

# Danes 'prepared to bomb runways in Greenland'

## DENMARK

Jeffrey Gettleman, Christopher F. Schuetze and Maya Tekeli

**London:** As tensions with US President Donald Trump peaked earlier this year, the Danish military developed detailed plans to blow up airfields in Greenland in the event of a US invasion, two European officials said.

Danish soldiers were sent to Greenland equipped with explosives and blood supplies, underscoring the seriousness of the contingency plans, according to the officials, who had knowledge of the plans but said they could not be identified because of the sensitivity of the subject.

The soldiers did not do anything to the airfields, but Denmark's consideration of such a scenario shows how unnerved the country was in January as US President Donald Trump escalated threats to take over Greenland, a huge Arctic island that has been part of the Danish kingdom for more than 300 years.

Trump later softened his tone, signalling that he was willing to compromise over Greenland's fu-



ture relationship with the US and subsequently turned his attention elsewhere, initiating a war with Iran alongside Israel.

DR, Denmark's public broadcaster, first published information about these plans this week, as Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen campaigns for re-election. Her tough stance against Trump has become one of her top-selling points in the election, which takes place this week.

According to DR's report, when Danish soldiers were deployed to

Greenland in January, they carried explosives to disable the runways in Nuuk, Greenland's capital, and in Kangerlussuaq, a small town in the Arctic Circle.

The report explained that this would "prevent US military aircraft from landing soldiers on the island if President Donald Trump ultimately chose to take Greenland by force".

The report did not mention that the US military maintains its own airfield on the north-west corner of the island, part of a defence agree-

ment the US has had with Denmark for decades. Security analysts said Denmark's detailed planning was unsurprising.

"Military will naturally think, 'OK, what's the worst that can happen?'" said Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at Bruegel, a research institute in Brussels.

"So you start with the runways, and you prepare for combat. Well, blood banks. Live ammunition. There you go."

According to the DR report, the Danish soldiers also had live ammunition.

At the time, Denmark said it was sending soldiers to Greenland for a broader military exercise with a small contingent of troops from other European countries, including France, Germany, Britain and Norway.

Though Denmark's full plans weren't public at the time, the exercise was clearly meant to signal to Trump that Europe was united against his threats to seize a large chunk of a European country's territory.

Tom Roseth, a professor of intelligence studies at the Norwegian Defence University College, be-

lieves Denmark's gambit worked.

"The situation was highly serious," he said. "Something had to be done in terms of military presence and demonstrating solidarity with Denmark."

"Whether it is called an exercise, an operational deployment, or symbolic support, the effect is what matters. The Americans could not simply arrive with a small force and raise the flag, if they ever seriously considered doing so."

US military officials indicated in January that they had no war plans for Greenland, and it isn't clear how likely Danish intelligence agencies believed the US was poised to invade.

Still, the Danish troops deployed on the island were under a heightened state of readiness.

In mid-January, as the tensions were rising, Denmark's Defence Minister, Troels Lund Poulsen, said Danish soldiers were under orders that "if one is attacked, one must defend the kingdom".

But, he added, "it is considered entirely hypothetical that the US government would initiate an attack on Greenland".

The New York Times