

GREENLAND GRAB

The wind howled, the visceral screech of a wounded beast screaming across the Greenland ice sheet, a ceaseless roar swallowing the sound of any other living entity. Not that there were many living entities competing for survival on the frozen plateau; the serrated ice and deep snowdrifts driving anything with a pulse into deep hibernation or death. But below the ice sheet, far below the ice sheet, life *could* exist. And exist comfortably. Buried beneath the permafrost hundreds of feet below the howls of the arctic storms, an altogether different environment existed.

A former Cold War station, known to the very few in the know, as SIGMA 1.

Officially, it had been decommissioned in the late 1980s, shut up like a Cape Cod summer house in the fall, but in the case of SIGMA 1, for the rest of eternity. *Unofficially*, however, small teams of maintenance staff had been secretly inserted into the facility every two years under the guise of environmental protection. Ostensibly checking for contaminants that might have leaked into the earth around the site, but in reality, ensuring the life support and communication functions of the site remained functional and updated. The maintenance teams never really questioned why their government went to such lengths to keep their activities a secret but just assumed, like employees in any other job that paid well for discretion, that their bosses must have had good reasons. Or, at the very least, *some* reasons . . .

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Lieutenant Jack Rainer narrowed his eyes, squinting into the green glow of the SDV's sonar screen. His six-man team of SEALs sat silent, cramped together in the confines of the SEAL Delivery Vehicle, cruising beneath the ice-choked fjords of western Greenland. Above them, a frozen wasteland. Ahead of them, the Insertion Point. For Jack, getting out of the 'torpedo coffin' and onto land, no matter how cold or brutal, couldn't come quick enough. A training accident with an SDV in the Philippines a year earlier had nearly taken the life of Jack and three of his team, the memory of the incident refreshed anew every time he found himself working with one of the mini submarines. His thoughts were interrupted by a transmission over the comms.

'*Five minutes.*' The clipped voice of Chief Petty Officer Alvarez.

Rainer acknowledged and adjusted his rebreather. He felt his pulse quicken at the thought of the imminent mission and he and his men's role in it. As usual, they were ghosts in enemy territory. Although, technically, Denmark wasn't an enemy but an ally. *Technically*. But this operation wasn't about killing Danish soldiers or citizens of Greenland. It was about *protecting* the people of Greenland. Harboring them from the malign interests of China and Russia. A pre-emptive measure to establish such protection before something happened. And because Denmark was too weak to provide that protection, the US, as usual, had to step up and own it, save these poor Greenlanders or whatever the hell they called themselves, from the might of Chinese or Russian interference. And the only way to do that was to, well, just do it. The White House wasn't fucking around anymore; if Denmark couldn't do the job, Uncle Sam

would. It would be nothing short of negligence to allow China or Russia to control a giant slab of Arctic territory right next to the continental US. America had been left with no choice as far as Jack was concerned.

Thinking about choice, his brow furrowed at the memory of two senior DEVGRU officers being handcuffed, arrested, and bundled into the grey DoD vans after they refused to have any role in the operation. At the time, it had seemed like the biggest deal, but even after that, more arrests had taken place of officers and enlisted alike who refused to support the Op. And while the Op itself was classified and secret, the leaks to the media had informed the public that something was going to happen with Greenland, and protests had erupted throughout the US overnight. National Guard units deployed to every major city, the nightly coverage of violence reminding Jack of those black and white news reports from back in the day that he'd watched in history class showing the public dissent with the Vietnam War. All of this had pushed the timeframe of the Op to the immediate rather than near, future. Getting boots on the ground before the Europeans could strengthen what minimal resources they had on the island. Shaking his head, Jack turned his attention back to the matter at hand. He wasn't a politician. He was a Navy SEAL. And a SEAL did what his country asked of him. And that's what he, and his team, intended to do. The comms came alive as the SDV approached the Insertion Point, the team reacting to the imminent deployment, equipment checked and adjusted in preparation.

