the Greenland area are affected by fog and by local gales. Fogs are more frequent at the border of the offshore ice than near land; more frequent on the coast than in the interior; more frequent in the open season than in the closed; and more frequent in the south than farther north. HOLSTERNBERG and SCORESBY SOUND have much less fog than JULIANEHAAB, CAPE FAREWELL and ANGMAGSSALIK. Local gales which reach force 12 are prevalent, particularly where the ice cap comes close to the coast.

7. During the winter months the shorter hours of daylight interfere with flying. Flying over the ice cap is relatively difficult due to winds, fog and the altitude required.

8. Seaplane operations are controlled by ice conditions and are necessarily limited to the open season in each area. In operating seaplanes it is necessary to consider not only the larger bodies of ice, but also the small pieces of ice which drift into the fjords even during the open season and are sufficient to wreck a plane landing or taking off or even at anchor. It is reported to be unsafe to operate patrol planes in any part of Greenland except from mid-June to late September. There is no assurance of suitable conditions for patrol plane operation on the East Coast at any time of year.

9. For seaplane operations it is advantageous to use small seaplanes which can be hoisted on board their parent ships, or small amphibians which can be taxied out wherever shelving beaches may exist.

10. The importance of Greenland for aeronautical purposes arises from:

(a) The possibility of constructing landing fields for the use of short range aircraft being flown to the British Isles.

(b) The possibility of occasional use of its waters by naval seaplanes engaged in operations over the Northern Atlantic.

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10. (Cont'd)

Date *10-25-66*
Col. J. Spica

(c) The value to all aircraft flying between North America and the British Isles of meteorological and radio direction finding stations in Greenland.

11. Unless landing fields can be located in Greenland in positions such that they combine to make a complete landplane route actually useful to us, it appears that the development of isolated landing fields may be of questionable value because of the defense requirements thereby created.

12. A joint Army-Navy-Coast Guard expedition is now in the JULIANEHAAB area with orders to:

(a) Determine whether or not it is practicable to establish in South Greenland a land airdrome suitable for the use of military and naval aircraft.

(b) Ascertain whether or not it is practicable to operate patrol planes with tender support from Southern Greenland, and report upon the areas considered most suitable for this purpose.

(c) Locate a suitable site for a meteorological station and a radio station for use in supporting naval and air operations in the South Greenland area and adjacent sea areas in the North Atlantic.

13. The Joint Board is proceeding with the development of a basic joint plan for such defense of Greenland as is required by the inclusion of Greenland in the system of cooperative hemispheric defense.

14. Meanwhile, it is proposed that the Navy Department:

(a) Establish a complete meteorological and radio station in the Cape Farewell area.

(b) Augment the Coast Guard patrol of the waters of Greenland as necessary, fitting out for this purpose suitable ships, including the BEAR and NORTH STAR now with the Antarctic Expedition, and using small ship-based seaplanes and amphibians to extend the surface patrol.

