

Meeting Leaves Trump And Denmark at Odds

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

WASHINGTON — A high-level meeting at the White House on Wednesday yielded no breakthrough on the standoff between President Trump and Denmark's government over Greenland, as several NATO countries announced plans to send troops to the frigid Danish territory and Mr. Trump reiterated his view that anything less than full U.S. control of the island was "unacceptable."

Speaking to reporters after a sit-down at the White House complex with Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Denmark's foreign minister, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, said that a "fundamental disagreement" remained with Mr. Trump, who says that America must rule Greenland to protect it from China and Russia.

"We didn't manage to change the American position," Mr. Rasmussen said. "It's clear that the president has this wish of conquering over Greenland."

An escalation in the crisis may have been averted, for now, by what Mr. Rasmussen called an agreement between the sides to form a "working group" on the matter, which he said would convene in the coming weeks.

It is unclear whether any compromise is possible, however. Mr. Trump's demand for ownership of Greenland appears irreconcilable with Denmark's insistence that it will not sell or surrender the sparsely inhabited territory.

Denmark has controlled Greenland for centuries, including as a colony, though today the island is largely self-governing. The Danish government continues to provide the island of about 56,000 people with economic subsidies

and security and supports its gradual path toward independence.

Early Wednesday morning, Mr. Trump posted on social media that the United States "needs Greenland for the purpose of National Security," adding: "Anything less than that is unacceptable." Mr. Trump has said he might use military force to acquire the island.

Mr. Rasmussen, in turn, said on Wednesday that American ownership is "absolutely not necessary" to ensure Greenland's defense. And his country, along with its allies, is taking steps to demonstrate its seriousness.

Denmark's defense ministry has announced that it will conduct additional military exercises on the island featuring "aircraft, vessels and soldiers" from its own military and those of its NATO allies. At least three member countries — Germany, France and Sweden — said that they would contribute to the exercises.

Several Swedish military officers arrived in Greenland on Wednesday, Sweden's prime minister announced on X, and 13 German reconnaissance soldiers will arrive on Thursday for a three-day visit, according to Germany's defense ministry. Both countries said the deployments were at the invitation of Denmark's government and related to a Danish-led military exercise.

At the same time, there is little sign that Mr. Trump's efforts to persuade Greenlanders into supporting a union with the United States with promises of economic benefits have gained traction. Standing beside Mr. Rasmussen outside Denmark's embassy in Washington after joining him at the White House, Greenland's foreign minister, Vivian Motzfeldt,



ERIC LEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Denmark's foreign minister, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, center, and Vivian Motzfeldt, Greenland's minister of foreign affairs, met with officials in Washington on Wednesday to discuss Greenland.

said that her homeland welcomed more cooperation with Washington but added: "That doesn't mean that we want to be owned by the United States."

Mr. Trump said Friday that he was determined to acquire Greenland "whether they like it or not."

Neither the State Department nor the White House provided a summary of the meeting or details on the working group. Asked for more information, a White House press officer cited Mr. Trump's morning Truth Social post.

Mr. Rasmussen spoke in somber tones after his meeting with Mr. Vance and Mr. Rubio, who also serves as Mr. Trump's national security adviser. Mr. Vance has shown more public enthusiasm for acquiring the territory than has Mr. Rubio, and paid a March visit to Pituffik, a small U.S. Space Force base that is all

that remains of a larger Cold War American military presence on Greenland.

The Danish official said he had welcomed the meeting as a chance to "take down the temperature" on a debate that has mostly played out through public remarks and social media posts.

"We agreed that it makes sense to try to sit down on a high level to explore whether there's possibilities to accommodate the concerns of the president while we at the same time respect the red lines of the kingdom of Denmark."

Mr. Trump told reporters on Wednesday that he had not yet been briefed on the earlier Greenland meeting, but he reiterated his view that Denmark cannot adequately defend the island.

"If we don't go in, Russia's going to go in and China's going to go in, and there's not a thing Denmark

can do about it," he said, adding: "But there's everything we can do. You found that out last week with Venezuela."

The mention of Venezuela was notable given that many analysts believe Mr. Trump is feeling emboldened in his foreign policy by the success of recent U.S. military operations, including the daring Jan. 3 capture of the Venezuelan strongman Nicolás Maduro.

Still, the notion that Mr. Trump might forcibly seize territory from a fellow NATO ally has shocked European leaders and rattled the alliance, whose 75-year history has never seen direct armed conflict between two members.

Intense diplomacy to defuse the standoff was set to continue. Mr. Rasmussen and Ms. Motzfeldt planned to meet some members of Congress on Wednesday afternoon and then host others for din-

ner at the Danish Embassy. And Senator Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware, is scheduled to lead a bipartisan delegation of senators and representatives to Denmark later this week.

"At a time of increasing international instability, we need to draw closer to our allies, not drive them away," Mr. Coons said in a statement.

Even some close allies of Mr. Trump are skeptical about his designs on Greenland, including Senator John Kennedy, Republican of Louisiana.

"Even a modestly intelligent ninth-grader knows that to invade Greenland would be weapons-grade stupid," Mr. Kennedy told CNN last week. "Now, President Trump is not weapons-grade stupid, nor is Marco Rubio. They do not plan to invade Greenland."

In perhaps a small consolation for Copenhagen, Mr. Trump has stopped short of criticizing Denmark's leaders. "I have a very good relationship with Denmark," he told reporters on Wednesday.

Experts acknowledge Greenland's importance to an unfolding military and economic competition between the United States, China and Russia in the Arctic, where melting ice has opened new shipping lanes and opportunities for resource extraction.

But many call Mr. Trump's talk of Russian or Chinese conquest of the island overblown and question whether Mr. Trump, a former real estate mogul, is motivated by a chance to dramatically enlarge America's territory.

A 1951 treaty between the United States and Denmark gave America the right in perpetuity to maintain military bases on Greenland. But Mr. Trump says that is not enough.

"Ownership is very important," he said in a recent interview with The New York Times. Mr. Trump did not explain why that was the case, beyond calling it "what I feel is psychologically needed for success."