

Following Trump's threat: European powers send troops to Greenland

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US President Donald Trump's persistent threats to take over Greenland have provoked strong reactions in Europe. After Trump repeatedly asserted his claim to the huge island—which belongs to Denmark as an autonomous territory—in recent days and a Danish-American meeting in Washington ended without a resolution, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany and France have sent military reinforcements to Greenland.

For the time being, only a few soldiers and ships have been sent to explore further options. The mission is justified by the need to allay Trump's concerns that Greenland is not sufficiently protected against Russian and Chinese attacks. In fact, it is intended to deter the US from annexing Greenland by force, even though it would offer little resistance to an American military operation.

The US president has justified his claim to Greenland on the grounds of US national security, among other things. "We need Greenland," he said, "to prevent Russia and China from owning it." He added threateningly that the takeover could be done "the easy way" or "the hard way."

The meeting between the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland with US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, which took place in Washington on Wednesday, did not blow up as previously feared, but it also did not bring the parties any closer together. "We have not succeeded in changing the American position. There is a fundamental difference of opinion," Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen told the press afterwards.

Rasmussen and his Greenlandic colleague Vivian Motzfeldt had made it clear that they are prepared to work closely with the US to turn Greenland into an armed fortress against Russia and China and to exploit the valuable raw materials stored beneath the island and the adjacent Arctic. But the US insists on owning the island itself. A joint working group will discuss further steps.

In Europe, outrage over Trump's claim to Greenland has reached fever pitch. The media and all established parties are up in arms over his threat to forcibly seize territory from a NATO partner. Seven European heads of government—including Friedrich Merz (Germany), Emmanuel Macron (France), Keir Starmer (Great Britain), Giorgia Meloni (Italy) and Donald Tusk (Poland)—signed a joint statement against Trump's annexation plans in early January. They emphasise that the island belongs to the Greenlandic people.

What motivates the European leaders is not concern for international law, and certainly not for the Greenlandic people. The same media and leaders who criticise Trump over Greenland have supported and continue to support his numerous other crimes—from the genocide in Gaza to the bombing of Iran and the attempt to forcibly bring about regime change there. They even welcomed the attack on Venezuela and the kidnapping of President Maduro, which clearly violated international law, even though Trump openly boasted that his goal was to steal Venezuelan oil.

Nor do European governments raise any criticism of the destruction of democracy in the US, the terror of the ICE Gestapo, the instrumentalisation of the judiciary, and the unpunished murder of peaceful citizens such as Renée Nicole Good, even though they are otherwise relentless in condemning human rights violations when it comes to Russia or China. Instead, the European governments are competing to flatter the fascist gangster in the White House.

Even with regard to Greenland, the Europeans' claims are not as clear-cut as they pretend. Although the island belongs to the Kingdom of Denmark under international law, it enjoys a high degree of autonomy. Copenhagen only has a say in foreign policy and defence; the Greenlanders themselves regulate internal affairs. The 2009 Self-Government Act expressly guarantees them the

right to self-determination: they can therefore decide for themselves at any time whether they want to remain part of Denmark or not.

Greenland is also not, as is often claimed, part of the European Union. In 1973, it became a member of the European Community (EC), the predecessor of the EU, as part of Denmark, even though 70 percent of Greenlanders had voted against it. After gaining internal autonomy, Greenland held its own referendum in 1982, in which 53 percent voted in favour of withdrawal, which was completed in 1985. Since then, Greenland has only been associated with the EU as an overseas country or territory.

Greenland's relationship with Denmark, which exploited the island as a colony for over two centuries, is also not as close as the government portrays it to be. Between 1966 and 1991, the Danish government implemented a brutal contraception program on the island to reduce the birth rate. For a quarter of a century, every second woman, including many girls, had an intrauterine device inserted without their knowledge. The Danish government did not apologise for this crime until 2025—six years after Trump first laid claim to Greenland.

Greenland, which has a population of only about 55,000, is dependent on financial support from Denmark. However, at €80 million per year, this support is very modest. It is therefore quite possible that Trump will try to bring Greenland under his control with an “offer they cannot refuse”—a combination of threats, blackmail and incentives. This is likely to be the subject of the negotiations agreed upon by the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland with Vance and Rubio.

The Europeans are not concerned with justice and self-determination in Greenland; rather, they fear losing out in the ruthless struggle for raw materials, markets and profits that is once again defining the relationship between the imperialist powers. They fear that Trump will break up NATO before they are strong enough to wage wars on their own. That is why they are rearming on a scale not seen since Hitler, and reintroducing conscription to recruit cannon fodder for the next war.

The conflict over Greenland is a convenient excuse to close political ranks and stifle resistance to rearmament and war. All parties in the Bundestag—from the Left Party to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD)—are in agreement on the Greenland issue. All three opposition parties stand behind the government.

Left Party leader Jan van Aken demanded: “Not a single millimetre of Greenland will go to the US.” He called on the government to “make it clear who calls the shots.”

Trump's behaviour reminds him of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, said van Aken: “Everyone criticised it at the time, then turned away and carried on as if nothing had happened.” If there is “no clear statement from Germany, from Friedrich Merz,” said the Left Party leader, the US will continue to do the same.

For Green Party leader Felix Banaszak, this is not enough. He accused the Left Party of talking about US “state terrorism” but failing to answer the question of what “Germany and the European Union actually want to do to survive in a changed world order.” What is needed, he said, is “European sovereignty, European resilience, European strength.” This also includes greater defence capabilities.

For the AfD, which maintains close ties to Trump's MAGA movement and Vice President Vance, German interests also take precedence in the case of Greenland. Party leader Alice Weidel accused Trump of “violating a basic campaign promise—namely, not to interfere in other countries.” Co-party leader Tino Chrupalla accused Trump of using “Wild West methods.” It is clear, he said, “that the end does not always justify the means.”

No one should be carried away by this war propaganda under the guise of “defending Greenland.” Not only Trump, but also Merz, Macron, Starmer and Meloni are preparing new wars to defend imperialist interests in a world where only the law of the strongest applies.

The answer to Trump's annexation plans is not European military strength, but the mobilisation of the international working class against war and capitalism. The workers of Europe and the US are allies in this struggle.



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