

ICELAND

The Republic of Iceland

Iceland, the second largest island in Europe, lies close to the Arctic Circle between latitude $63^{\circ}24'$ and $66^{\circ}33'N$ and between longitude $13^{\circ}30'$ and $24^{\circ}32'W$. The total land area is about 103,000 km². Almost four-fifths of the country is uninhabited and mostly uninhabitable. The settlements are limited to a narrow coastal belt, valleys and the lowland plains in the south and southwest of the island.

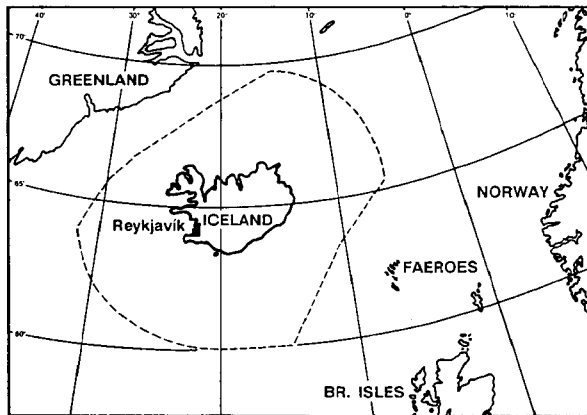


FIG. 1.- Iceland.

The population is 268,000 of which 104,000 live in Reykjavik, which is the capital city as well as the centre for international and domestic maritime trade. Iceland was settled in the 9th century. The settlers came to a great extent from the Scandinavian countries, mainly Norway, but also from the British Isles, chiefly Scotland, Ireland and the outlying islands.

In the 13th century, Iceland and its settlements in Greenland came under Norwegian rule and about a century later under Danish rule, together with Norway.

In 1918, Iceland gained sovereignty but was united with Denmark under the Danish crown until 1944 when it became fully independent and the Republic of Iceland was proclaimed. The current President is Ólafur Ragnar GRIMSSON.

Geologically, Iceland is still a young country and its formation is still in progress. Its interior consist of mountains and high plateaus, partly covered with glaciers. Active and inactive volcanoes are numerous and submarine eruptions are frequent off the coasts, especially on the ridge southwest of Reykjanes.

Considering the northerly location of Iceland, its climate is much milder than might be expected, especially in winter. This is partly due to the Gulfstream flowing clockwise around the island. Annual mean temperature for Reykjavik is 5°C.

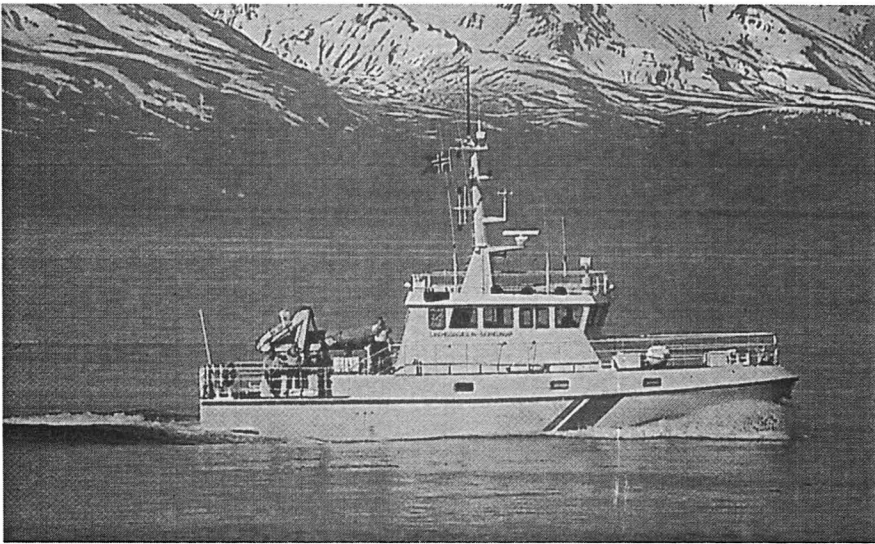


FIG. 2.- Survey Vessel BALDUR.

In addition to the grasslands, which form the basis of agriculture and hydroelectric power and geothermal energy which support growing industry, by far the most important national resource is the country's rich fishing grounds which constitute the very foundation of Iceland's economy. Fish and marine products for a long time amounted to about 90% of Iceland's exports but have now come down to about 75%. Conservation of the fish stocks and the vital economic need were the main reasons for the Icelandic Government's decision to extend the fishery limits to 200 nm in 1975 (having already extended the limit from 3 to 50 nm step by step in the previous 20 years). The area of the EEZ is 758,000 km². Currently Iceland's merchant fleet totaled 59,000 tons and the fishing fleet 184,000 tons, excluding small fishing vessels and pleasure craft.

The Hydrographic Office

Only a year after the establishment of the Royal Danish Hydrographic Office, the first chart bearing its seal was published (1785). This happened to be a chart covering a part of the east coast of Iceland based on surveys carried out by a

Danish naval vessel a few years earlier. In the following years, the Danish Hydrographic Office showed a fairly great interest in Icelandic waters. Coastal charts and an Icelandic Pilot were published early in the 19th century.

Icelandic charts were published by the Hydrographic Office in Denmark until 1960 when the Icelandic Hydrographic Service took over that responsibility.

The Hydrographic Service had started modestly in the 1930's, surveying inshore sailing routes to correct existing charts published in Denmark. Ever since this meager beginning, there has always been a close cooperation between the Icelandic and Danish Hydrographic Offices. Currently, there are 39 nautical charts on issue together with some special charts, as well as Tide Tables, Light Lists, etc. Notices to Mariners are published monthly.

The Hydrographic Service had from its beginning worked closely with the Lighthouse Office and the Coast Guard and, in 1982, it was merged with the Icelandic Coast Guard as one of its departments and the Icelandic Hydrographer was appointed Director General of the Coast Guard. Though the Hydrographic Service is now a Department of the Coast Guard, it retains its name and has an independent status in matters concerning nautical charting. Iceland joined the IHO in 1957.

The Hydrographic Service is responsible for maintaining charts covering Iceland and adjacent waters. Besides new editions of charts formerly published by the Danish Hydrographic Office, a number of new charts have been published.