

WHY TRUMP WANTS GREENLAND

SECURITY STRATEGY

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Location, location, location: Greenland's position above the Arctic Circle makes the world's largest island a key part of security strategy. But for whom?

Increasing international tensions, global warming and the changing world economy have put Greenland at the heart of the debate over global trade and security, and U.S. President Donald Trump wants to make sure his country controls this mineral-rich island that guards the Arctic and North Atlantic approaches to North America.

Greenland is a self-governing territory of Denmark, a longtime U.S. ally that has rejected Trump's overtures. Greenland's own government also opposes U.S. designs on the island, saying the people of Greenland will decide their own future.

The island, 80 per cent of which lies above the Arctic Circle, is home to about 56,000 mostly Inuit people who until now have been largely ignored by the rest of the world.

Here's why Greenland is strategically important to Arctic security.

GREENLAND'S LOCATION IS KEY

Greenland sits off the northeastern coast of Canada, with more than two-thirds of its territory lying within the Arctic Circle. That has made it crucial to the defence of North America since the Second World War, when



EVGENIY MALOLETKA / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILES

With over two-thirds of its territory lying within the Arctic Circle, Greenland has been a crucial component in the defence of North America for decades.

the U.S. occupied Greenland to ensure it didn't fall into the hands of Nazi Germany and to protect North Atlantic shipping lanes.

After the Cold War, the Arctic was largely an area of international co-operation. But thinning ice is promising to create a northwest passage for international trade and reigniting competition with Russia, China and other countries over access to the region's resources.

SECURITY THREATS TO THE ARCTIC

In 2018, China declared itself a "near-Arctic state" in an effort to gain more influence in the region. China has also announced plans to build a "Polar Silk Road" as part of its global Belt and Road Initiative, which has created economic links with countries around the world.

Meanwhile, Russia has sought to assert its influence over wide areas of the Arctic.

U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

The U.S. Department of Defense operates the remote

Pituffik Space Base in northwestern Greenland, which was built after the U.S. and Denmark signed the Defense of Greenland Treaty in 1951. It supports operations for the U.S. and NATO. Greenland also guards part of what is known as the GIUK (Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom) Gap, where NATO monitors Russian naval movements in the North Atlantic.

RARE EARTH MINERALS

Greenland is a rich source of the so-called rare earth minerals that are a key component of smartphones, batteries and other high-tech gadgets that are expected to power the world's economy in the coming decades. That has attracted the interest of western powers as they try to ease China's dominance of the market for the minerals.

Development of Greenland's mineral resources is challenging because of the island's harsh climate, while strict environmental controls have proved an additional hurdle for potential investors.

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