

# Trump Ratchets Up Campaign to Gain Control of Greenland, Panama Canal

*President-elect threatens to hit Denmark with high tariffs if officials there don't cooperate with his bid for Greenland*

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PALM BEACH, Fla.—President-elect [Donald Trump](#) declined to rule out using military or economic coercion to gain control of Greenland and the Panama Canal, ratcheting up [his campaign](#) to expand America's global footprint.

"I'm not going to commit to that now. It might be that you'll have to do something," Trump said during a news conference on Tuesday. He was responding to a question about whether he could offer reassurances that he wouldn't leverage U.S. military and economic might to get his way.

Since winning the election, Trump has repeatedly raised the idea of taking over the Panama Canal from Panama and taking control of Greenland from Denmark. He has also said that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state, in an apparent [effort to troll](#) Justin Trudeau, the country's departing prime minister.

During Tuesday's news conference, Trump threatened to hit Denmark with tariffs "at a very high level" if Danish officials don't cooperate with his bid to take over Greenland. He also questioned whether Denmark has any legal right to control the territory.

"People really don't even know if Denmark has any legal right to it, but if they do, they should give it up, because we need it for national security," Trump said.

Trump and transition officials have offered no details on the president's apparent plans for territorial expansion. Officials in Denmark, Greenland, Canada and Panama have so far rejected his entreaties.

Representatives for Denmark's foreign ministry and Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen didn't respond to requests for comment. Frederiksen said in a Danish television interview on Tuesday that Greenland is not for sale. "Greenland belongs

to the people of Greenland. Our future and fight for independence is our business,” Múte Egede, Greenland’s prime minister, said in a statement.

Greenland is an autonomous Danish territory with self-government and its own parliament. Denmark, a U.S. ally and member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, maintains some control over the island, including its foreign policy. A NATO spokesman declined to comment.

The president-elect said he would consider using economic coercion to convince Canada to become part of the U.S., but he ruled out using military force.

“There isn’t a snowball’s chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States,” Trudeau wrote on X on Tuesday afternoon.

“The sovereignty of our canal is not negotiable,” said Javier Martinez-Acha, Panama’s foreign minister. “It is part of our history of struggle and an irreversible conquest.

Trump has accused Panama of charging American shipping and Naval vessels high fees for passage through the canal.

The canal, through which about 4% of global trade passes, is crucial for the global economy and U.S. consumers. Control of the canal was gradually given back to Panama as a result of a 1977 treaty signed by President Jimmy Carter. Trump pointed to the canal as the reason for Carter’s loss in the 1980 presidential election. Trump also said his administration would change the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America. “What a beautiful name, and it’s appropriate,” he said.

Ahead of Trump’s press conference, Trump’s son Donald Trump Jr. arrived in Greenland—in a Trump-branded plane. The elder Trump wrote in a social-media post, “This is a deal that must happen. MAGA. MAKE GREENLAND GREAT AGAIN!”

The president-elect called into a lunchtime gathering of his son and others in Greenland, saying over a [speaker phone](#), “It’s a very special place. It needs security for itself, but it also needs security very much for the world.”

The younger Trump arrived on Tuesday in Nuuk, Greenland’s capital, with an entourage that included conservative activist Charlie Kirk; James Blair, political director of the 2024 campaign and incoming senior White House adviser; and Sergio Gor, who will oversee the White House Office of Presidential Personnel.

Trump’s national security team has had preliminary discussions about a process by which Trump would direct the State Department to undertake negotiations with the governments of Denmark and Greenland, according to people close to the transition.

That could potentially happen through a Compacts of Free Association agreement—a financial assistance pact similar to what the U.S. currently has with several Pacific Island nations.

Trump's advisers hope to launch potential negotiations once the president-elect takes office, the people said.

But the Trump administration is likely to pursue a negotiation that is more nuanced than a real-estate purchase or sweeping annexation, according to the people close to the transition.

During his first term, Trump [expressed varying levels of interest](#) in purchasing Greenland after hearing from his aides about its abundant resources and geopolitical importance. Greenland is a self-ruling part of the Kingdom of Denmark, and while its government decides on most domestic matters, foreign and security policy is handled by Copenhagen.

When The Wall Street Journal first reported of Trump's interest in the purchase, Greenland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the island wasn't on the market.

Cosmetics billionaire Ronald Lauder discussed the idea with Trump during his first term and offered to serve as a back channel negotiator with the Danish government, the then-president's advisers said at the time.

Lauder, who said ahead of the 2024 election that [Republicans needed a new leader](#), has been rebuilding his relationship with the incoming president, recently giving \$1 million to Trump's inaugural committee. "The status quo isn't working, and President-elect Trump's success is America's success," an aide to Lauder said, confirming the donation.

Trump's Tuesday news conference touched on several other topics.

On the negotiations to release hostages held by Hamas militants in Gaza, Trump said, "If they're not back by the time I get into office, all hell will break out in the Middle East, and it will not be good for Hamas, and it will not be good, frankly, for anyone." Trump has appointed Steve Witkoff, a real-estate executive and close ally, as his envoy to the Middle East. On Wednesday, Witkoff is expected to join talks in Doha for a cease-fire in Gaza in exchange for the releases of hostages held by Hamas.

Four years after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, the president-elect said he is looking at potential pardons for participants charged in the riot, including those charged with violent offenses.

“People that were doing some bad things weren’t prosecuted, and people that didn’t even walk into the building are in jail right now,” he said. “So we’ll be looking at the whole thing, but I’ll be making major pardons.”

The president-elect said he is open to pushing his legislative agenda through Congress with either a single large bill or two separate bills, weighing in on an issue that has been a point of debate for lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Trump is expected to visit Capitol Hill on Wednesday.

“I like one big, beautiful bill,” he said, adding that two bills would move a “little bit quicker.”