



Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Greenland Foreign Minister Vivian Motzfeldt on Wednesday

Trump Calls Island Vital For Security

Officials from Denmark, Greenland say president is unmoved after talks

Top officials from Denmark and Greenland conceded they hadn't persuaded President Trump to abandon his ambitions to annex Greenland after a visit to the White House on

By Robbie Gramer, Drew Hinshaw and Alex Leary

Wednesday. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted the Danish and Greenlandic foreign ministers at the White House amid an extraordinary standoff between the U.S. and its closest allies over the future of the ice-covered island of 57,000 people. Political leaders in Greenland, a semiautonomous island in the Danish kingdom, have repeatedly insisted their home isn't for sale after Trump's plans sparked anger and blowback.

But a few hours later, Trump reiterated his position that the U.S. needs Greenland for security purposes: "There's not a thing that Denmark can do about it if Russia or China wants to occupy Greenland," he told reporters. "But there's everything we can do. You found that out last week with Venezuela....I can't rely on Denmark being able to fend themselves off."

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said the meeting on Wednesday was a positive step forward, even if it didn't sway Trump on the issue. A "fundamental disagreement" remains, he said, although talks will continue. "We didn't manage to

change the American position. It's clear that the president has this wish of conquering Greenland, and we made it very, very clear that this isn't in the interest" of either Denmark or Greenland, Rasmussen said.

He added the U.S., Denmark and Greenland would establish a high-level working group to meet in the coming weeks but declined to give more specifics.

Danish officials insist that Washington could achieve all of its strategic aims with Greenland—acquiring more military bases and access to mineral resources—without annexing the island.

A senior Trump administration official said a financial offer was to be part of the discussion and that the president was waiting on the outcome to decide his next move. A senior Danish official wouldn't confirm any monetary offers were made but said any effort to fully annex Greenland would be unacceptable.

U.S. lawmakers, including some from Trump's own party, are piling on. Sen. Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said Trump's Greenland aims are "incinerating the hard-won trust of loyal allies in exchange for no meaningful change across the Arctic."

"Following through on this provocation would be more disastrous for the president's legacy than withdrawing from Afghanistan was for his predecessor," McConnell added.

Sens. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Republican Lisa Murkowski from Alaska on Tuesday proposed legislation that would block the U.S. military from occupying the territory of NATO allies.

Greenland Could Be a Money Pit

By Max Colchester

NUUK, Greenland—If President Trump acquired Greenland, he would find himself in charge of a slow-growing economy heavily reliant on more than \$1 billion of annual government subsidies and powered largely by sales of shrimp.

The island is prized by the president as the real-estate purchase of a lifetime. It boasts a strategic location and untapped mineral reserves buried deep beneath the ice.

The economy, however, is reliant on something more prosaic: fishing and a recent surge in investment to build new airports. And revenue from both of these is trending down, causing the economy to flatline in 2025.

Opinion polls in recent years consistently show that Greenlanders are more concerned about the state of their economy than a U.S. takeover.

Greenlandic officials quietly concede that, in the short term at least, anyone running this island is more likely to find themselves staring down a money pit rather than a gold mine.

The island is one of one of the world's biggest welfare states, a vast expanse of ice-clad villages whose residents—reachable only by helicopter and propjet—are nonetheless accustomed to the perks of Denmark's social democracy, from free healthcare to robust schools. It could also take years and billions of dollars to transform an economy where 98% of the exports are seafood into a mining behemoth.

"It is not a diversified economy and it is going to take a while for it to become self-sufficient," said Otto Svendsen, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The Greenlandic government hasn't made "a ton of progress," he said.

Greenland's population of 57,000 is thinly spread down the coast of some of the world's most environmentally hostile territory—a country 80% covered with ice. Living standards vary enormously. In the capital, Nuuk, locals can play golf and dine in a fine Thai restaurant. In smaller remote settlements, where wages are on average 50% lower, people bathe by hacking out chunks of ice to melt. The island, which is slightly bigger than Mexico, has less than 100 miles of paved road.

