

GREENLAND'S NATIONAL PASTIME WAS NEARLY HIJACKED THIS WEEK AFTER WHITE HOUSE SAID USHA VANCE WOULD ATTEND — SHE DIDN'T

No Usha Vance, no problem: Greenland's dog sled race goes barking on amid spotlight

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AT THE foot of glistening Mount Nasaasaaq — “the king of the mountains” — in Sisimiut, Greenland, hundreds of spectators bundled in bright jackets, insulated pants and heavy boots lined a snow-packed trail on Saturday waiting for the racers to glide past.

The low sun glinted off the ice. The snow squeaked underfoot, fine and dry like sifted flour. Red and white Greenlandic flags

popped up everywhere — from poles, tucked into hoods, flapping in mittened hands.

For more than three decades, Greenland has held a national dog sledding championship — the Avannaata Qimussersua, which means, in Greenlandic language, “The Great Race of the North.” This year the event brought together more than 25 mushers — including a pretty tough 14-year-old boy — and at least 400 dogs. It's a tradition deeply rooted in the country's culture, where dogs are not just animals, but partners in survival. And usually, the race doesn't attract much interna-

tional attention.

But this year it was swept into a major geopolitical storm when the White House announced that Usha Vance, the wife of Vice President JD Vance, and one of their sons would attend. With Greenlanders gearing up to protest, Ms. Vance ended up canceling her trip.

Vance had tried to frame her visit as a gesture of cultural appreciation. The Greenlanders didn't buy it. President Trump has been fixated on taking over Greenland — a semiautonomous territory of Denmark — and has steadily ratcheted up his talk to “get it, one



Mushers celebrating after completing a dog sledding race. *NYT*

way or the other,” as he has said.

Many Greenlanders (and Danes) saw the visit as a threat. The race organizers quickly issued a pointed statement saying the Vances had not been invited. A spokeswoman for Vance denied this, saying the second lady had received “multiple invitations.”

Vance, along with her husband and some other officials, did come to Greenland, but ended up spending less than three hours on Friday at the Pituffik Space Base, a remote American missile defense station on Greenland's northern

coast, miles from any town. The race, though, went on, just as planned. For the competitors, it was the culmination of years of daily care, discipline and deep mutual understanding between human and dog.

On Saturday afternoon, a voice crackled over the loudspeaker with updates on the competitors' progress as they cut across the grueling 26-mile course. Children bounced to stay warm. In the distance, sharp barks echoed across the mountain. “We're not trying to impress anyone,” said Inuna Davidsen, a spectator who was alertly wait-

ing for the sleds to appear. “We just want to stay close to nature and to each other.”

Like many others here, she saw the event not only as a competition but as a gathering — a space where people from distant settlements meet, celebrate and reconnect in the snow. Sisimiut, which hosted the race this year, is the second largest town in Greenland, with a population of around 5,000.

Greenlanders have been working with sled dogs for hundreds of years. They used them to travel to faraway villages and to hunt seals and reindeer. **NYT**