



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

Is Trump bluffing in the Greenland case?



US President Donald Trump has achieved one of his goals very quickly. That is why he has launched the rather shocking idea that the USA should take over Greenland.

The alarm bell that rang in Europe on this occasion was necessary for Trump to test how far the Europeans are prepared to go regarding their ambitions for security sovereignty.

Danish PM Mette Frederiksen **visited** the most important European partners very soon after Trump's statements and actions in relation to Greenland and received from them what she had come for—confirmation that there will be no change to the borders of sovereign states in Europe.

"The clear message from friends in the Nordic countries and Europe, and also outside Europe, is that there must be respect for territories and the sovereignty of states. This is crucial for the international community we have built together since the Second World War," **said** Frederiksen after talks with the Nordic leaders as well as French President Emmanuel Macron, outgoing German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte.

While Mette Frederiksen was on a European tour, her government announced that it would invest just over USD 2 billion in security facilities in the Arctic, which includes Greenland as an autonomous territory within Denmark.

This is a massive allocation and represents almost a third of Denmark's total aid to Ukraine (around EUR 7 billion) over the last three years of the Russian invasion.

Parallel with Ukraine

If Trump's Greenland story was just a test for the Europeans, they solved it quite quickly and with a shared voice. Apart from welcoming Trump's new mandate with the concern that he will continue his retreat from the security partnership in Europe, European leaders

quickly agreed to reject the American president's ideas on Greenland.

"The principle of the inviolability of borders applies to every country, regardless of whether it lies to the east of us or the west, and every state must keep to it, regardless of whether it is a small country or a very powerful state," is the **view** of outgoing German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, which is shared by other European leaders.

They clearly refer to the defence of Ukrainian sovereignty, about which they are not divided, so they apply the same principle to the case of Greenland, which is within the international jurisdiction of Denmark.

Trump's rehashing of the old story has a purpose

The new US president included Greenland in the shopping basket along with Panama and Canada when he launched his expansionist plans at the beginning of his term.

On the one hand, he continued his story from last term, when, in 2019, he was also in favour of the American takeover, including the purchase of Greenland from Denmark. Then he even abruptly cancelled his visit to Denmark due to Mette Frederiksen's remark that she had no interest in talking to Trump about selling the island.

However, Trump's rehashing of the old story has a purpose, even if it serves more to demonstrate a strong start to the new presidential term than to look like a well-developed international strategy.

Passion for territorial expansion

Trump's supporters rejoice at such outpourings of American power because they are reminiscent of the old days when large areas, such as Alaska, were bought for the purpose of territorial expansion.

"In Trump's case, he clearly linked it not just to

new frontiers in, say, science or space. He explicitly linked it to a return to territorial expansionism. And there's not that much territory left to divvy up. But I think he's looking for more of a rallying cry, and he thinks he's found it in the well-worn image of the frontier," Greg Grandin, professor of history at Yale and Pulitzer Prize-winner, **told** *The New Yorker*.

The total takeover of Greenland for reasons of US national security makes little sense in practice

Finally, the total takeover of Greenland for reasons of US national security makes little sense in practice. This autonomous territory still fulfils this function on the basis of the 1951 agreement, under which the USA has effective security control over this part of the North Atlantic via the Pituffik base in north-western Greenland.

The US military has a permanent presence at this strategic base, which is located on the shortest flight route between Europe and North America and has a ballistic missile early warning system.

A means of pressuring the Europeans

The entire Arctic has become a scene of economic and security tension, especially with the increased involvement of Russia and China. However, the takeover of Greenland by the US, despite the opposition of the Danes, Greenlanders, and Europeans, would not provide a particularly new quality to the US positions in the region.

The Chinese "threat" to exploit the island's rich mineral resources never materialised. Six years ago, for example, there was an intention by Chinese companies to invest USD 550 million in the expansion of two airports on the island, but they abandoned it. There is simply no Chinese **investment** in Greenland.



The takeover of Greenland by the US would not provide a particularly new quality to the US positions in the region - Greenland, radar and satellite installation

"Greenland becomes a pawn in Trump's interest in Arctic geopolitics. At the same time, in a US geopolitical perspective, Greenland's strategic or economic value should not be overestimated. It is a long way from Nuuk to Russia, and even further to China," **said** Andreas Østhagen, a senior fellow at The Arctic Institute.

President Trump probably won't mind if his inflammatory and repetitive story about buying Greenland is silenced for a while, like his bluff.

However, it also serves the function of allowing him to reactivate it at any time within the next four years, if necessary, as a means of pressure on his partners in Europe and NATO.

"Europe-watchers should expect Trump and his team to get hooked on this idea of acquiring Greenland. That means it will not only be a source of transatlantic contention for the next four years but could also be used as an attempted bargaining tool in Trump's economic confrontation with Europe," **said** Rachel Rizzo, an expert on transatlantic relations at The Atlantic Council.