

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
Washington

MATTHEW F. MCGUIRE  
Assistant to the Attorney General

September 29, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR HONORABLE J. EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

This refers to your memorandum of September 26, in which you request the views of this office concerning the proposed assumption of investigative jurisdiction on the part of the Coast Guard in respect to sabotage committed on vessels under the jurisdiction of the United States while they are on the high seas and outside of the territorial limits of the United States.

As is correctly stated in your memorandum, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has always been charged with the duty of investigating crimes committed on the high seas and is presently charged with the duty of investigating all acts of sabotage.

The Coast Guard has for some years been authorized to make inquiries, examinations, inspections, seizures and arrests upon the high seas, and for such purposes has been authorized at any time to go aboard any vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to address inquiries to those on board, to examine the ship's documents and papers and to examine, inspect and search the vessel and use all necessary force to compel compliance. (U.S. Code, Title 14, Section 45.)

The authority intended to be conferred by this Act is that which is ordinarily reposed in the uniformed police force of a municipality. The Coast Guard is in effect the uniformed police patrol force operating on the high seas. Its authority does not include the making of investigations.

/s/ Matthew F. McGuire  
The Assistant to the Attorney General

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