

Is Iceland Brown's Falklands?

Sir, One of the few winners of the global financial crisis is Gordon Brown. For him, the crisis and the clash with Iceland could not have come at a better time. He is coming to the rescue of British savers, investors, public bodies and charities that could have lost millions of pounds deposited in failing Icelandic banks.

The Prime Minister said it was illegal that Iceland was not prepared to compensate UK investors equally but protected its domestic savers first. He hit back by seizing assets in Britain of one of the Icelandic banks using an anti-terrorism law that provides for the freezing of assets in the fight against terrorism. But how legal is it to use a legal instrument for a purpose for which it was not given? And how big is Iceland's terror threat to Britain?

Perhaps as big as the threat the Falklands posed to Britain. In 1982, the Falkland conflict bolstered the position of Margaret Thatcher. A year later her Government won the general election. Is glory in a war against Iceland the PM's perspective after having been so close to his political grave?

CEES VAN DAM
Visiting Professor
King's College London

Sir, What on earth prompted the Prime Minister's extraordinary actions against Iceland? To demand money with menaces, to take aggressive action against another state's property in the UK and to

label a fellow member of Nato a terrorist state is unprecedented, unwarranted and likely to prove highly counter-productive.

Iceland faces national calamity, and surely has the right to expect better than this from a fellow western state in its hour of need. It cannot at the moment reimburse the savers in Icesave even if it wanted to — this is not a case of a foreign government capriciously declining to meet its debts but a country wondering how to pay for its food imports this winter. Compared with that, UK savers rightly do not rank very high on the Icelandic Government's list of priorities.

It is when disaster strikes that one discovers one's true friends. A friend would extend sympathy and perhaps even a loan. Instead, Brown has acted precisely like the worst of the banks, foreclosing on a debtor at the first missed payment. I am ashamed of our aggressive, bullying and totally unthinking Prime Minister, who has merely ensured that when the Icelanders do recover and rebuild their economy, satisfying Britain will be the very last thing on their list.

JOHN NUGÉE
New Malden, Surrey

Sir, Am I the only one who wonders how the Prime Minister has had time to write a book ("Brown relishes the chance to be author of his own heroics", Oct 11)?

JAMES ESDAILE
London SW18