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# Greenland and Denmark say sovereignty 'red line' after latest Trump remarks

European leaders say territorial integrity must be respected after Trump claims 'total access' to Arctic island.

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NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and US President Donald Trump meet at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Wednesday, January 21 [Jonathan Ernst/Reuters]

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"I don't know what there is in the agreement, or the deal, about my country," Nielsen said.

"We are ready to discuss a lot of things, and we are ready to negotiate a better partnership and so on. But sovereignty is a red line," he added, when asked about reports that Trump was seeking control of areas around US military bases in Greenland as part of a wider deal.

"We cannot cross the red lines. We have to respect our territorial integrity. We have to respect international law and sovereignty."

In recent weeks, Trump has ramped up his threats to seize Greenland – a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark – claiming it is needed to defend US national security interests and prevent inroads by China or Russia in the Arctic region.

The US president's push has plunged US-European relations to their lowest point in decades and prompted fears for the survival of NATO.

Earlier on Thursday, Trump said in an interview with Fox Business Network on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, that the "framework" for a future deal involving Greenland and the wider Arctic would give the US "total access".

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But Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen also said discussions about Denmark's sovereignty were off the table. "It cannot be changed," she said.

She told reporters in Brussels that Denmark was open to discussing a 1951 pact with the US, "but it has to be in the framework of us as a sovereign state."

"It is still a difficult and serious situation, but progress has also been made in the sense that we have now got things where they need to be. Namely, that we can discuss how we promote common security in the Arctic region," Frederiksen said.

## Threat of tariffs

The uncertainty around the purported framework comes a day after Trump unexpectedly dropped his threat to impose 10 percent tariffs on European countries opposed to his bid to [take control of Greenland](#) and ruled out the use of force to seize the island.

Trump also said there could be a deal that satisfies his desire for a "Golden Dome" missile defence programme, a \$175bn system that will put US weapons in space for the first time, and access to critical minerals while blocking what he says are Russia and China's ambitions in the Arctic.

But the US president offered few details on the talks.

Rutte, the NATO chief, told the Reuters news agency that the framework agreement would require NATO countries to swiftly ramp up security efforts in the Arctic to ward off threats from Russia and China.

"We will come together in NATO with our senior commanders to work out what is necessary," Rutte told Reuters. "I have no doubt we can do this quite fast. Certainly, I would hope for 2026; I hope even early in 2026."

Mineral exploitation on the resource-rich island had not been discussed in the meeting with Trump, Rutte said, adding that negotiations on the issue would continue between the US, Denmark and Greenland itself.

NATO spokesperson Allison Hart said on Thursday that Rutte "did not propose any compromise to sovereignty during his meeting with President Trump".

She added that talks between Denmark, Greenland and the US would continue, aimed at "ensuring that Russia and China never gain a foothold – economically or militarily – in Greenland".

Frederiksen, the Danish prime minister, also said Denmark wanted to continue engaging in constructive dialogue with allies on strengthening security in the Arctic, including the US Golden Dome programme, "provided that this is done with respect for our territorial integrity".

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“We support talks between Denmark, Greenland [and] the United States on the basis of these principles” aiming for closer cooperation, Merz said in Davos.

“It is good news that we are making steps into that right direction. I welcome President Trump’s remarks from last night – this is the right way to go.”

Speaking as EU leaders were reportedly set to discuss reviewing their ties with Washington at an emergency summit on Thursday, Merz stressed the need for European NATO countries to do more to secure the Arctic region, describing it as “a common transatlantic interest”.

“We will protect Denmark, Greenland, [and] the north from the threat posed by Russia,” he said.

“We will uphold the principles on which the transatlantic partnership is founded, namely sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

Despite Trump’s sudden about-face on his tariff threats, European governments have remained wary of another change of mind by a US president who is increasingly seen as a bully that Europe needs to stand up to, observers say.

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