

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

092.2 Greenland

SEP 30 1957

I-15,768/7

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: 99-Year Lease of Northern Greenland (Secret)

Reference is made to Memorandum from the Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff, dated 29 May 1956, subject as above.

The views of the Department of State as to the feasibility
of this action are set forth in a letter from Assistant
Secretary of State Elbrick, a copy of which is inclosed for
your information and appropriate action.

(Signed) Mansfield D. Sprague

Inclosure

(Asst Sec/State ltr 9/13/57,
Copy 1 Series B, w/enclosure)

Prep: ISA/FMRA/Col Chapman/nla/19 Sep 57
2A-874, ext 54871

cc (w/encl) Dist: 1,2,3 - Chmn, JCS, w/encl Cy 1, Ser B. Rec. #B-42437
4 - PJBD w/encl Cy 2, Ser B.
5 - ISA Legal, w/encl Cy 3, Ser B.
6 - Plans, w/encl Cy 4, Ser B.
7 - WH, w/encl Cy 5, Ser B.
8 - Reading
9 - OSD Files w/encl Cy 6, Ser B.
10 - R&C
11 - FMR Comeback
12 - Hold

TOP SECRET

Copy 10 of 12 Copies

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 974362

REPRODUCTION OF THIS DOCUMENT
IN WHOLE OR IN PART IS PROHIBITED
EXCEPT WITH PERMISSION OF THE
ISSUING OFFICE.

I-15,768

(30 Sept 57)

Date 6 FEB 1989
Declassify on OADR
Reviewed by RMC MCM DIV. W.
Reason: DOD 5200.1R, Para 3.2.2

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS)

INTEROFFICE CONTROL SHEET

DATE

19 Sept 57

LOG NUMBER

I-15,768/7

	TO:	INITIAL	FOR					
			INFORMATION	CONCURRENCE	APPROVAL	SIGNATURE	ACTION	DISPOSITION
5	ASSISTANT SEC/DEF (ISA)					5		
	DEPUTY ASD (ISA)							
	DEPUTY ASD (ISA) (MAP)							
	DEPUTY ASD (ISA) (NSC & PLANS)							
4 1/2	MILITARY ADVISOR	B ✓						
	SPECIAL ASSISTANTS TO ASD (ISA)							
	EXECUTIVE OFFICER OASD (ISA)							
4 ✓	DIRECTOR, PLANNING	RE	4					
	DIRECTOR, NSC AFFAIRS							
	DIRECTOR, OCB AFFAIRS							
1	DIRECTOR, SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS				1			
	DIRECTOR, PROGRAMMING AND CONTROL							
	ISA COMPTROLLER							
	REGIONAL DIRECTOR, EUROPE							
	REGIONAL DIRECTOR, FAR EAST							
	REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NESA							
2	REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WH	5	2					
3	LEGAL ADVISOR	ML	3					
6	RECORDS AND CONTROL OASD (ISA)							6

SUBJECT

99-Year Lease of Northern Greenland

ORIGINATOR AND EXTENSION

Colonel J. W. Chapman, 2A-874, Ext 54871
Foreign Military Rights Affairs

REMARKS

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff in a memorandum of 29 May 1956 recommended that (1) the United States purchase Greenland, or (2) the United States lease Greenland for a long term of years, or (3) the United States negotiate an agreement for long term use of selected base areas in Greenland. (TAB A)

This memorandum was forwarded to State by Assistant Secretary Gray for a recommendation as to the political feasibility of the proposals of the Joint Chiefs. (TAB B)

Assistant Secretary Elbrick has now replied (TAB C) stating that the first two alternatives are not politically feasible and that the third is in effect already accomplished under the Defense of Greenland Agreement of 1951, which remains in force for the life of NATO, and that any attempt to secure a longer term might be met with suspicion and distrust and thus might be counterproductive as regards any additional facilities or areas which we may require in the more immediate future.

A memorandum has been prepared transmitting the Department of State's comments to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Recommend that the attached memorandum (at signature tab) be signed and dispatched.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 974362

REPRODUCTION OF THIS DOCUMENT
IN WHOLE OR IN PART IS PROHIBITED
EXCEPT WITH PERMISSION OF THE
ISSUING OFFICE

F. J. Chesarek
F. J. CHESAREK
Colonel, USA
Deputy Director, Office of
Special International Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

WASHINGTON



In reply refer to
EUR:BNA

September 13 1957

TOP SECRET

Dear Mr. Sprague:

I refer to the letter of July 16, 1956 from Mr. Gordon Gray addressed to the Secretary of State, which asked the views of the Department on the political feasibility of certain recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggest that the United States purchase Greenland, or obtain a long term lease for all of Greenland, or negotiate an agreement for long term use of selected base areas in Greenland. This letter will serve to formalize earlier oral comments on the political feasibility of these recommendations.

