

1968 Thule Air Base B-52 Crash - Aftermath - 'Thulegate' Political Scandal

'Thulegate' Political Scandal

Denmark’s nuclear-free zone policy originated in 1957, when the coalition government decided in the lead-up to the Paris NATO summit not to stockpile nuclear weapons on its soil in peacetime. The presence of the bomber in Greenland airspace in 1968 therefore triggered public suspicions and accusations that the policy was being violated. The nature of the "Hard Head" missions was suppressed at the time of the accident; the Danish and American governments claimed the bomber was not on a routine mission over Greenland and that it diverted there because of a one-off emergency. US documents declassified in the 1990s contradicted this view, and resulted in a 1995 Danish political scandal known as "Thulegate".

The Danish parliament commissioned a report from the Danish Institute of International Affairs (DUPI) to determine the history of U.S. nuclear overflights of Greenland and the role of Thule Air Base in this regard. When the two-volume work was published on January 17, 1997 it confirmed that the nuclear-armed flights over Greenland were recurrent but that the United States had acted in good faith. The report blamed Danish Prime Minister H. C. Hansen for introducing ambiguity in the Danish–U.S. security agreement: he was not asked about, nor did he mention, the official Danish nuclear policy when meeting with the United States ambassador in 1957 to discuss Thule Air Base. Hansen followed up the discussion with an infamous letter pointing out that the issue of "supplies of munition of a special kind" was not raised during the discussion, but that he had nothing further to add. In doing so, the report concluded, he tacitly gave the United States the go-ahead to store nuclear weapons at Thule.

The report also confirmed that the U.S. stockpiled nuclear weapons in Greenland until 1965, contradicting assurances by Danish foreign minister Niels Helveg Petersen that the weapons were in Greenland's airspace, but never on the ground. The DUPI report also revealed details of Project Iceworm, a hitherto secret United States Army plan to store up to 600 nuclear missiles under the Greenland ice cap.

Read more about this topic: [1968 Thule Air Base B-52 Crash, Aftermath](#)

Famous quotes containing the words *political* and/or *scandal*:

“ It has now become the doctrine of a large clan of politicians that *political* honesty is unnecessary, slow, subversive of a man’s interests, and incompatible with quick onward movement.”

—[Anthony Trollope](#) (1815–1882)

“ There’s no *scandal* like rags, nor any crime so shameful as poverty.”

—[George Farquhar](#) (1678–1707)

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