

Greenland Radar Cleared for U.S. Missile Defense

- [Arms Control Today](#)

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The Danish parliament has unanimously approved a Bush administration request to upgrade a radar located in Greenland so it can play a future role in a planned U.S. missile defense system.

The vote came approximately 18 months after the United States asked Denmark for permission to improve its early-warning radar at Thule Air Base. Greenland used to be a Danish colony until 1979 when it received the right to self-government. Denmark retained responsibility, however, for the island's defense and foreign policies.

Although the proposal sparked some debate in Denmark and Greenland, 101 Danish lawmakers voted May 27 in favor of the move. Ten parliamentarians from two left-wing parties abstained, and 68 legislators were absent.

Officials from the U.S. and Danish governments, as well as Greenland's Home Rule government, plan to codify an agreement covering the radar overhaul later this summer. The agreement will permit the Pentagon to make the Thule radar more capable of guiding U.S. missile interceptors toward ballistic missile warheads traveling through space. Currently, the radar is tasked with spotting launches of foreign ballistic missiles, but not accurately tracking and pinpointing the flight trajectories of the missiles and their payloads.

The United States already received permission from the British government to carry out similar work on the Fylingdales radar in the United Kingdom. (See ACT, March 2003.) The Fylingdales radar is expected to be operational before the end of 2005, while the Thule radar will not be ready until at least 2006.

The two radars are intended to help the United States track and intercept ballistic missiles launched from the Middle East. No country in that region currently possesses a ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States.

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