News



A boat navigates around a portion of an iceberg near Nuuk, Greenland, in this undated photo provided by Fr. Tomaž Majcen, a Conventual Franciscan, and the only Catholic parish priest serving in Greenland. Majcen says talks about a U.S. takeover are being met with concern, fear and "a quiet strength" by residents. (OSV News/Fr. Tomaž Majcen)

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The Trump administration's stated plans to acquire Greenland for the U.S. — either through purchase from Denmark or by military means — are being met with concern, sometimes fear and "a quiet strength" by residents, the Arctic island's only Catholic parish priest told OSV News.

"People talk about it in shops, at work, and even after Mass," said Fr. Tomaž Majcen, a Conventual Franciscan and pastor of Christ the King Church in Greenland's capital, Nuuk.

The Slovenian-born Majcen and two other Franciscan friars make up the Conventual Franciscan Mission in Denmark, part of the order's Province of St. Jerome in Croatia.

In 2023, the three Franciscans took over pastoral care in Greenland — home to some 500 Catholics — at the request of Bishop Czeslaw Kozon of Copenhagen, where the mission also serves two parishes.



Fr. Tomaž Majcen, a Conventual Franciscan, and the only Catholic parish priest serving in Greenland, is seen with several of his parishioners at Christ the King Church in Nuuk, Greenland. Father Majcen says talks about a U.S. takeover are being met with concern, fear and "a quiet strength" by residents. (OSV News/Fr. Tomaž Majcen)

In a Jan. 6 email to OSV News, Majcen said, "Most Greenlanders feel strongly about who they are and about their right to decide their own future."

He added, "The fact that such a large majority does not want to become part of the United States says a lot."

Trump's long-signaled interest in acquiring Greenland as a "national security priority" was formally confirmed by the White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt in a Jan. 6 statement. It also said, "The President and his team are discussing a range of options to pursue this important foreign policy goal, and of course, utilizing the U.S. Military is always an option at the Commander in Chief's disposal."

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The White House statement came after Denmark, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on Greenland declaring that "security in the Arctic must be achieved collectively," and that "Greenland belongs to its people," with only Denmark and Greenland having the right to decide on matters concerning them.

Fears of U.S. willingness to move on Greenland — already home to the Pituffik Space Base for some 70 years under an agreement with Denmark, a NATO ally — have increased in Europe following the Jan. 3 U.S. unilateral military intervention in Venezuela.

Some 56,000 people — a majority of them Inuit — live in semiautonomous Greenland, which along with the Faroe Islands and the European nation of Denmark forms the Kingdom of Denmark. The world's largest island gained self-rule from Denmark in 1979, and Greenland governs most of its domestic affairs, with Denmark overseeing foreign and defense policy.



The northern lights are seen over the city of Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, in this undated photo provided by Fr. Tomaž Majcen, a Conventual Franciscan, and the only Catholic parish priest serving in Greenland. (OSV News/Fr. Tomaž Majcen)

In 2009, the Greenland Self-Government Act established islanders' right to declare independence from Denmark. According to Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, "most Greenlanders support eventual independence, though economic reliance on Danish subsidies complicates this goal."

Majcen told OSV News that the unfolding situation regarding Greenland highlights the urgent pastoral mission of the church. He said people in Greenland have a "quiet strength."

"People are worried, but they are also very clear: this is our land, our culture, our home," he said.

"As a priest, I see how political uncertainty affects people's hearts. It creates anxiety, especially about identity and the future of children and families," he explained. "Our pastoral work today includes listening more, comforting more, and helping people name their fears."

And, he said, "The Church must be a place of peace and hope. We must stand for human dignity, for the rights of the Inuit people, and for dialogue instead of threats.

"Above all, we pray — for wisdom for leaders, for peace between nations, and for the strength of our community," said Majcen. "In tense times like these, the Church's role as a home for everyone becomes even more important."

"As people of faith, we are called to be peacemakers, especially in uncertain times," said Majcen. "We should remember that we are all God's children, and our true strength comes from compassion and working together for the common good."

He invited the faithful "to pray for peace and respect for sovereignty, and to join us in caring for creation, especially our fragile Arctic environment, which is one of God's most breathtaking but vulnerable masterpieces."