

# Trump's tariff threat has struck a nerve

An ice-covered island is ground zero in one of the biggest crises in years between the U.S. and Europe

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ANALYSIS

Greenland, an ice-covered island with just 57,000 inhabitants, has unexpectedly become ground zero in one of the biggest crises in years to hit relations between the United States and Europe.

Donald Trump's threat to slap tariffs on imports from NATO allies that don't back his plan to acquire Greenland, a semi-autonomous part of Denmark, has struck a nerve in European capitals and prompted some of the strongest criticism yet of the U.S. President from European leaders.

"Europe won't be blackmailed," Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen declared on Sunday.

Her comment came as ambassadors from the European Union held an emergency meeting in Brussels and drew up plans to retaliate with countertariffs on U.S. imports worth €93-billion (US\$107.7-billion).

The EU, which negotiates tariffs for all 27 members, spent months hammering out a trade agreement with Mr. Trump that brought tariffs down to 15 per cent. With one social-media post on Saturday, the President has threatened to jack them up to 25 per cent and said they will go even higher if he doesn't get support for buying Greenland or taking it by force.

What has particularly enraged European leaders is Mr. Trump's specific attack on eight NATO allies who participated in a long-planned military exercise in Greenland called Operation Arctic Endurance.

The exercise, which involves a relatively small number of troops, had been in the works since last fall and the U.S. was invited to participate. The operation took on greater significance in recent weeks given Mr. Trump's increasing rhetoric about acquiring Greenland, but it remained limited and some troops began leaving on Sunday.

And yet in his social-media post, Mr. Trump accused the countries of journeying to Greenland "for purposes unknown" and said it had created "a very dangerous situation."

In a joint statement released Sunday, the eight countries – Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden – hit back and said that "tariff threats undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral."



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen speaks about the current situation in Greenland while in Copenhagen last week. LISELOTTE SABROE/RITZAU SCANPIX VIA REUTERS

They have also argued that protecting the territorial integrity of Denmark touches on the same principles as backing Ukraine against Russia's invasion.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who has gone to great lengths to appease Mr. Trump over the past year, has called the U.S. President's threat "wrong" and reiterated Britain's support for Greenland and Denmark to decide their futures. Mr. Starmer also spent weeks negotiating a trade deal with Mr. Trump that brought tariffs down to 10 per cent. They could now jump to 20 per cent.

At the Nuuk airport on Sunday, a group of 15 German soldiers were leaving the island, after just four days.

"Our mission has been completed on plan, and therefore everything's done. We will come back either to Greenland or have some more meetings in one of the allied countries," Rear Admiral Stefan Pauly told reporters at the airport just before the troops left for Germany.

"We have received all our answers, and especially for the Greenland people, they have been extremely, extremely friendly to us. And therefore, even as it was a short visit, it has been a very productive one."

Adm. Pauly, who heads the joint forces operations command in Germany, said the purpose of the mission was to bolster NATO's response to threats in the Far North from China and Russia. "I'm in the military, and my task is to develop military options to strengthen NATO and the alliance," he said.

When asked if he viewed the Americans as a potential enemy, Adm. Pauly shook his head. "The Americans are our allies. They're the strongest ally, and we always

could rely on this."

But in many NATO capitals, there is real concern that the future of the alliance is at stake. Mr. Trump's comments about invading Greenland had already rattled European leaders. Adding the threat of tariffs has led some to worry that NATO may not survive.

