

Greenlanders Reject American Ties in Poll

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WASHINGTON—A new poll shows 76% of Greenlanders say they wouldn't benefit from becoming part of the U.S., noting their concerns about exchanging the Danish welfare system for American health-care, eldercare and education.

Only 3% of Greenlanders had a "very positive" view of U.S. government-provided benefits, while 59% held a mainly or very negative view of it, the poll shows. The U.S. has some of the highest healthcare costs in the world.

Sune Steffen Hansen, a Danish pollster who designed and conducted the survey, said the findings make clear Greenlanders are broadly satisfied being part of the Danish kingdom and even expect their circumstances to get better under their current political arrangement. "That's a hard deal for the U.S.," he said.

President Trump's campaign hasn't only turned citizens more sharply against the U.S., but has also prompted Greenlanders to seek closer ties with the European Union.

Trump's Greenland aims have triggered an extraordinary crisis with one of its closest historic allies and undermined European countries' faith in the U.S. as a reliable ally, several senior European officials said.

The poll of 610 Greenlanders aged 18 or older took place Jan. 16-28, when Trump and members of his administration escalated their rhetoric about potentially using military force to seize the world's largest island. On Jan. 21, Trump and Mark Rutte, secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, agreed to set up a diplomatic framework for the U.S., Denmark and Greenland to begin negotiations while Washington dropped its military threats.

All sides met last week to discuss how to allay U.S. concerns over Arctic security

without crossing Denmark's red lines on Greenland's sovereignty, Danish officials said.

Trump's late January decision to avoid the use of force didn't affect the survey results, Steffen Hansen said. "There was a consistency throughout the process and the results. It is not like people changed their minds overnight."

The greatest impact on attitudes was the full-throated U.S. campaign to acquire Greenland, a territory of about 57,000 people, by any means necessary, he continued. "America wanted to get close to Greenland, but instead they pushed them away."

U.S. intelligence agencies have stepped up their efforts to better understand Greenlanders and their political attitudes. The Trump administration is also weighing direct cash payments to island residents to change their views, U.S. officials said.

Such efforts face an uphill battle. Given a choice between strengthening Greenland's cooperation and relationship with the EU or the U.S., 65% of respondents chose the European bloc and only 5% said the U.S.

Meanwhile, 51% of Greenlanders said splitting from Denmark would result in a weaker economy on the island, with 62% of respondents adding that they wouldn't like to leave the kingdom and become independent now. In the long term, 52% of people said Greenland could be independent without any other country having decisive military or political influence over the island.

Greenlanders were interviewed online and over the telephone for the poll, which has a margin of error of 4%. Steffen Hansen said he didn't receive government funding for the poll. The Copenhagen Post, a Danish newspaper, covered Steffen Hansen's expenses in exchange for two stories based on the survey's results, he said.

A Pew Research poll published Jan. 29 showed 58% of U.S. adults opposed an American takeover of Greenland.