Surfacing through a hole cut days earlier by a disguised NOAA icebreaker, Jack's HUD, his Heads Up Display, synced with the other elements of Task Force VALHALLA. Green squares and triangles overlaid on a 3D topographical map flickered into view. CAG, or Delta Force as most people still referred to them, had completed their HALO insertion and were now boots on the ground inland from the SEAL's insertion. Studying the real-time mapping, Jack nodded when he saw that 10th Special Forces were already setting up the Forward Operating Base, codenamed FOB Odin. A stream of text appeared at the lower left of Jack's screen confirming that the CIA's Ground Branch element had successfully jammed local comms and spoofed radar signatures in anticipation. Jack sent a message of his own, informing the Task Force of his team's arrival and imminent boots on the ground. With a final check that the team were ready, Lt Jack Rainer prepared to lead his men into the first Navy SEAL deployment against a NATO ally on the ice sheets of Greenland's frozen tundra.

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A few hundred metres inland, Major Dan Voss of Delta Force crouched behind a ridge of fractured glacial rock, both for cover from view and respite from the elements. Despite his thermal clothing, the wind was razor sharp and he felt the cold penetrating deep into his bones, colder than he'd ever felt in his life. Hell, the pre-mission rehearsals in Alaska hadn't been as cold as this. Even the HALO insertion had been pretty hairy; the winds scattering his squadron across a wide expanse of the ice, though thankfully, with no serious injuries. But they were here now, on the ground, eyes on Target, invisible in their white camouflage suits as they studied the target before them. Every so often, Voss spoke softly into his comms, acknowledging the updates from the other teams in the squadron or giving updates of his own. All teams now had eyes-on SIGMA 1. To all intents and purposes, it looked dead, devoid of life: A large concrete dome, half-buried in snow, ringed by outdated radar dishes. An

ancient perimeter fence with broken lighting swaying in the crazy winds at irregular intervals. The old security entrance a throwback to the analogue era, barriers and concrete chicanes, snagged garbage flapping in the wind along the fence line. Nothing moving other than the detritus that had been driven over the frozen plain by the relentless winds. But thermal scans told another story:

Heat signatures.

Barely visible but definitely there. On a warmer night they might even have gone unnoticed but with the sub-zero temperatures, they were more readily identifiable to Major Voss and his men. Occasionally, any doubts the Delta squadron may have had about the nature of the signatures were allayed by subtle movements from the coloured blobs displayed through their NODs. Someone was down there.

SIGMA 1 was being guarded.

As Voss continued his observation of the target, he couldn't help but wonder why, whoever it was that he was watching, went to such pains to conceal themselves. And to be taking cover in the open, between buildings rather than in a defensive position. Danish military? Greenland militia? In truth, it mattered little to him. His mission was crystal clear: Secure overwatch of SIGMA 1 to enable SEAL team breach and clearance of target. Then move to hold SIGMA 1 in anticipation of occupying military personnel. Liaise and collaborate with 10th Special Forces at FOB Odin for mutual support. Simple. Well, it seemed simple enough but Voss had been around long enough to know that rarely, if ever, was anything as simple as it first appeared. As if reading his mind, his comms came to life with a hushed message from Sergeant King.

'I'm calling four Tangos, southeast of Building 1, between Building 1 and Building 2. No further details.'

Voss nodded. 'Yeah, we have them too. Very little movement, looks like they may have dug in or be in foxholes.'

'Copy that, my thoughts exactly.'

Voss narrowed his eyes and studied the progress of the SEALs through his NODs. They were forming up at the designated LOD, the Line of Departure before they began their approach to Target. Voss cleared his throat and spoke into his comms.

'Rainer, you've got company. Four Tangos southeast of Building 1, between Building 1 and Building 2.'

A moment later the SEAL Team leader replied.

'Copy, Voss. We see them. Moving now to breach.'

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Captain Aksel Neilsen watched the spectral figures moving across the display of his thermal scanner and could tell by their actions that this was the breach team making

their way to enter SIGMA 1. Intelligence had already informed Neilsen that they were a Tier 1 SEAL Team and that they'd be approaching from the ice-locked sea. The auto-targeting facet of his scanner had already locked on to the approaching SEALs and each individual had an ever-changing range and bearing beside them as they made their approach. Close enough now that specific details were becoming clearer; weapon systems, equipment, even individual gait. Aksel gave a slow nod when he saw that three of the six-man team had detached themselves and were advancing towards the gap between buildings 1 and 2, no doubt acting on the heat signatures they had seen on their approach. It made sense; neutralise any threat on the approach instead of leaving it behind you when you breached. He wondered what the three SEALs were expecting to find. Probably Danish military or Greenland Militia. That's what *he* would expect in their position. What they wouldn't be expecting as they approached the lumps of life semi-concealed in the snow were dogs.