It is the view of the Department of State that the purchase of Greenland by the U.S. is not a politically feasible proposal at this time, or for the foreseeable future. The circumstances of Danish political life are such, particularly the fact that the Danish constitution promulgated on June 5, 1953 formally made Greenland an integral part of the Kingdom of Denmark with a status equal constitutionally to that of any other part of the Kingdom, that a proposal by the U.S. to the Danes to purchase Greenland could well be regarded as an insult by the Danes and could be seriously damaging to U.S.-Danish relations. Indeed even the knowledge that some responsible officials of the U.S. Government were seriously considering making such a proposal might well be damaging to U.S.-Danish relations.

The

The Honorable
Mansfield D. Sprague,
Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA),
Department of Defense.

TOP SECRET

Authority to reproduce
6 copies from Mr. Wm. Kerrigan,
D/State, EUR/BNA 9/19/57.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 974362

215768/7

092-2 K.M. Anderson

13 APR 1957

Date	4 6 FEB 1989
Declassify on	OADR
Reviewed by	RSC MGT DIV, WHS
Reason:	DOD 5200.1R, Para 202 c

The reasons for such a strong potential reaction to an offer to purchase Greenland are the following:

The Danish people and Danish Government have a strong emotional attachment to Greenland. Greenland is the last remnant overseas of a great Danish empire of the past whose domain has been shrinking throughout the past 500 years, and the Danes take pride in their humane and orderly paternalistic administration of Greenland and its native inhabitants. The Dane regards the Greenlander as part Eskimo, part Scandinavian, and as a sort of half brother. For these reasons, and in view of changing conditions of commerce and administration in Greenland itself, the Danish Government included the change in Greenland's status in the constitutional reform in 1953 which passed the Danish Parliament by an overwhelming majority and was approved by popular vote prior to promulgation on June 5, 1953.

The potential danger to Danish-American relations involved in attempting to lease any portion of Greenland would seem to be hardly less serious than those involved in trying to buy it. The danger would flow from internal Danish politics. Denmark has taken its place in western defense through NATO tardily, reluctantly and hesitantly. There is a strong, vocal sector of the population (which cuts across party lines) that would welcome the political capital to be made from an offer to lease portions of Greenland, as an invasion of Danish sovereignty, an ultimate and final involvement of Denmark with the U.S. on a bilateral basis, and the subjugation of Denmark to U.S. interests. Since Danish Governments are either minority governments or uneasy coalitions, handling a supercharged issue such as the sale or lease of an integral part of Denmark would involve political risks too grave for precariously seated Governments like the present one to risk willingly. Moreover, since the Danish Government has quickly and willingly met - without exception - every major U.S. request for rights to occupy territory and conduct investigations in Greenland it is likely that the Danish Government would

regard

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 974362

TOP SECRET

- 3 -

regard with suspicion and fear of our ultimate aims any expressed desire on our part to revise an agreement that has worked so satisfactorily for the United States. In this connection, the possible advantages of a lease arrangement over our present arrangements are not clear to the Department. It would be helpful to know more precisely how a lease arrangement would be considered to be more advantageous than the present arrangement.

Thus, the Department of State considers that for a wide variety of reasons an offer to purchase or to lease Greenland - or portions of it - would not advance the interests of the U.S. Among these reasons are, from the Danish point of view, constitutional considerations, national prestige, internal politics, fear of U.S. motives, and a sense of duty to the native population.

The views of our former Ambassador to Denmark on the JCS proposals were solicited. Mr. Coe's reply, which is set out in an attachment, covers certain points not fully dealt with in this letter.

Sincerely yours,


C. Burke Elbrick
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure:

Views of Ambassador Coe
on JCS Memorandum.

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 974362

TOP SECRET

VIEWS OF AMBASSADOR COE ON JOINT CHIEF OF STAFF MEMORANDUM

"However, our considered judgment is that not only would either of these courses be politically unfeasible in the extreme but that merely to propose them would be counterproductive, jeopardizing both our present position and future requirements. The third alternative (to lease a portion of Greenland) would of course be somewhat less unfeasible, but its success would, in our opinion, be highly doubtful and the net benefits, over the present arrangement, minimal.

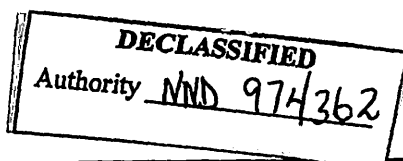
"The Danish attitude toward any such proposals would, we believe, be determined by the following (1) historical, prestige and emotional factors, (2) economic aspects, and (3) political consideration.

"1) As you know, the history of modern Denmark is a history of gradual loss of territory -- southern Sweden, Norway, Schleswig-Holstein, the Virgin Islands, Iceland. Except for the Faroes (which despite its headaches Denmark is anxious to keep), Greenland is the only real estate the Danes have left outside of these Islands. The money they receive for the Virgin Islands has long since been spent and the benefits untraceable and there is still some feeling that the deal should never have been made. Resentment of course still lingers over the Icelandic affair. Against this background, the Danes would most decidedly not take kindly to the prospect of separation of any other portion of the national patrimony.

