

U.S. Again Trying to Control Greenland to Dominate Arctic

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In the summer of 2020, the U.S. intends to open its consulate in Greenland, as well as allocate \$12.1 million to strengthen its presence on this island. According to the U.S. ambassador to Denmark, Carla Sands, the North American country will reopen a consulate in the capital city of Nuuk so it can “serve as our primary platform for increasing our daily interaction with the people of Greenland,” which is a territory of Denmark.

According to the [State Department](#), the \$12.1 million tranche is intended for financial aid to Greenland and is supposedly not related to the desire previously expressed by U.S. President Donald Trump to buy the territory. As stated in a Greenland Government (Naalakkersuisut) [press release](#),

“the U.S. is focusing on sectors in Greenland that will benefit the economic development of Greenland, including the mineral industry, tourism and education.”

At the same time, [the State Department said](#)

“that the United States recognizes that Russia has legitimate Arctic interests. It’s an Arctic Council member. It’s cooperated with the United States and other Arctic states in a number of areas, including oil spill response, search and rescue, pollution issues. That work is continuing; it’s ongoing; it’s welcome. We have no concerns about it or no objections to it, and we want it to continue. But we also have concerns about Russia’s military build-up in the Arctic.”

The State Department spokesman also said that the United States does “not accept Beijing’s claims to be a near-Arctic state” and that “its soft power tools generally have a sharp edge.”

Although the U.S. says it is concerned by Russia’s supposed military build-up in the Arctic, it is likely more concerned by China, a country 1,500 kilometers away from the Arctic but considers itself a “near Arctic” state. Washington cannot pass off Russia’s interests and legitimacy in the Arctic and is thus trying to create a “us versus them” situation by highlighting to Moscow that China is not an Arctic state. Although Russia is a militarily powerful state, China is the true economic rival of the U.S., and this is of a greater immediate concern for Washington as there is little chance in the short and medium term of a war between Russia and the U.S. Although relations are hostile, they are not strong enough to eventuate in a military conflict.

However, as the U.S. attempts to use Greenland to counter China and Russian interests in the Arctic, it has not considered Denmark at all, with many political parties across the political spectrum denouncing Washington's moves.

"The U.S. is clearly working to undermine the Kingdom of Denmark," said Rasmus Jarlov, a centre-right MP and former minister. "In the end, they might not be present in Greenland at all if they come with this kind of agenda. It is totally unacceptable."

Karsten Hønge, a leftwing MP, accused the U.S. of trying to drive a wedge between Greenland and Denmark and urged Danish premier Mette Frederiksen to "draw a line in the ice cap."

Since 2008, Greenland has enjoyed strong autonomy, all powers were transferred to Nuuk except foreign and financial policy, and security. The largest island on the planet has enormous geostrategic appeal, which the Trump Administration has desperately wanted to take advantage of. Washington is well aware of the great disadvantage it has in this geostrategic battle against Moscow. Russia not only controls much more Arctic territory than the U.S., it is also much better prepared to exploit and control the Arctic. Paul Zukunft, commander-in-chief of the US Coast Guard between 2014 and 2018, said in 2017 that it will take the U.S. "a generation" to reach Russia's military capabilities in the Arctic.

The U.S., Russia and China are competing over the Arctic because as the icecaps melt, a new maritime route that is emerging will allow ships to pass through, considerably reducing journey times between Europe, North America and East Asia, propelling international trade. In addition, a 2008 study by the U.S. Geology Service indicated that the Arctic potentially has 22% of the world's undiscovered oil and gas reserves, in addition to precious metals and minerals like gold, copper, bauxite, zinc and diamonds.

However, a U.S. control of Greenland will mean a considerable advantage against Russia to gain access to these precious resources and control maritime laneways. Greenland itself has large reserves of gas, oil and fresh water. It is for this reason that Trump believed the purchase of Greenland is a great real estate deal. But the battle goes beyond Greenland, and focuses on the Arctic.

Eight nations are within the Arctic Circle - Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the U.S., and all of them created in 1996 the Arctic Council, a forum in charge of promoting cooperation and coordination. China is however outside of this circle but will still force its way to try and influence the region. Although the U.S. is watchful and suspicious of Russia, a part of it is hoping that Moscow and Washington can coordinate against Chinese influence, while at the same time dominate the region for itself. It is however unlikely that Copenhagen will allow the U.S. to control and/or influence Greenland, despite its attempts, thus severely weakening American hegemony in the Arctic.

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