Sled dogs.

Curled up and taking shelter from the vicious winds. The wind pushing all scents away from them, giving the animals no forewarning of the SEAL's presence. Which is what Aksel and his squadron of Danish special forces were relying on. A combined unit of elite Jaeger Corps and the legendary Sirius Patrol, Aksel's squadron boasted seasoned operators with years of experience in the harsh Greenland environment. A burst of static in his earpiece preceded a transmission from Bravo Three Zero – the British SAS squadron concealed on the western flank of SIGMA 1.

'Delta One Zero, Bravo Three Zero. Three Tangos inbound on LASSIE.'

Aksel replied, unused to relying on such ancient radio tech, but which was necessary to evade the comms blanket that the Americans deployed.

'Roger, we also have three Tangos, proceeding to Breach, 20 metres and closing.'

The British voice acknowledged.

'Roger that Delta One Zero. Our three Tangos are 10 metres and closing . . . 5 metres . . . Standby, Standby . . .'

Even though Aksel knew that he wouldn't hear anything from the SAS as they engaged the three-man element of the SEAL team, he strained his ears, old habits dying hard and all that. The fact that the SAS weapons were non-lethal, designed to incapacitate rather than wound or kill the SEALs, meant there would be no gunshots or explosions to carry on the wind. But, in the event the non-lethal plan didn't work, the SAS operators were also equipped with the standard weapon systems more usual to such an action. Aksel hoped that the situation wouldn't escalate to that.

Nobody wanted to be remembered as the guy who started World War Three.

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Sergeant John Corbett watched as the stream of electric-charged projectiles struck their targets, multiple stubby darts striking and burying their barbed heads into the

bodies of the three-man SEAL team. The SAS Team Leader gave a small nod to himself as he watched the twitching group of men collapse to the ground, limbs locking in crazed positions as the high voltage charges surged through their bodies. Around the SEALs, white wraiths exploded from the snow; John's Grab Team erupting from the ground, their thermal-shielding blankets billowing and whipped away by the wind. In seconds, his guys had immobilised and secured the SEALs with restraints and hoods without a live round being fired. Around them, the now disturbed sled dogs were howling and barking, leaping and straining against the chains tethering them to the frozen ground. Sergeant Corbett was relieved more than he thought he would be, that his men hadn't needed to escalate to live ammunition.

But now his guys were in the open, that might change in a hurry. He knew from the Intel spooks that Delta, and the Green Berets of 10th Special Forces supporting the SEALs would now see John's SAS operators through their NODs. Turning his own thermal scanner towards the Danish contingent of the Task Force, he hoped Aksel and his guys were as on-point as they had been during mission rehearsals. Watching the multi-coloured people-shapes on his screen, John Corbett sent the codeword that he had secured his objective.

'Delta One Zero, Bravo Three Zero. JACKPOT on LASSIE.'

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Dan Voss strained his eyes to make sure he was seeing what he thought he was seeing. *What the actual fuck . . .* His comms came alive with equally surprised and profane statements as his squadron's Team Leaders reacted to what was happening to the SEALs. As Voss watched in amazement, the second element of Rainer's unit, the Breach team, were, well, were *taken down* in the same manner as the first. Voss growled into his comms.

'*Can anybody tell me what the fuck just happened here?*'

The long delay in answering told him all he needed to know. His men were as much in the dark as he was. Shaking his head, he tried to establish communication with 10th Special Forces but after half a dozen attempts, gave up and switched to the CIA paramilitaries.

Nothing.

Voss began to get a bad feeling about this. Comms SNAFUs were not unusual by any means but not getting anyone? He checked his own system and was content it was operating fine. Trying his own guys again, Voss gritted his teeth in frustration as only bursts of static now seemed to be coming through. The Delta squadron commander was faced with a dilemma. Something had happened to Rainer and his team that indicated a hostile force *in situ*. That meant immediate action was required. But with no comms between either his squadron or the mutual support, it was impossible to coordinate. Voss shook his head.

Time to go old school.

