

Greenland

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Washington after the meeting concluded.

“It’s clear that the president has this wish of conquering over Greenland.”

Before the meeting, which lasted around two hours, Trump argued on social media that NATO would become far more formidable and effective with Greenland in the hands of the United States. “Anything less than that is unacceptable,” he wrote.

In recent weeks, he has frequently repeated longstanding claims that acquiring Greenland is a national security imperative, and that Denmark is not capable of warding off Russian and Chinese influence in the Arctic region.

Greenland and Denmark say the island is not for sale, and that threats of force are reckless and security concerns should be resolved among allies.

Prominent EU countries have backed Denmark, which is a member of the NATO alliance. Ahead of the meeting, Greenland and Denmark said they had begun to increase their military presence in and around Greenland in close cooperation with NATO allies, as part of their promise to beef up Arctic defense.

The increased military presence would include a range of exercise activities throughout 2026, according to the Danish defense ministry.

During the news conference, Rasmussen and Motzfeldt called the meeting respectful and emphasized that Denmark shared U.S. concerns about Arctic security. But they firmly rejected the idea of the island becoming American.

While Trump has at times portrayed the island as besieged by Russian and Chinese ships, Rasmussen rejected that characterization on Jan. 14, saying “it is not a true narrative that we have Chinese warships all around the place.”

The meeting presented an opportunity for Copenhagen and Nuuk to de-escalate the crisis and find a diplomatic path to satisfy U.S. demands for more control, analysts said.

Noa Redington, an analyst and former political adviser to previous Danish premier Helle Thorning-Schmidt, said concerns were high in Denmark and Greenland that Motzfeldt and Rasmussen could be treated in the same way as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, when he suffered a public humiliation in a meeting with



Women walk along a road in Nuuk, Greenland, on Jan. 14. Greenland and Denmark say the island is not for sale.

MARKO DJURICA/REUTERS

Trump – and Vance – at the White House in February 2025.

“This is the most important meeting in modern Greenland’s history,” he told Reuters.

Denmark and Greenland had originally sought a meeting with Rubio, hoping to have a discussion among top diplomats on resolving the crisis between the two NATO allies.

But Denmark’s Rasmussen said Vance had also wanted to participate and that the vice president would host the meeting himself at the White House.

European diplomats had said the White House had for months brushed off Denmark’s attempts to engage on Greenland at a high level. The Jan. 14 meeting was the first principal-level encounter between U.S. and Danish officials on the issue.

Unity with Denmark

Anxiety has been high in Greenland.

“I have been sleeping very, very badly, really,” said Liv Aurora Jensen, a craftswoman and designer in Nuuk, right before she watched the Motzfeldt and Rasmussen news conference on television.

“And I was talking to my sister yesterday and I told her: ‘I’m trying not to get a panic attack.’”

Greenlandic leaders appear to be shifting their approach in how they are handling the diplomatic crisis.

Until recently, they were stressing Greenland’s path to independence. But now their public statements put more emphasis on Greenland’s unity with Denmark.

“It’s not the time to gamble with our right to self-determination, when another country is talking about taking us over,” Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen told Greenland daily *Sermitsiaq* in an interview published Jan. 14.