

and Coastguard members through the Iceland Crisis Response Unit. This unit is an ad hoc creation and consists of a list of around 200 qualified Coastguard and Police personnel who are deployed in small numbers to support NATO, EU or UN missions and is operated by the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁸⁴.

The Icelandic Coast Guard is not a military force. The Coastguard possesses a number of patrol boats and those patrol boats have light armaments including small arms for the crew and machine guns. It also has a single maritime patrol aircraft and three search and rescue helicopters, all unarmed. The Coast Guard also maintains the Icelandic Air Surveillance centre which uses ground based radars to monitor Icelandic airspace⁸⁵. Despite this non-military status the Coast Guard has, at times, been very active in its pursuit of defending Iceland's national interests. The most visible example of this was in the so-called Cod Wars with the United Kingdom.

The Cod Wars were a disagreement between the United Kingdom and Iceland that resulted in a number of confrontations from 1952 to 1976⁸⁶. It was a dispute that contributed to changes in maritime law and the creation of Exclusive Economic Zones and was an example of non-military action being used to defend and extend a nation's national interests. Following independence from Denmark, Iceland began to look at its foreign relations and key international agreements to see that they met Iceland's national interests. The most important industry at the time was fishing and Iceland was keen to revisit earlier UK-Denmark agreements on fishing to ensure that Iceland's national interests were being met to the fullest extent. In 1949, Iceland began a process of abrogating the previous agreements and in 1952 extended the three nautical mile fishing zone to four nautical miles around Iceland's coast that was for the exclusive use of Icelandic fisherman to the exclusion of others without a license. The others were primarily British fisherman from Northern ports who depended on the waters around Iceland for their catch and a viable industry. Britain responded by banning the import of Icelandic fish which caused considerable harm to the Icelandic industry⁸⁷.

In this instance a small power being economically coerced by a larger power seemed to be a logical and effective way for Britain to assert its power and secure its interests over the interests of Iceland. What Britain failed to appreciate was Iceland's strategic value in the

⁸⁴ International Crisis Response Unit <https://www.mfa.is/foreign-policy/development-cooperation/icru/>

⁸⁵ Icelandic Coast Guard <http://www.lhg.is/english>

⁸⁶ Sverrir Steinsson, **The Cod Wars: A Re-Analysis**, *European Security* (Vol. 25, Issue 2, 2016), 258.

⁸⁷ Ibid.