Danish parliament unanimously approves expanded US military presence in Greenland

Jordan Shilton
29 November 2026

Deputies voted by 109 to 0 in the Folketing (Danish parliament) last week to approve an updated version of a 1951 bilateral agreement with the United States granting Washington the right to massively expand its military presence on Greenland.

The new deal has been widely praised in the international media for diffusing US President Donald Trump's repeated threats to seize control of the island. But it represents another stage in escalating antagonisms between the imperialist and major powers, and increases the danger of war in the Arctic.

Trump announced the agreement in September at the White House with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Greenland's Prime Minister, Jens-Frederik Nielsen. It permits Washington to use Greenland as a base of operations for waging war against its main rivals, including through an expanded military presence, substantial influence over economic activity, and potential preferential access to large quantities of critical minerals.

The deal permits the US to "modernize and expand" its presence at Pituffik Space Base, formerly known as Thule, and establish new military outposts at two locations in the southwest and east of the island. The US also secured free overflight, overland, and underwater passage, including in Greenland's territorial waters. The agreement restricts investments in key economic areas, including resource extraction, to NATO and European Union (EU) members, or NATO partners.

Denmark and Greenland acceded to US imperialism's preparations for nuclear war, giving their approval to the use of Greenland as part of Washington's ballistic missile defence shield, which has the mad goal of making a nuclear war "winnable." The text noted "the Parties' shared interest in allowing the United States to have military access to the territory of Greenland to the extent necessary to defend the North Atlantic Treaty area, Greenland, and the American continent, including through establishment of a Golden Dome defense system."

The militarisation of the Arctic island is necessary, according to the agreement, because of "the security challenges in the Arctic and the High North posed by adversaries'" and "increased military activity and growing strategic interest in the region." It adds that "the security situation in the Arctic is changing and that more efforts are needed to ensure security there in the future."

As a result, "The Parties support a stronger NATO engagement in the Arctic, including as regards planning, presence, exercises, and joint intelligence gathering."

Trump's "America first" agenda aims to consolidate US hegemony over the governments, supply chains, and raw materials of the Western Hemisphere, from Greenland to Argentina, to establish the economic and military foundations for world war, above all against China. The aggressive nature of this agenda is shown by Trump's threats to make Canada the 51st state, the invasion of Venezuela and abduction of President Nicolas Maduro, and the push for regime change in Cuba.

The Arctic is a zone of increased conflict between the US, European imperialist powers, Canadian imperialism, and Russia and China. Melting ice due to climate change is opening new trade routes that could significantly shorten transit times to Asia. Climate change is also exposing energy-rich deposits previously deemed inaccessible to capitalist exploitation. American imperialism wants to dominate all of this, at the expense of Russia and its erstwhile European allies.

The conflict over Greenland is just one expression of the breakdown of Transatlantic relations, which has accelerated dramatically since Trump returned to the White House. While Trump has pursued efforts to reach an accommodation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the European powers have recklessly escalated the war on Russia in Ukraine. The war is now rapidly expanding into the Baltic and threatens to trigger a nuclear exchange.

Despite its small size, Denmark is a significant player in this process. It is among the highest providers of financial and military assistance to Ukraine per head of population. Just one day after the Folketing passed the Greenland agreement, Denmark's domestic intelligence agency (PET) accused Russia of plotting the assassination of a Ukrainian rapper scheduled to perform in the country and expelled a Russian diplomat.

The European imperialists, led by Germany and France, exploited the bitter dispute between Washington and Copenhagen over Greenland to considerably accelerate the militarisation of the Arctic. Under the auspices of NATO, the

© World Socialist Web Site

Arctic Sentry mission was launched, allowing an expanded presence of troops and equipment. Germany established agreements with Iceland for naval and air activity in the North Atlantic, while military manoeuvres in northern Norway and Finland near the Russian border involving British, German and other NATO members have been intensified. When the Greenland agreement refers to increased NATO activity in the Arctic, it is by no means true that all NATO members are pursuing compatible goals.

In October, one month after Trump unveiled the plan to boost America's military presence in Greenland, the European Union (EU) unveiled an updated Arctic strategy. Its aims include, "Strengthening security and resilience in the Arctic to improve preparedness, protect critical infrastructure and strengthen Europe's ability to operate in Arctic conditions," and "building an economically secure Arctic through the new EU polar research hub and by reinforcing the European Polar Coordination Office." An EU Commission press release declared, "The Arctic is changing fast. It is warming nearly four times faster than the global average, affecting ecosystems, changing livelihoods and communities. New shipping routes and uncovering resources are reshaping [the] Arctic's security and economic landscape, resulting in increasing geopolitical tensions, strategic competition and military activity."

The main concern of the Danish ruling class was to preserve Copenhagen's position as an Arctic power, even at the expense of facilitating US imperialism's plans for nuclear war. Throughout the Cold War, Washington conducted large-scale military operations on Greenland. Thule Air Base served as a key radar station for spying on the Soviet Union and a store for nuclear warheads. Denmark agreed to all this following the 1951 defence agreement.

The latest agreement strengthens American imperialism's war-fighting capabilities. An attempt is made in the text to cover this over with cynical phrases about the right of Greenland to self-determination, an absurdity given that US warplanes, ships, and troops have free movement across its territory, an effective veto over wide swathes of its economic policy, and have made it a target in the rapidly escalating third world war by pledging to use it as a base for nuclear-capable ballistic missiles.

The agreement preamble lauds "the long history of cooperation between the Parties based on their deep respect for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as the more than eighty years of close defense cooperation between them, which has contributed to strengthening the security and stability of the United States, Greenland, and the rest of the North Atlantic Treaty area."

What could be more outrageous than Trump, the man who oversaw the assassination of Iran's head of state, Ayatollah Khamenei, and his family, and the bombing of a girls' school killing over 150 on the first day of the war of extermination against Iran in February, being presented as a defender of the "rule of law!" Perhaps the suggestion that American imperialism, which has waged uninterrupted wars of aggression over the past 35 years throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, and is ruled at home by a financial oligarchy that backs Trump's drive to erect a fascist dictatorship, also protects "democracy and human rights."

This pro-war propaganda was wholeheartedly endorsed by the Danish government, a coalition of Social Democrats, Socialist People's Party, Social Liberals, and Moderates, and all opposition parties. This includes the pseudo-left Red-Green Alliance (RGA), known as the Unity List in Danish.

The RGA's spokesperson for foreign and defence affairs, Trine Pertou Mach gave a speech at the November 12 session of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee where the agreement was debated, expressing surprise that the US had "suddenly" become an opponent, threatening to take Greenland by force. Mach praised Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen for unleashing Denmark's "super weapon" of diplomacy, before continuing, "It is of course clear that for a party like mine, the Unity List, an agreement expanding the American military presence in Greenland is not something that we can celebrate with cake. Nor that the US will have an influence over investment in Greenland, and we are fundamentally sceptical about the ongoing militarisation of the Arctic."

However, Mach concluded that because the agreement declared for Greenland's "self-determination" and the slogan, "Nothing about Greenland without Greenland… the Unity List supports the proposed motion."

Opposition to imperialist war and the militarisation of the Arctic can go forward only through the independent political mobilisation of the working class on both sides of the Atlantic against capitalism. Workers in Denmark, throughout Europe, and in the US can put an end to the war plans of the ruling classes by fighting to turn the mass protests breaking out against austerity, the impossible cost of living, and worsening social conditions to a socialist and internationalist programme to end war and the capitalist system that gives rise to it.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site