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U.S. President Trump Intent On Acquiring Greenland Despite Risking Fallout With Europe

Prepared by Tal Shair Directorate of Intelligence, 20 January 2026

U.S. President Trump views acquiring Greenland as a critical national security priority, aimed at bolstering Arctic dominance amid escalating competition with Russia and China. Acquiring the island would secure vital military positioning for missile defense, surveillance, and naval operations, while granting access to untapped rare earth minerals essential for defense technologies and the green energy transition. This move, while straining NATO alliances, is framed as essential to prevent adversarial encroachment in a rapidly thawing Arctic region, potentially reshaping global power dynamics.

- President Trump has emphasized that without U.S. acquisition, Russia or China could exploit Greenland's vulnerabilities, citing increased adversarial naval presence around the island. When asked how far he was willing to go to acquire Greenland, Trump stated "You will find out".
- Greenland's location between North America and Europe positions it as a key gateway for monitoring Russian and Chinese military activities in the Arctic, where melting ice is opening new shipping routes that could reduce Asia-Europe transit times significantly compared to the Suez Canal. The U.S. already maintains Thule Air Base there for early warning systems, but full control would enable expanded air and space operations.
- The push includes economic leverage, such as proposed 10% tariffs on European allies opposing the deal, highlighting tensions within NATO as Trump argues Denmark lacks the capacity to defend the territory adequately against great power threats.





Europe Unified In Its Resistance and Prepares to Retaliate

Europe's resistance to President Trump's push for U.S. control of Greenland has intensified into a unified transatlantic standoff, with Denmark and key NATO/EU allies rejecting coercion through tariffs and military threats. European leaders view the demands as a direct challenge to sovereignty, international law, and the credibility of NATO itself, prompting joint statements, emergency meetings, protests, and preparations for potential retaliation—risking a broader fracture in alliance relations amid heightened Arctic tensions.

- Denmark's PM Mette Frederiksen has declared "Europe won't be blackmailed" by tariff threats, emphasizing that Greenland "belongs to the Greenlanders" and that any U.S. annexation would end NATO's viability. Massive protests occurred in Nuuk and across Denmark under the "Hands Off Greenland" banner, with thousands demanding respect for self-determination.
- Eight NATO nations (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the UK, Netherlands, Finland) issued a joint statement condemning the proposed 10% tariffs (escalating to 25% by June) as undermining transatlantic relations and risking a "dangerous downward spiral," while reaffirming solidarity with Denmark/Greenland and commitment to Arctic security through NATO rather than unilateral U.S. acquisition.
- European responses include increased multinational military presence in Greenland (e.g., NATO-linked exercises with troops from France, Germany, Norway), diplomatic outreach to U.S. Congress for bipartisan support against annexation, and threats of broader retaliation such as suspending U.S.-EU trade deal progress or even symbolic actions like a potential World Cup boycott.

Conclusion

Based on assessments of Greenland's strategic geography, resource wealth, and the intensifying Arctic rivalry, U.S. acquisition could fortify national security and economic resilience against adversaries like Russia and China. However, it risks fracturing NATO unity and provoking diplomatic fallout with Denmark and Europe, potentially leading to broader alliance realignments if unresolved.

Potential Resources Valued Between \$2-4 trillion

Resource	Estimated Amount (Proven Reserves or Key Deposits)	Broader Geological Potential	Approximate Economic/Strategic Value Notes
Rare Earth Elements (REEs)	1.5 million metric tons (USGS 2025 proven reserves)	36–42 million metric tons (GEUS/inferred, including sub-ice; could rank 2nd globally after China if verified)	Critical for defense, EVs, renewables; high heavy REE concentration (e.g., Tanbreez ~27%) adds premium for magnets/tech. Global REE market ~\$10B+ annually; strategic diversification value from China dominance. Key deposits: Kvanefjeld (~11M tons resources, incl. 370K tons heavy REEs), Tanbreez (~28.2M tons, high heavy REEs).
Uranium	~270,000 tons (associated with REE deposits, e.g., Kvanefjeld)	One of world's largest deposits	High strategic value for nuclear/energy; mining banned since 2021
Graphite	Limited proven; Amitsoq deposit ~8.28 million metric tons	~6 million tons (GEUS estimate)	Essential for batteries; high-purity potential.
Lithium	~235,000 tons (resources)	Moderate potential	Key for batteries; small global share (~0.2%).
Zinc	Significant in northern formations (e.g., Citronen Fjord project, one of world's largest undeveloped)	Large potential in northern geologic belt (>2,500 km)	Base metal; historical interest but undeveloped.
Other Critical Minerals (e.g., Copper, Nickel, Gallium, Tungsten, Vanadium, Platinum Group Metals)	Deposits known but mostly exploration-stage	Moderate to high (25 of 34 EU critical minerals present)	Support electronics, defense, energy transition; underexplored.
Oil & Gas (Hydrocarbons)	No proven reserves	~31 billion barrels oil equivalent	mostly undiscovered/technically recoverable. Exploration halted (2021 moratorium)



Tal Shiar was founded by Nadeem Iqbal, a national security expert who served over 16 years as an intelligence officer for the Department of Defense from 2006-2022. His career began as a counter-insurgency analyst on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force (2006–2013), followed by 9 years as a military analyst in the Syria Branch (2013–2022). He deployed five times in support of combat operations (3× Afghanistan, 2× Iraq), including two rotations with

Special Operations Forces focused on counter-terrorism missions in the CENTCOM theater. Additional roles included rotations to CIA Headquarters as the military analyst for the DNI Middle East Task Force and served as the Syria Country Director for Office of Secretary of Defense Policy (OSDP). He was recognized with Joint Civilian Commendation/Achievement Medals, the NATO Medal(x3), the Secretary of Defense GWOT Medal, DoD Expeditionary Award and the OSD Excellence Award.