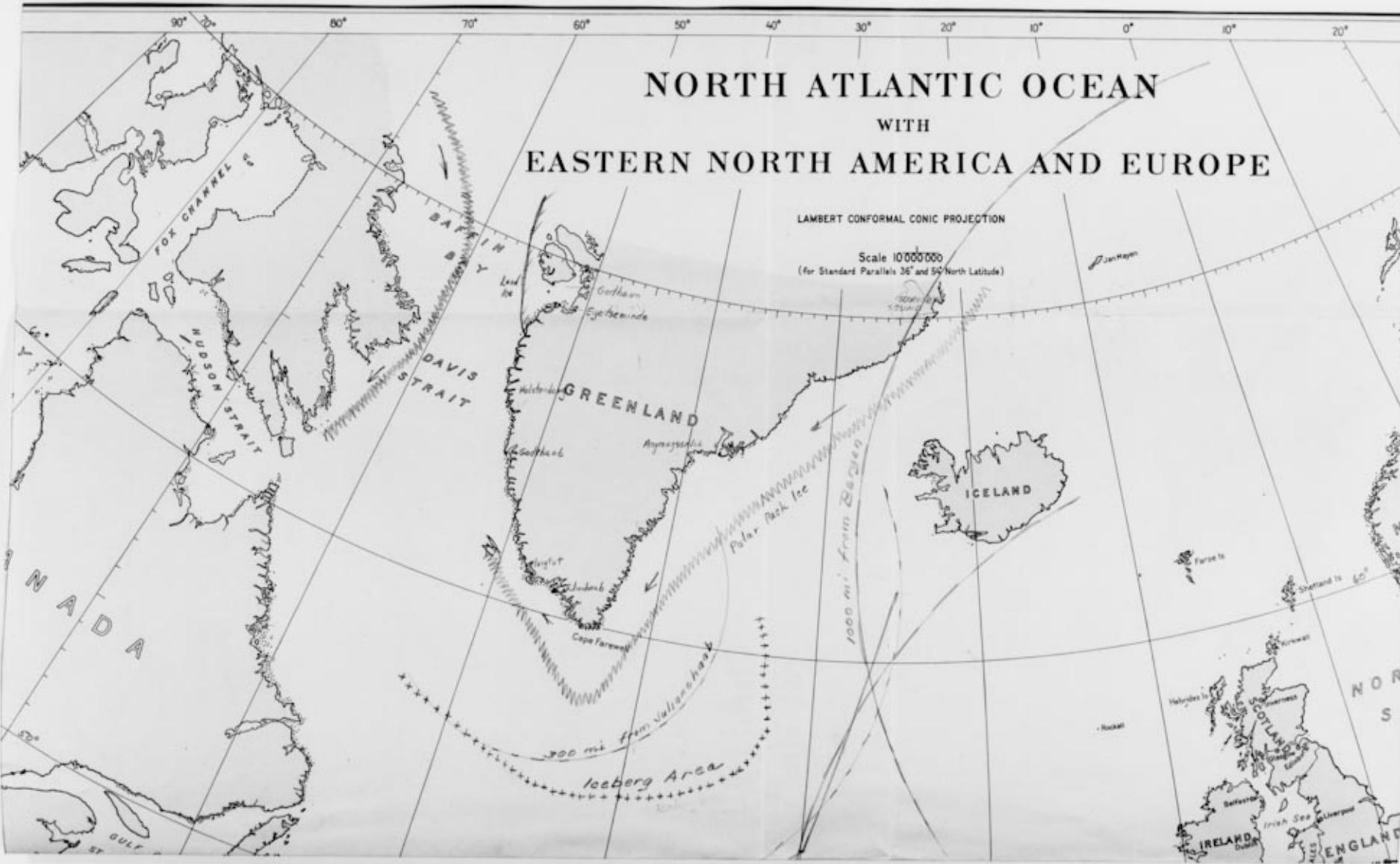
(c) Continue to cooperate with the Army in surveying possible naval bases, troop bases, airdrome sites, and seaplane operating areas with a view to more extensive operations if required.

THIS OVERSIZE ITEM HAS BEEN
MICROFILMED IN SECTIONS.

NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN WITH EASTERN NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

LAMBERT CONFORMAL CONIC PROJECTION

Scale 10 000 000
(for Standard Parallels 36° and 50° North Latitude)





SEC. NC

.24

April 30, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE SECRETARY OF WAR
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

SUBJECT: Prevention of German Activity in the Scoresby Sound Region, Greenland.

1. In paragraph #4 of your report of April 23rd, you suggest that until July the only practicable way of locating and eliminating such stations (German) is by the use of Iceland, both for the immediate operation of radio intercept and direction finding stations, and later as a base for aircraft operating against stations located.

2. I do not think that we should wait until we can get a specially constructed ship up to Scoresby Sound in mid-July, though we should plan to have the USS BEAR go there then. I understand that one other ship, the NORTH STAR or the NORTHLAND is similarly strengthened for ice conditions. Perhaps two ships should go together. The object of this July expedition would be to thoroughly search out and eliminate any German or so-called Norwegian weather stations or bombing plane base.

3. I cannot agree that Germany will not attempt to establish a military base in Northeast Greenland this year. I think Germany will probably seek to get a definite foothold even if this foothold can only defend its own location. Therefore, our own expedition should be fitted out with sufficient guns to hold the Scoresby Sound area until early September, leaving just before the ice closes in.