Underpinning this existence is a deep reliance on the Kingdom of Denmark, of which Greenland is a semiautonomous territory. About 40% of the Greenlandic workforce is employed by the state. Denmark provides a grant that accounts for roughly half of the Greenlandic government's revenue and 20% of the island's GDP. It also pays for police, courts, banking regulators and largely free healthcare for some of the world's most remote settlements, as well as



Local fishermen break ice in Nuuk's harbor before heading out for the day's fishing trip.

Tourism Is Eyed to Boost Economy

Investments on the horizon could help boost Greenland's economy, including expanding the Buksefjord power plant near Nuuk and building new hydropower plants. These plants could provide cheap energy to attract data centers.

There also is an ongoing effort to boost tourism, with direct flights to the capital, Nuuk, from Newark, N.J., operating during certain months of the year.

Some analysts see Greenland aping Iceland's success, combining tourism with fishing and cheap energy to attract tech companies.

Faced with the threat of

a U.S. takeover, Denmark also is pouring in extra cash. It recently announced a further \$250 million in funding over the next three years to cover the cost of a new regional airport in eastern Greenland and a new deep-water port.

Regardless of the economic cost, it is unlikely to deter the Trump administration, said Otto Svendsen, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. President Trump, he said, just wants to make America bigger. "It is easy to come to the conclusion that this is about territorial expansion."

managing foreign affairs and ponying up for defense.

This equates to just more than \$1 billion a year, said Torben Andersen, the chairman of the Economic Council for Greenland. If that disappeared overnight, "that would be a dramatic thing," he said.

Were the U.S. to replace that Danish grant, that alone would make the island's residents the largest per capita recipients of federal grants, surpassing denizens of Alaska or Washington, D.C.

The Trump administration has offered to buy the island, which the Greenlandic government says isn't for sale. Administration officials have discussed making payments directly to Greenlanders to win them over. They are also considering a proposal that would involve Greenland be-

coming independent from Denmark and receiving U.S. payments to cover some running costs in return for preferential access for the U.S.

Trump has argued that if the U.S. doesn't take over Greenland, it could fall into the laps of the Chinese or Russians. Danish officials say China has shown little interest, while Russia—whose military is bogged down in Ukraine—rarely brings naval assets near the island.

For a decade, the combination of Danish subsidies, infrastructure investment and rising global prices for halibut, cod and shrimp have helped keep the economy ticking. There also has been a building spree, including a new international airport at Nuuk.

Those good times are com-

ing to an end. Greenland's economy grew 0.8% in 2024 and 0.2% in 2025, according to the Danish central bank. Part of this slowdown is linked to falling shrimp stocks, as well as declining prices. Rising sea temperatures are affecting shrimp reproduction. There also has been a rise in the population of cod, which eat shrimp.

This month, the central bank warned of a "surprisingly sharp deterioration" in Greenland's public finances.

Longer term, Greenland faces challenges familiar to many Western economies, including an aging population and a brain drain as educated locals pursue careers in Denmark. This risks exacerbating a labor shortage on the island, which has a workforce of 29,000. There has been a wave of immigration from Asia—the Philippines in particular—to fill vacancies.

"A lack of manpower, a low competence level, an aging population and significant inequality exert pressure on both the economy and social cohesion," the Bank of Greenland, the island's biggest commercial lender, said in a recent report.

But it also clearly has potential. Much depends on whether Greenland can exploit the mineral wealth under the ice, said Andersen, the economist. Greenland has just one active mine. "Many things have been on the table for the last 20 years and they have been dropped because there is not a business case," he said.

Building a mine in Greenland often means also building a road and a port, not to mention housing, clinics and amenities for workers, who are scarce and hard to recruit. The freezing weather can make the mine inaccessible for chunks of the year. The Greenlandic government owns and has rights over all mineral resources. In 2021, it imposed a moratorium on oil-and-gas exploration licenses.

It is one of the world's biggest welfare states, relying heavily on Denmark.

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