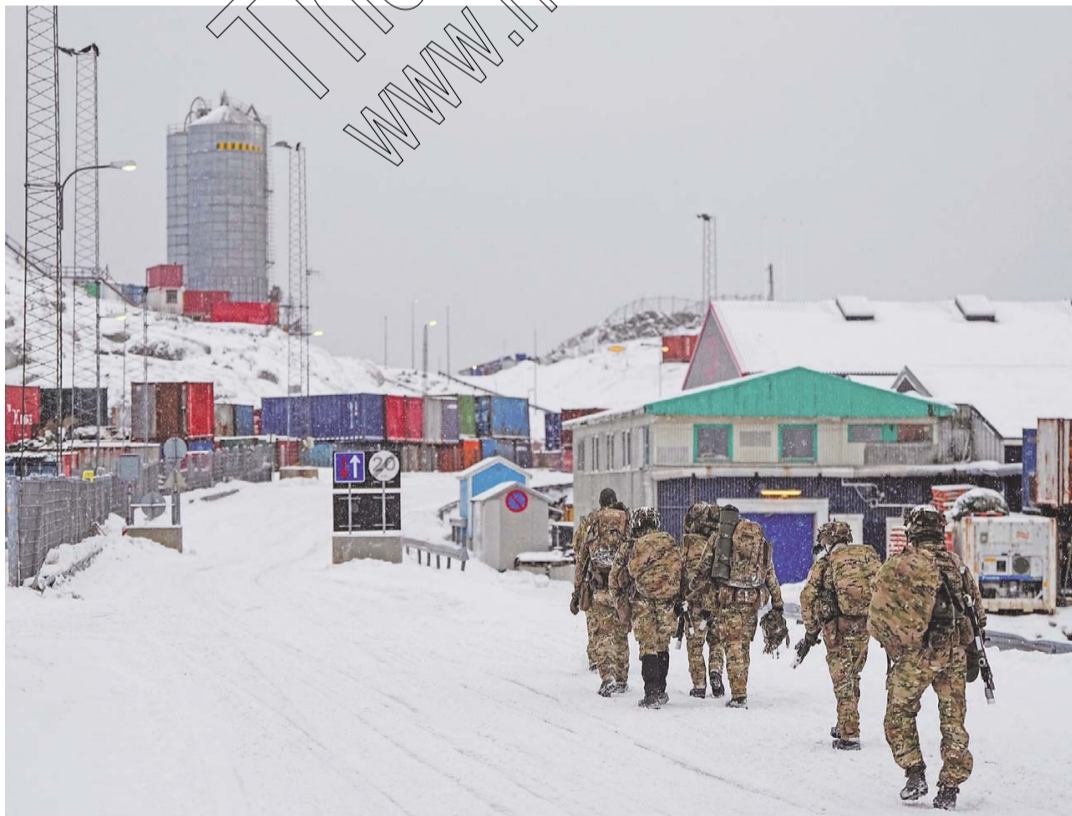
"The very essence of NATO is to protect the sovereign and territorial integrity of its member states," said Norway's Foreign Minister, Barth Eide.

In Copenhagen, Danish MP Rasmus Jarlov said NATO would unravel if Mr. Trump invaded Greenland.

"It would be the end of NATO. You're not going to be in alliance with someone that attacks you and tries to take a territory," he said in an interview this week. "That's for sure. We're done with the Americans if they do this."

Many people in Greenland feel the same, and they are fed up with being scared and anxious about Mr. Trump's next threat. Thousands took to the streets on Saturday in a noisy protest outside the U.S. consulate. They chanted "Greenland belongs to Greenlanders," held banners that read "Yankee Go Home" and sung traditional Inuit songs. Some held handmade signs that used crude language to describe Mr. Trump and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, who many believe has been too accommodating of the President.

As she stood outside the consulate building near the back of the crowd, Pha Kielsen had this to say about Mr. Trump. "I think he should just shut up," she said. "Nothing good is coming out of his mouth."



Danish soldiers disembark at the port in Nuuk, Greenland, on Sunday. Senior government officials said a small number of Canadian soldiers could head to Greenland this week if the Prime Minister signs off on the plan. MADs CLAUS RASMUSSEN/RITZAU SCANPIX VIA REUTERS

## Soldiers: Carney said he believes that NATO can handle the job of defending Greenland

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Mr. Carney did not respond to a question about whether Canada is prepared to join other NATO countries in building up a military presence in Greenland as a show of support.

Mr. Trump has justified his demand to make Greenland a U.S. territory by saying the strategically located island and its valuable critical mineral resources should not be allowed to fall under the control of Russia or China.

Mr. Carney invoked Russia's invasion of Ukraine as he outlined his response to Mr. Trump's latest pressure tactic to gain control of Greenland.

"It's a serious situation, and we're concerned. We're concerned about this escalation," the Prime Minister said of Mr. Trump's tariff threat.

"The future of Greenland and decisions about the future of Greenland are for Greenland and Denmark to decide."

U.S. legislators from both the Democratic and Republican parties have criticized Mr. Trump's threat to take Greenland and his subsequent tariff threat. The U.S. President has said he feels Denmark is ill-equipped to defend the island and its resources.

But Mr. Carney said he believes that NATO can handle the job of defending Greenland. He said that during his recent

trip to Paris he talked to NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte about protecting the Arctic.

The Prime Minister said he and Mr. Rutte spoke about how "we're going to further enhance that security umbrella" over the northern flank of the NATO territory.

Mr. Carney said Canada will always support the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, wherever their geographic location is," adding that he talked to the Emir of Qatar about a number of threats to sovereignty and territorial integrity, "Ukraine being a very prominent example."

With a report from Reuters