Grabbing his weapon, he slung his pack on his shoulders and stood, buffeted hard and almost blown over by the howling wind. Lowering his head, he staggered against the gale, legs ploughing through the deepening snow as he made his way towards Sergeant King's position using the compass feature on his Sat Watch to direct him. Each element of the squadron had updated their position onto their devices in the event that comms went down and Voss followed the bearing and direction towards King's location. The snow battered him, his goggles constantly needing wiping clear, but his hood and protective face mask shielded him from the worst of the driving snow. He didn't believe that comms had just dropped at the exact moment the SEALs had been engaged. In his experience, it spoke of an orchestrated attack timed to perfection. But he and his men had contingencies for such eventualities, no plan ever surviving contact with the enemy and all that. An old lesson but an ever relevant one. Ploughing through the snowdrifts, Voss gave an angry shake of his head at the memory of the Pentagon's directive to get the operation underway with minimal prep time. The urgency of the directive robbing Voss and the other special forces under JSOC command the luxury of in-depth planning and preparation. But they'd all been here before in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and plenty of other shitholes. Having to deploy at short notice with minimal mission prep time. So, not an unusual situation to be in. Yet . . . something about this one just didn't feel right. Maybe it was the fact that only his squadron had conducted the pre mission prep in Alaska, the SEALs, Green Berets, and Agency spooks opting to carry out their own individual preparations elsewhere due to the rushed timeframe. Hardly ideal when the operation relied upon vital coordination between the units. Which would have been fine if they had good comms. However . . .

Looking up, Voss saw intermittent flashing and recognised the infra-red Firefly, directing him to King's position. King and his guys must have picked Voss up on their thermals and were guiding him in. Lowering his head once again, Voss ploughed through the knee-deep snow and made his way into King's position. He saw King's men had taken cover behind a low ridge of rock and he followed the IR Firefly until he reached Sergeant King where Voss shouldered off his pack and took a knee beside King, leaning in close as he shouted to be heard over the wind.

'You see the SEALs?'

King replied in his curt, New York manner. 'Yep. What the fuck was that?'

Voss shook his head. 'I don't know. Kinda looked like they were grabbed or detained. Doesn't make any sense. Either way, they need our help but my comms are down.'

It was King's turn to shake his head. 'All comms are down Voss. Can't raise anyone in the Task Force. I've called the other teams in so we can brief face-to-face.'

Vos nodded and looked around as movement caught his eye. 'Good, looks like they've arrived. Let's get all Team Leaders briefed to move out in 2. Full squadron assault on SIGMA 1 to rescue SEALs and retake initiative. Stay Line Of Sight until communications are reestablished.' He watched as King despatched one of his guys to greet and grab the Team Leaders and Voss waited until the men huddled up next to he and King before repeating his plan. 'Okay, full squadron assault on SIGMA 1. Mission is to rescue SEALs and neutralise enemy presence. Once achieved, hold at

SIGMA 1 until SEALs are reintegrated then support breach and entry. Clear?’ When there were no questions, Voss looked at the digital readout on his watch. ‘Okay, form up behind this ridge, move out in 2 Mikes, Line Of Sight until comms reestablished. Go.’

Two minutes later, Major Dan Voss, veteran officer of CAG or Delta Force as everyone continued to refer to them, led his squadron of special forces operators through a driving blizzard towards SIGMA 1. Despite the freezing cold and driving snow, the action reminded him of a similar operation he’d conducted in Syria around eight years ago, leading a squadron across a rocky plain to assault a large ISIS compound in the dead of the night. That Op had been a great success and as he pushed through the deep snowdrifts towards SIGMA 1, Voss couldn’t see any reason why this one wouldn’t be the same.