Moreover, there is a special historical attachment to Greenland itself. Since the reestablishment of its regular contact with the Western World by Hans Egede in 1721, people from Denmark have taken the lead in exploring it, and some of its explorers are counted among the most distinguished of Danish subjects. All Danish school children are given extensive instruction concerning Greenland and the libraries are full of studies about its people, language, background, flora and fauna, resources, etc. Many distinguished Danish scholars have won their academic spurs in Greenland.

"As

TOP SECRET



I 15768/7

TOP SECRET

- 2 -

"As late as 1933 Denmark successfully fought Norway in the Court of International Justice at The Hague when the latter laid claim to a part of the island. The new Constitution of 1953 changed the status of Greenland from a non self-governing territory to an integral part of Denmark, and, on the basis of this, the Danes made a strong and successful effort at the UN to remove it from those territories over which the UN, under the Charter, exercises special interest and rights of surveillance.

"Moreover, the Danes have a feeling of protectiveness and responsibility toward the Greenlanders. They have taken on a "white man's burden" of bringing the natives from the stone age to the atomic age and are trying to do a creditable job. The Greenlanders are still shielded from direct and free commercial intercourse and contact with the world and, as you know, the Danes have been most anxious to prevent any contact between the Americans and the natives. They take pride in their civilizing mission and would not want to sell or rent these 25,000 people to Uncle Sam.

"Thus, although the average Dane has never seen the area and its problems do not impinge daily upon their consciousness, the above historical and prestige factors create a strong attachment to Greenland which would arouse deep emotions if the prospect of its alienation were raised.

"2) Although the economic value of Greenland has yet to be proved, there are strong economic factors also working against Danish agreement to any sale or lease or, indeed, long-term tenure of large areas. There are no natural resources in this country. Everything it produces outside of its agricultural production - and even some of that - must be imported, processed and exported. This means dependence on others. Denmark's only hope for exploiting indigenous resources at a profit for ages ahead rests in Greenland. Considerable excitement was generated here when lead deposits were discovered and they are rumored to be of fabulous value - even though thus far disappointing. For the second year in a row Danish scientists have been exploring for uranium in Greenland with so far indifferent success. However, Danish hope is undiminished that Greenland will prove to be a fabulous source of uranium and that the Danish future will thus be assured in the atomic age. Plans are reportedly under way to continue and expand current efforts to discover other minerals and sub-surface

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 974362

TOP SECRET

- 3 -

surface wealth, and I believe that the Danes will continue until they have examined minutely every accessible square mile for any useable resources.

"Moreover, Greenland is obviously an area of great future importance in aviation. It lies closer to the Pole than any other territory. Both the Government and SAS, which has pioneered polar flights, are very much aware of this and for economic, as well as prestige reasons, would be unwilling to cede rights to territory which gives them such a large measure of polar control.

"Other economic interests also play a part. Considerable effort is being made, for example, by the Royal Greenland Trade Department to develop fishing as a commercially profitable enterprise. Greenland cod, halibut, salmon and shrimps are of excellent quality and are beginning to come on the international market. More and more freezing plants are being built in Greenland. Danish construction companies (principally the very powerful Danish Arctic Contractors) which look for further business on the island would also join in pressing the Government to reject any arrangement abridging their possibilities.

"3) From a political point of view, both domestic and international, similarly strong factors operate to deter any Danish government from agreeing to such a deal. In this legislative dominated, perpetual minority type of government, the party in power shrinks from any step which is controversial. Any major move invites an opposition that can easily result in upsetting the constantly weak and precarious alignment of forces that keeps the administration in power. This is the sort of issue which is made to order for opposition politicians. It is an understatement to say that such proposal regarding the sale or lease of Greenland would bring a cataclysmic storm about the government's head and that any party taking responsibility for it would almost surely be thrown out.

"Merely to make such a proposal would jeopardize our future requirements in Greenland and I can think of few things more vital to our security than the extension of the DEW line. The Danes, their worst fears confirmed as to our ultimate

intentions,

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 974362

TOP SECRET

- 4 -

intentions, would then view our every move in Greenland with the gravest suspicion and would be most disinclined to grant future requests for any extension of our facilities. The repercussions would also be felt in the Danish-American relations in other fields.

"All of the above factors would operate, but of course with diminished force, in the case of JSC's third alternative of an agreement for a long term tenure of selected base areas. However, the real advantages of this over our present arrangement are not clear to me. The Agreement of 1951 provides for the designation of defense areas, unlimited in number or size, and gives us adequate rights therein. By its terms it is to remain in force for the duration of NAT, which itself is in effect of indefinite duration. Moreover, in my view the two conditions which made it possible to conclude the 1951 Agreement were the Korean war and the existence of NATO. I think it most unlikely therefore that the Danes would agree to a revised arrangement unrelated to NATO's duration except under conditions of crisis. ..."

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 974362