

Can a collision between the USA and Europe be avoided?



NATO's secretary general hosts Denmark's defence minister and Greenland's foreign minister

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If the U.S. president was Moscow's Manchurian candidate, he could not do better – he has just imposed [punitive tariffs](#) on the European countries that oppose his Greenland takeover bid. And Donald Trump has achieved what people thought impossible – to unite Europe and unite the kingdom of Denmark.

At the same time, he has done Europe an inestimable service. Both in his [first term of office](#) and last year Trump made plain to Europe they must pay their share of the defence burden. At the NATO summit in The Hague last June America's NATO allies [committed](#) to spending 5 percent of GDP on defence, and it is clearly Russia's invasion of Ukraine that has woken Europe from its lethargy.

Former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger is credited with saying, "Who do I call if I want to speak to Europe?", but now the contours of a defence structure are emerging. EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and her vice-president Kaja Kallas, who is in charge of foreign affairs and security, play a prominent role.

It was Kallas who in March last year presented [Readiness 2030](#), Europe's plan to allocate up to €800 billion on defense spending. Also in March the UK and France [launched a plan](#) to establish a "coalition of the willing" to provide support for a peace plan for Ukraine. The coalition, which consists of 35 countries, is behind [the 20-point peace plan](#) in response to [the 28-point plan](#) concocted by U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff and Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev.

There is a great deal of tension between the USA and Europe, which was accentuated by Vice President JD Vance's [address](#) at the Munich Security Conference in February last year. Here he raised the issue of the challenge from mass migration and lectured on democratic values. In addition, [the National Security Strategy](#) claimed that Europe faced "civilisational erasure", and now Trump's Greenland policy threatens a collision.

In [an extensive interview](#) with the New York Times Trump explained his psychological need for ownership, even at the cost of the NATO alliance. Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen has [warned](#) that if the U.S. chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, "then everything stops, including NATO and thus the security that has been established since the end of the Second World War".

Nevertheless, Trump forges ahead under the mantra of "[national security](#)", although there is the suspicion this is a fig leaf for a real estate deal. As his new envoy for Greenland, Louisiana governor Jeff Landry [admitted](#), "Our president is a business president."

For this reason, U.S. secretary of state Marco Rubio [agreed to meet](#) with the Danish and Greenland foreign ministers, but at the last minute the venue was changed to the White House with JD Vance in charge.

There was no readout of the meeting or a joint press conference, so what we have learned is from [the press conference](#) with the Danish and Greenland ministers and [an interview](#) on Fox News with Danish foreign minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen.

At the press conference, Rasmussen stated the aim was to find a joint way forward to increase Arctic security. Also that it was agreed to form a high-level working group with this aim. Both here and on Fox News Rasmussen emphasized that the territorial integrity of the kingdom of Denmark and the Greenlandic people's right to self-determination must be respected.

Greenland's prime minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen has also [asserted](#) that Greenland does not want to be owned or governed by the USA. If they have to choose here and now, they choose Denmark, NATO and the EU.

Therefore it caused consternation when the White House's press secretary Karoline Leavitt [stated](#) that the two sides agreed to establish a working group to continue to have technical talks on the acquisition of Greenland. Consequently, there have been mass protests in [Nuuk](#), in [Copenhagen](#) and other Danish cities, making common cause against U.S. demands. Several European NATO countries have also despatched [token forces](#) to Greenland in support.

Trump's angry response does not enjoy popular support in the USA, where [YouGov](#) notes 86 percent are opposed to the use of military force to take control of Greenland. In Denmark there has been [a call to cancel](#) the annual celebration of U.S. independence on 4 July.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who earlier was Denmark's prime minister and NATO's secretary general, has told [the Financial Times](#) Trump uses Greenland as "a weapon of mass distraction" from the real threats such as Russia's war in Ukraine. Instead, he suggests Denmark should present Trump with three concrete proposals: a revision of the 1951 defense agreement, an investment agreement, and a compact to prevent Russian and Chinese influence.

Danish defence minister Troels Lund Poulsen and Greenland's foreign minister Vivian Motzfeldt have met with NATO secretary general Mark Rutte and [proposed](#) a NATO mission in Greenland and the Arctic, but whether this is acceptable to "Daddy" remains to be seen.