

US, Denmark, Greenland agree to disagree on territory

Nothing changes after meeting

By Amelia Nierenberg

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Denmark, Greenland, and the United States have a “fundamental disagreement” over the future of the territory in the North Atlantic, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, the Danish foreign minister, said Wednesday after a White House meeting with top Trump administration officials.

The meeting in Washington — hours after President Trump said the US “needs Greenland” — was the first among the three governments to discuss Trump’s desire to buy or take the semiautonomous Danish territory.

Rasmussen and Vivian Motzfeldt, the Greenland foreign minister, met with Vice

President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Afterward, Rasmussen called the discussion “frank” and “constructive” even as he underscored that Denmark has no interest in changing the status quo.

“Our perspectives continue to differ,” he said. “The president has made his view clear. And we have a different position.”

But, he said, there was also progress: The governments will form a working group, likely within weeks, to try to find a path forward that accommodates Trump’s security concerns, without violating the territorial integrity of the Danish kingdom or the Greenlanders’ right to self-determination.

While the Americans did not apologize or back down from Trump’s threats, Rasmussen said he hoped the governments could

begin to “take down the temperature” after more than a year of trading barbs on social media instead of meeting face to face.

“We, therefore, still have a fundamental disagreement, but we also agreed to disagree,” he said. “We will, however, continue to talk.”

Trump has turned up the pressure on Greenland this year, apparently emboldened by the success of the US military operation that led to the capture of Venezuela’s leader Jan. 3. He said last week that he was “going to do something on Greenland, whether they like it or not.”

He repeated his claims hours before the closed-door meeting, saying that “anything less than” American control of Greenland would be “unacceptable,” in a post on Truth Social. “The United States needs Greenland,” he

said, renewing his argument that it was necessary for national security. “NATO becomes far more formidable and effective with Greenland in the hands of the UNITED STATES.”

Denmark and Greenland have stood united in the face of Trump’s repeated threats.

Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen of Greenland told journalists Tuesday that Greenland would rather remain with Denmark, its former colonizer, than join the United States under the Trump administration. It was his strongest statement yet on Greenland’s desire to remain a territory of Denmark.

“If we have to choose between the United States and Denmark here and now, we choose Denmark,” he said Tuesday during a joint news conference in Copenhagen, Denmark,

with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen of Denmark.

Frederiksen has said that an American attack on Greenland — which, as a part of the kingdom of Denmark, is already under the protection of NATO — would destroy the alliance.

On Wednesday, Denmark announced that it would increase its “military presence in and around Greenland in the coming period.” Swedish soldiers also arrived in Greenland at Denmark’s request, Ulf Kristersson, the Swedish prime minister, wrote on social platform X.

In part, that is because the security situation at the top of the world is changing. Climate change is melting the ice in the Arctic, opening previously un-navigable routes where superpowers are vying for military and commercial dominance.

That is why Rasmussen said that Denmark and Greenland share some of Trump’s concerns about defense, noting that Denmark allocated about \$15 billion in recent years to military capabilities in the High North.

“There is definitely a new security situation in the Arctic,” he said.

“The big difference is whether that must lead to a situation where the US acquires Greenland,” he continued. “That is absolutely not necessary.”

Rasmussen noted that Greenland, as part of the Danish kingdom, is already under NATO protection. And he pointed to a Cold War-era agreement, which already gives the American military wide access to Greenland.

“The long-term security of Greenland can be ensured inside the current framework,” he said.