

US foreign policy

Donald Trump ridicules Denmark and insists US will take Greenland

'They put two extra dog sleds there . . . they thought that was protection,' says US president



The US has repeatedly recognised Danish sovereignty over Greenland, not least when it bought what are now the US Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917 © Sean Gallup/Getty Images

Richard Milne, Nordic and Baltic Correspondent JANUARY 26 2025

US President Donald Trump has ridiculed Denmark's attempts to defend Greenland with additional patrols including two extra dog sleds as he insisted America would take control of the strategically crucial Arctic island.

Denmark's defence minister has conceded that the Nordic country has not done enough to protect its autonomous territory of Greenland, but revealed plans to spend \$1.5bn on two new inspection ships, two drones and two dog sled patrols after Trump [renewed his interest in the island](#).

"I do believe Greenland, we'll get — because it really has to do with freedom of the world. It has nothing to do with the United States, other than we're the one that can provide the freedom. They [Denmark] can't. They put two dog sleds there two weeks ago, they thought that was protection," Trump told reporters on Air Force One this weekend.

Trump held a 45-minute phone call with Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen last week, which five current and former senior European officials described to the Financial Times as [fiery and confrontational](#).

The officials said the Danish government was in "crisis mode" after Trump took the unprecedented step of refusing to rule out military action to take territory from a

Nato ally and threatened targeted tariffs against it. The US already has the sole military base in Greenland, in the north of the island.

Denmark's military presence on Greenland is currently limited to an Arctic Command of just 75 people and equipment consisting of four ships, a surveillance plane and several dog sled patrols.

Both Danish and Greenlandic officials have said the US could increase its military presence on the island, and there have been periodic discussions about a second base or more personnel.

Troels Lund Poulsen, Denmark's defence minister, [said](#) on Christmas Eve that as well as the new ships, drones and dog sled patrols Copenhagen would also upgrade the runway of one of Greenland's main airports to allow F-35 fighter jets — operated both by the US and the Nordic country — to land there.

The US has repeatedly recognised Danish sovereignty over Greenland, not least when it bought what are now the US Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917.

But Trump said on Air Force One: “I don't really know what claim Denmark has to it, but it would be a very unfriendly act if they didn't allow that to happen because it's for the protection of the free world. It's not for us, it's for the free world. Right now, you have Russian ships, you have Chinese ships, you have ships from various countries. It's not a good situation.”

He added: “I think Greenland will be worked out with us. I think we're going to have it. I think the people want to be with us.”

European countries are scrambling to work out how to react to Trump's threats against Denmark without ending up in his crosshairs themselves. Some have urged Frederiksen to “fight back” against the US president. So far, the Danish prime minister has insisted that Greenland is not for sale but has welcomed increasing US interest in the Arctic.

The Danish prime minister's office said it did “not recognise the interpretation of the conversation” between Trump and Frederiksen, but refused to explain which details it disagreed with. US officials did not dispute the FT's reporting.

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