4. In addition to the above expedition by sea, I suggest that one or two Navy patrol planes fly immediately (as soon as possible) to Newfoundland and thence to Iceland, after the requisite arrangements have been made at the latter place. This will not be an unneutral act, as Iceland is independent and not a party to the war. These two planes should stay in

Iceland as short a time as possible, making one or two flights from there over the Scoresby Sound area for close observation purposes, returning immediately to Iceland. When their mission is accomplished, they should return at once to Newfoundland.

5. In regard to your Paragraph #11, I think that (a) is unnecessary, as I have already announced that Greenland falls within the Monroe Doctrine.

I approve (b), (c), (d) and (e). I suggest a modification of (f), as I do not think we are prepared at this time to use Iceland as a permanent or semi-permanent base. Its use for one specific purpose, as outlined above, i.e., one or two inspection flights over Northeast Greenland, only, is approved.

F. D. R.

(SC) R16-1/EFYY-Y

WAR AND NAVY DEPARTMENTS
Washington

APR 22 1941

Memorandum for THE PRESIDENT:

Subject: Prevention of German Activity in the Scoresby Sound Region.

1. During the summer of 1940 Germany made numerous attempts to establish weather stations in Northeast Greenland. Three small Norwegian vessels were sent under German control to establish such stations. The British took counter measures using a Norwegian gunboat operating under British Admiralty control. They landed British personnel at Myggbukta for a brief period; they dismantled two Norwegian radio stations and removed their personnel; they seized Danish Navy supplies of aviation fuel; they captured personnel landed by a German controlled Norwegian vessel, and seized one of the three Norwegian vessels mentioned above.

2. German aircraft have since appeared over Northeast Greenland on at least three occasions. It is suspected that a German controlled weather station is still in operation in Greenland although no definite information has been received on this point.

3. The region involved in these activities includes Scoresby Sound, King Oscar Fjord and the Mackenzie Bay area between latitudes 70° North and 73° 30' North. In this region are reported to exist the best sites on the East Coast for developing landing fields. The area is normally open to navigation only from mid-July to early September and then only to ships especially constructed for Arctic operations.

4. Owing to ice conditions, the only German activity feasible in Northeastern Greenland prior to July is the maintenance or establishment by air of weather stations. Until July, the only practicable way of locating and eliminating such stations is by the use of Iceland, both for the immediate operation of radio intercept and direction finding stations, and later as a base for

aircraft operating against stations located.

5. The importance to Germany of regular meteorological reports from Greenland indicates that when ice conditions permit, in July, Germany may attempt to establish new weather stations and to send supplies to any which may now be in operation. Since the region involved is slightly less than 1000 miles from German bases in Norway, attempt may also be made to establish aviation facilities, but it is believed that such facilities will be limited to those needed for aircraft cooperating with the weather stations.

6. Ships to be used in Northeast Greenland, either by Germany or by us, must have been especially constructed for work in pack ice. Operations must be limited accordingly. For this reason it is not believed that any attempt will be made to establish a naval base in the region. Owing to the relative proximity of landing fields available to her, Germany can utilize aircraft to supply her stations by air. Without a base in Iceland, we can not.

7. The terrain in the region is such that troop movements over long distances are not practicable by land. Passage over the ice cap can be accomplished only by very small numbers of men after elaborate preparations. Accordingly the establishment of a military garrison on shore is effective only for the defense of its own location, and is ineffective as a means of denying other locations. It is not believed, therefore, that Germany will attempt to establish a military base in Northeast Greenland this year.

8. The most effective means available for preventing the type of activity expected is the use of ships suitable for arctic work, equipped with aircraft for observation purposes, and prepared to land detachments to seize the personnel and material of any German stations located. We have three such ships, -- the Coast Guard Cutter NORTHLAND, and the BEAR and NORTH STAR now returning from the Antarctic. Each ship should have guns installed and be equipped with an observation seaplane or amphibian. Such of the present equipment and personnel of the Antarctic Expedition as may be useful and available should be retained. The crews of the ships should be augmented to include well trained landing parties.

