

TERRITORIAL CLAIMS IN THE ANTARCTIC

[The following statement was issued by the Foreign Office on 18 January 1949.]

“In August last, the United States Government made proposals to the seven governments claiming Antarctic territory which were designed to settle conflicting claims to sovereignty by the establishment of a limited form of international regime. These proposals have been accepted in principle by His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom, but most of the other governments¹ to which they were addressed have not felt able to return equally favourable replies to the United States Department of State.

In view of the imminence of the Antarctic summer season, bringing with it the risk of incidents between claimants which might exacerbate normal friendly relations, His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom and the Argentine and Chilean Governments some weeks ago entered into conversations with a view to ascertaining whether it might not be agreed that naval visits to Antarctic waters, apart from the purely routine ones, were unnecessary during the current season. As a result of these conversations, statements were recently exchanged between the governments concerned, in the following terms:

‘Being anxious to avoid any misunderstanding in Antarctica which might upset the friendly relations between the United Kingdom, Argentina and Chile, the governments of these three countries have informed each other that in present circumstances they foresee no need to send warships south of latitude 60° during the 1948–49 Antarctic season, apart, of course, from routine movements such as have been customary for a number of years.’

His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom feel confident that these parallel statements of intention will be valuable in ensuring that incidents likely to cause unnecessary friction in Antarctica between the three Powers concerned are avoided. The United States Government have been kept informed.”

[On 18 January 1949 the Department of State in Washington issued the following statement.]

“The Government of the United States is very pleased to learn that, being anxious to avoid any misunderstanding in Antarctica which might affect the friendly relations between Argentina, Chile and the United Kingdom, the Governments of these three countries have informed each other that in present circumstances they foresee no need to send warships south of latitude 60 degrees during the 1948–1949 Antarctic season, apart, of course, from routine movements such as have been customary for a number of years.

The United States Government does not contemplate sending any vessels to Antarctica during the 1948–1949 Antarctic season.”

¹ The New Zealand Government signified its willingness to discuss the establishment of a regime on the lines proposed.—Eds.