



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on September 23, 2026

Did Trump Inflate the Greenland Deal — Or Is It Really About Rare Earths?

The United States signed an agreement on Tuesday with Denmark and Greenland, ending a saga that at one point seemed to be heading toward a military clash over the large and highly strategic Arctic island.

President Donald Trump announced the deal in his usual vaunting manner. “This is a dream come true for the United States of America, one that is very important, historic, and special,” he [said](#) on his Truth Social page.

New Deal Same as the Old Deal?

But is this agreement that much different from the pre-existing one?

The 1951 defense pact between the three parties already allowed unlimited U.S. troops on the island and it already allowed the U.S. broad latitude to build and operate bases. However, it made no mention of natural resources, as the new version does. Greenland has a treasure trove of minerals and rare earth metals, and it’s no secret the Trump administration has been looking for ways to become less dependent on China for certain of those.

Some analysts [say](#) Trump’s spectacle is much ado about nothing, with Mises Institute’s Connor O’Keeffe [calling it](#) “a continuation of the status quo.” Others, however, [believe](#) the agreement makes Trump a “master deal-maker.”

First off, this agreement rules out U.S. ownership, which is what U.S. presidents past and present have coveted. In fact, the updated arrangement emphasizes Danish sovereignty and right to self-determination by the people of Greenland. This is certainly a win for Greenlanders and Denmark’s government, who had no intentions of caving in to U.S. pressure. It also seems to have relieved tension caused by Trump’s insistence on ownership, although there is still a lot of friction between the U.S. and Western NATO nations for other reasons.

An “Infinite” Agreement

Among the few real changes are the clauses that commit Greenland to staying in NATO and honoring the rest of the agreement even if it manages to break with Denmark. It also has no expiration date. The president touted the agreement’s permanence. “This is an ‘Infinite Life’ Agreement, there is no end!” he said.

Per the [agreement](#):

This Agreement does not have an end date and may only be amended by mutual consent in



AP Images

Donald Trump (left), Mette Frederiksen (center), and Jens-Frederik Nielsen



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accordance with Article XIII of the 1951 Defense Agreement. In case Greenland exercises its right to self-determination to become independent, the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark and the Government of Greenland shall together ensure that the independent Greenlandic state will (i) agree to remain in NATO, including by applying to become a member if necessary, and (ii) affirmatively assume, as from the date of independence, all of the rights and obligations of the Kingdom of Denmark specified in this Agreement, including any implementation agreements or arrangements between the Parties, as well as the Defense Arrangements.

Ivo Daalder, who was U.S. ambassador to NATO under President Barack Obama, however, points out that this isn't a major upgrade. "The agreement has no end date," he [said](#) on his Substack. "But the 1951 agreement already ran for the life of the North Atlantic Treaty, which has no end date either."

No Non-Nato Bases

Speaking of military arrangement, the agreement officially freezes out non-NATO nations from investing or building military installations on the island. "No state that is not a member of NATO shall be allowed to establish its own manned or unmanned military installations in Greenland nor shall they be allowed a persistent presence of military forces in Greenland, unless otherwise agreed by the Parties," according to the deal. The primary "adversaries" this is targeting are China and Russia, which are viewed as particularly bullish on Arctic dominance.

Daalder, again, is not impressed. "Denmark was never going to let these countries build military facilities in Greenland," he said. "The investment clause is useful, but it is open to all NATO and EU investors and enforced by Greenland's own screening law." The president has argued that Denmark doesn't have the power to deter a potential Chinese or Russian takeover.

Trump says the U.S. will "immediately begin the process of developing a large Military presence in the appropriate part of Greenland." The U.S. operated more than 30 military bases and various installations in the 20th century. That number is down to one now, Pituffik Space Base. The new [deal says](#) the U.S. will establish two additional sites:

The United States shall be allowed to establish an additional Defense Area at Narsarsuaq and Mestersvig in accordance with modalities and technical details to be mutually agreed by the Parties[.]

Narsarsuaq is a U.S. air base during World War II that was deserted in the 1950s. Mestersvig is a military outpost used by Denmark's Sirius Dogsled Patrol unit. The technical details of the bases must be approved by all three parties.

There is also mention of the "establishment of a Golden Dome defense system," an antimissile shield. The president's signature piece of legislation, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, allocated over \$24 billion for a Golden Dome. It looks like Greenland will be integral to its construction.

Hinges on Continued U.S. NATO Involvement

The agreement hinges on NATO membership. It says that all three parties "support a stronger NATO engagement in the Arctic, including as regards planning, presence, exercises, and joint intelligence



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gathering.” It begins by tracing the 1951 agreement to the creation of NATO. So, this agreement hardens U.S. participation in NATO. Perhaps it’s no accident it was signed just as the saber-rattling between Russia and England has become increasingly intense as of late. War is brewing in Europe; if and when it breaks out, the Western oligarch class intends to make sure the U.S. is ensnared.

Access to Natural Resources

Then there’s the part about natural resources. The deal defines “particularly sensitive sectors or activities” as “sectors or activities determined to be particularly sensitive, including but not limited to critical infrastructure and the extraction of resources.” Non-NATO and non-EU nations are not allowed access to “national security or public order *within Particularly Sensitive Sectors or Activities* in the territory of Greenland (including the Territorial Waters), unless agreed between the Parties that the activities of such states or investors would not constitute a threat to national security or public order,” per the agreement.

The verbiage in the agreement doesn’t specifically grant the U.S. extraction rights or rewrite Greenland’s mining law. But some observers have interpreted this part of the deal as an opening of Greenlandic natural resources to the U.S., specifically within a national security framework. And there’s been no shortage of the president framing access to valuable natural resources as just that. In April 2025, the president signed the executive order titled “[President Donald J. Trump Ensures National Security and Economic Resilience Through Section 232 Actions on Processed Critical Minerals and Derivative Products](#).” The essence of the order is to investigate the national security risks associated with U.S. reliance on rare earth minerals.

The Greenland drama is over for now. This is one of the few foreign policy episodes that concluded peacefully.



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