9. Although their operations may not be absolutely effective against surreptitious activities, the entry into the region, as soon as ice conditions permit, of these three ships will make it more difficult for Germany to establish stations than was the case last summer. If Germany chooses to use force, she may destroy any

or all of the ships by air attack. Our only safeguard against such action is Germany's knowledge of the consequences. If Germany should land in Northeast Greenland, for any purpose, a force too strong to be dealt with by ships which can enter the region, it will be necessary for us to resort to the use of superior force. The most effective way of doing so locally, until such time as we may have a base in South or West Greenland, is to use aircraft based on Iceland.

10. The use of the NORTHLAND, BEAR and NORTH STAR for operations in Northeast Greenland will make it necessary for the War Department to modify its former plan to use two of them to accomplish the survey of the Southeast coast of Greenland, for the purpose of locating a landing field, previously directed by the President. The desired survey probably can be accomplished, although with somewhat less certainty and effectiveness, by using the smaller short range cutters of the ALGONQUIN class, which are partially strengthened for work in ice, and by refueling them in the Julianehaab area.

11. After considering the probable extent of German operations in Northeast Greenland during the summer of 1941, it is recommended:

(a) That announcement be made that European military activities in Greenland will be resisted by the United States.

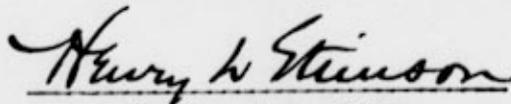
(b) That the British be requested to operate the necessary radio intercept and direction finding equipment in Iceland.

(c) That no United States garrison be established in Northeast Greenland this year.

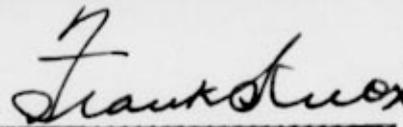
(d) That a naval expedition be prepared now for such use as may be necessary in Northeast Greenland, including the NORTHLAND, BEAR, and NORTH STAR operating under naval control, and that other ships be employed for surveys elsewhere.

(e) That sufficient equipment and supplies be carried to permit one ship to winter in the region if found necessary.

(f) That, if more force becomes necessary, the foregoing action be supplemented by patrol plane operations, using Iceland as a base.



The Secretary of War.



The Secretary of the Navy

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Greenland
(SC) EF22-2
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JUN 11 1941

Memorandum for THE PRESIDENT.

Subject: Greenland Radio Stations.

1. An air reconnaissance of the east coast of Greenland has been completed by naval patrol planes based on a tender stationed at Reykjavik. No signs of German activity were found.
2. Report has been received by dispatch that radio stations seen showed Danish or Norwegian flags and were those known previously to exist.
3. The radio stations known to exist on the East Coast of Greenland are those operated under the supervision of the Greenland Government at ANGMAGSSALIK, SCORESBY SOUND, ELLA ISLAND, ESKIMONAES on Clavering Island, and MOERKEFJORD.

Frank Knox

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Date- 10 - 26 - 44

Signature- *Carl L. Speiser*

PSF
Greenland

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WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON

August 7, 1942.

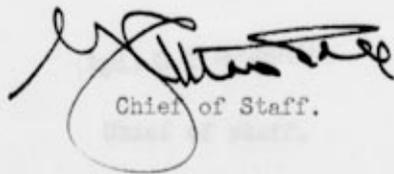
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

Subject: Joint Plan for the Defense of Greenland.

In your action of June 7, 1941, approving the plan for the defense of Greenland, you indicated that a study of the use of the Ice Cap west of Scoresby Sound by patrol planes should be made.

Investigations of conditions on the Ice Cap have reached the stage where it is considered practicable to select suitable landing areas on the Ice Cap for aircraft engaged in reconnaissance missions or being ferried across the Atlantic. A detachment of officers and enlisted men has accordingly been sent to Greenland with the mission of locating landing areas and at the same time investigating the possibilities of establishing Aircraft Warning Service Stations on the Ice Cap.

In connection with the investigation of Aircraft Warning Service possibilities, efforts to install such stations elsewhere in Greenland have been unsuccessful due to peculiar terrain conditions. It appears, however, that detector stations may be established on the Ice Cap. It is proposed to establish one station on the Sondrestromfjord-Angmagassalik route and one between Narsarsuak and Reykjavik. It is hoped that these stations will be in operation in their primary stages by September first of this year. I will keep you informed of the progress that is made.



Chief of Staff.

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Signature- *Carl T. Spicer*