



Greenlanders prepare for uncomfortable visit from US vice-president

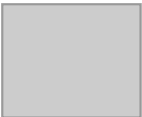
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Greenlanders prepare for uncomfortable visit from US vice-president

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A high-powered delegation of US officials will spend Friday at a remote military base on Greenland in what is being viewed as the latest move by the US as it amplifies its desire to acquire the Danish territory.

The US group includes Vice-President JD Vance and his wife Usha, White House National Security Advisor Michael Waltz, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright and Republican Senator Mike Lee of Utah.

The trip marks the latest twist in what has become a tangled diplomatic journey that began with what was originally billed as a private tour by the US second lady.

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Usha Vance was only supposed to travel to Greenland, a semi-autonomous part of Denmark, with her son to attend cultural events, like a dog-sledding race, and to spend some time visiting the capital of Nuuk.

But the visit quickly attracted scrutiny. While the trip was originally framed as a cultural tour, the scale of the security preparations made it clear that this was something bigger. Greenlanders made clear they would protest Mrs Vance's presence.

The visit raised eyebrows in light of President Donald Trump's repeated comments that he would like to annex mineral-rich Greenland, which he says is critical for US security.

Then when it was announced that Waltz, Trump's national security advisor, would join the delegation visiting the island, the people of Greenland and Denmark appeared to grow even more uncomfortable.

The American visits began to look less like a cultural interaction and more like an effort to meddle in the island's internal politics by rallying support for closer ties to the US among the local population – at the expense of Danish sovereignty.

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Greenland's Acting Prime Minister Mute B Egede said it was a "provocation" and "demonstration of power", and asked the international community to step up.

"Just for the record, the government of Greenland has not extended any invitations for any visits, neither private nor official," Egede said.

Ordinary Greenlanders also made their displeasure known, promising that the American delegation would not receive a warm welcome.

In Sisimiut, where the annual dog race is held, the mayor declined to set up a meeting with the second

lady, citing next week's municipal elections as a reason. A silent protest had been planned too, which would have seen locals turn their back on the American visitors – a potentially publicly awkward situation and poor optics for Mrs Vance.

"The US administration could see they were heading for PR catastrophe," political analyst Noa Redington said.

"They were heading for a charm offensive without charm," he said. "With people absolutely not happy to see Usha Vance or any other American politicians."

A mere two days after Usha Vance's trip was announced, the cultural itinerary was dropped, replaced by a single visit to a remote US military installation – Pituffik Space Base. And now, Vice-President Vance would be joining his wife.

Waltz was no longer listed on the itinerary, though he was added again later.

"Leaders in both America and in Denmark, I think, ignored Greenland for far too long," JD Vance said, announcing his visit. "That's been bad for Greenland. It's also been bad for the security of the entire world. We think we can take things in a different direction."

Despite his comments, political leaders in Denmark cautiously welcomed the change of plan, and especially the limiting of the itinerary to just the US base.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said that while the vice-president's presence may increase the formality of the visit, it was actually "masterful spin" which made the US "look like they're escalating when they're actually deescalating."

"I actually think it is very positive that the Americans are cancelling their visit to the Greenlandic community. Then they will instead make a visit to their own base, Pituffik, and we have nothing against that," he said.

Vance is the highest-ranking US official to ever visit Greenland and while the limited scope of the trip has pleased Denmark, the fact that he is going at all underscores the high level of interest the Trump administration has in the island.

The US president himself has continued to reiterate his desire to acquire Greenland for national security reasons, saying on Wednesday that the US will "go as far as we have to go" to accomplish that goal.

According to Michael Williams, a professor of international politics at the University of Ottawa, Trump's focus on Greenland appears to reflect a larger international strategy that involves exerting US influence over key territories within its sphere of geographic influence.

Canada and Greenland, both early targets of interest for the administration, occupy key Arctic waterways that are being contested by other global powers, like Russia and China.

Recent US moves could be viewed as an attempt to gain the upper hand in these strategic North Americans regions.

“You want to amp up the American presence in the north and its control over those northern reaches,” Williams said.

“If you can do that, then you can actually potentially control those northern waters in a much, much more direct way than has ever been necessary before.”

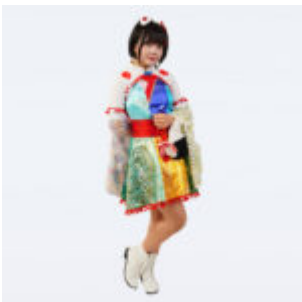
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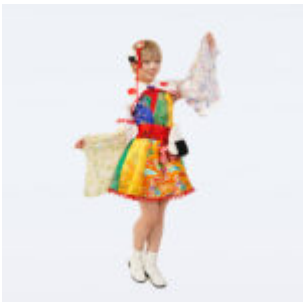
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