

# European leaders say Greenland ‘belongs to its people’

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AND STEFANIE DAZIO

BERLIN — Several European leaders pushed back Tuesday on President Trump’s comments seeking an American takeover of Greenland.

The leaders issued a statement reaffirming the strategic, mineral-rich Arctic island “belongs to its people.”

The leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom joined Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in defending Greenland’s

sovereignty in the wake of Trump’s comments about Greenland, which is a self-governing territory of the kingdom of Denmark and thus part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization military alliance.

“Greenland belongs to its people,” the statement said. “It is for Denmark and Greenland, and them only, to decide on matters concerning Denmark and Greenland.”

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney also expressed his support and announced a visit to Greenland early next month by Canada’s Governor General Mary Si-

mon, who is of Inuk descent, and Foreign Minister Anita Anand.

“The future of Greenland and Denmark are decided solely by the people of Denmark,” Carney said, standing next to Frederiksen at the Canadian Embassy in Paris.

Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff, said Monday that Greenland should be part of the United States in spite of a warning by Frederiksen that a U.S. takeover of Greenland would amount to the end of NATO.

“The president has been clear for months now that the United States should be the nation that has Greenland as part of our overall security apparatus,” Miller said during an interview with CNN on Monday afternoon.

His comments came after the Danish leader, together with Greenland’s prime minister and other European leaders, firmly rejected Trump’s renewed call for the island to come under U.S. control in the aftermath of the weekend U.S. military operation in Venezuela.

Trump has argued the U.S. needs to control Greenland to ensure the security of the NATO territory in the face of rising threats from China and Russia in the Arctic. “It’s so strategic right now,” he told reporters Sunday.

“Greenland is covered with Russian and Chinese ships all over the place,” Trump said. “We need Greenland from the stand-



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**GREENLAND** Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen holds a news conference in Nuuk, Greenland.

point of national security, and Denmark is not going to be able to do it.”

Miller wondered during his interview Monday whether Denmark can assert control over Greenland. “What is the basis of their territorial claim?” Miller asked. “What is their basis of having Greenland as a colony of Denmark?”

He said it was not necessary to consider whether the U.S. administration was contemplating an armed intervention. “There is no need to even think or talk about this in the context that you are asking, of a military operation. Nobody is going to fight the U.S. militarily over the future of Greenland,” he said.

## Strategic importance

Greenland had been a colony of the Danish kingdom for hundreds of years, becoming an integral part in 1953. The U.S. government recognized Denmark’s right to the whole of Greenland at the beginning of the 20th century.

Legislation in 2009 that extended self-government to Greenland also recognized a right to independence under international law, an option favored by a majority of Greenlanders.

Greenland sits off the northeastern coast of Canada, with more than two-thirds of its territory lying

within the Arctic Circle. That location has made it crucial to the defense of North America since World War II.

The U.S. Department of Defense operates the remote Pituffik Space Base in northwestern Greenland. Constructed after a 1951 defense agreement between Denmark and the U.S., the base supports missile warning, missile defense and space surveillance operations for the U.S. and NATO.

Greenland also guards part of the GIUK Gap, named for the initials of Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom, where NATO monitors Russian naval movements in the North Atlantic.

Greenland has large deposits of rare earth minerals needed to make computers and smartphones as well as the batteries, solar and wind technologies that will power a transition away from fossil fuels. The U.S. Geological Survey also has identified potential offshore deposits of oil and natural gas.

## Dispute creates major anxiety

What started out as a social media post on Saturday by Miller’s wife over the weekend quickly turned into something that Denmark now perceives as a real threat.

Katie Miller, a former Trump administration offi-

cial turned podcaster, posted an illustrated map of Greenland in the colors of the U.S. flag accompanied by the caption: “SOON.”

Trump’s comments Sunday, including telling reporters “let’s talk about Greenland in 20 days,” deepened fears that the U.S. was planning a Greenland intervention in the near future.

Frederiksen said Monday that Trump’s comments about Greenland “should be taken seriously.”

“If the United States chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, then everything stops,” Frederiksen told Danish broadcaster TV2. “That is, including our NATO and thus the security that has been provided since the end of the Second World War.”

Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen insisted on the need for good relations with the United States. “We are not in a situation where we think that there might be a takeover of the country overnight and that is why we are insisting that we want good cooperation,” he said Monday night.

U.S. Reps. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and Blake Moore (R-Utah), co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Friends of Denmark Caucus, issued a joint statement Monday urging calm.

“Sabre-rattling about annexing Greenland is needlessly dangerous,” they said. “An attack on Greenland — a crucial part of that alliance — would tragically be an attack on NATO.”

“We already have access to everything we could need from Greenland,” the congressmen said, noting Denmark has previously given the U.S. a green light to deploy more forces or build additional missile defense infrastructure in Greenland.

Ciobanu and Dazio write for the Associated Press. AP writers Aamer Madhani in Washington, Danica Kirka in London and Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

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## FOR THE RECORD

**Candlelight vigil:** An article in the Jan. 6 California section about a vigil for Keith Porter Jr., a Compton man killed by an off-duty Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent in Northridge on New Year’s Eve, according to authorities, said Porter was 33. He was 43.

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