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Aksel Neilsen watched the approaching Delta Force squadron while relaying its position to the pilots of the F-16s currently in their holding pattern to the east. The decision to use the older jets for this operation rather than the new F-35s had been based on several factors, the main one being the manoeuvrability and close-combat effectiveness of the older jet but also the suspicion that the Americans might access and control the software in the F-35s if they knew the Danes were deploying these aircraft. Aksel nodded when the lead pilot declared his team were on the run-in to target. Speaking into his comms, Aksel requested his Sirius team acknowledge the information as their role in the operation was about to happen very soon. When the Team Leader acknowledged, Aksel turned his attention back to the approaching American special forces making their way across the snow-covered plateau. Several seconds later the air was filled with a horrendous roar that drowned out even the howling wind. As Aksel watched through his NODs, he saw the middle section of the squadron disappear in an explosion of snow as they were battered by the blast of the shockwave that trailed the low-level jet in its Show Of Force. A brief moment later, a second jet roared just above the heads of the men on the squadron’s left flank, the shockwave scattering the Delta operators like ninepins. The third jet took care of the remaining men on the opposite flank, the shockwave hurling them to the ground. Barely had the roar of the last F-16 dissipated than the first Sirius Patrol section burst from their position of cover behind a low rocky ridge, the high-pitched whine of the snowmobiles reaching Aksel over the howl of the wind. The second Sirius section exploded out of a concealed entrance within SIGMA 1, the dozen snowmobiles speeding towards the incapacitated Americans.

While Aksel watched, the Sirius teams disarmed and restrained the stunned Delta operators. Over the comms, Aksel heard requests for Medics to be ready on the return to SIGMA 1 for minor injuries and concussions. He’d expected as much. The effects of the Show Of Force something Aksel had witnessed several times before in other countries and conflicts. But the Delta guys would be physically strong and robust, so it was unlikely that they would sustain any serious injuries. Their *pride* however, well, that would be another matter. But that was a *them* problem as far as Aksel was concerned, not something that he or his men had to be concerned about. The Sirius Patrol commander confirmed that his objective was secured and requested SAS assistance with taking the detainees to SIGMA 1. Aksel gave his agreement and half

of Bravo Three Zero left their position and made their way towards their Sirius counterparts to assist. Switching to the broader Task Force channel, Aksel swore softly as he listened to the updates from the final element of the operation. It seemed that the SAS Mountain Troop from B Squadron had encountered resistance after the Show Of Force over 10th Special Forces. From what Aksel could make out, some of the Green Berets had managed to take cover during the jets' passes and had been almost unaffected when the SAS soldiers stormed the position. Two dead Green Berets and one dead SAS operator were the result. Although Aksel was disappointed, in reality, deaths and wounds had always been a very real possibility with this operation. As much as the planning and rehearsals had gone to great pains to mitigate against it, with some of the world's best special forces going at it with each other in an extreme environment, the fact that only three soldiers had been killed was nothing, at least as far as Aksel was concerned, short of a miracle. But with that, the operation was all but over. There would be utter confusion on the American side as to what the fuck was going on. Every element of Task Force VALHALLA neutralised with minimal loss of life. A huge contingent of NATO troops had left Iceland an hour ago on dozens of military flights and would be landing soon, briefed and prepped to establish permanent positions in key locations. On the diplomatic front, NATO was already making public the invasion of Greenland by the USA and how it had been successfully repelled by NATO troops with minimal loss of life. Images and footage from NODs and HUDs were being deployed across social media channels, showing elements of the operation and taking control of the narrative before the White House could counter with its traditional 'fake news' whitewash.

Switching back to his Group channel, Aksel requested a SITREP from the team Leaders and acknowledged them when they came through. All detainees were now secured in SIGMA 1, the injured being attended to by the medics. A message from command informed him that representatives from Greenland's autonomous government would be arriving imminently to conduct a live press conference where they would have the invading American soldiers on camera. The soldier in Aksel didn't like this; one didn't subject prisoners of war to propaganda exposure. But as had been pointed out to him by the Task Force Legal Adviser during the Mission Prep, the Americans wouldn't be prisoners of war. They had entered a sovereign country illegally, under arms, and intent on doing harm. In terms of legal classifications, they were criminals and as such, subject to criminal law. That was the message that Greenland wanted the world to see. That their peaceful island was not a conflict zone or a hotbed of terrorism that could possibly have justified such an incursion. That these soldiers had carried out crimes against Greenland and as such, would be answerable for them. In reality, both Denmark and Greenland had already planned to repatriate the captured Americans, but not before their activities had been broadcast to the world.

When they'd Red-Teamed the White House response to the failed invasion, the diplomats and senior military officers had identified a likely doubling-down of effort. That the administration would simply flood Greenland with thousands more troops to secure their objective. And they wouldn't balk at going to war with NATO troops on the ground. They'd simply create an alternative narrative that would shift the optics to that of defending Greenland against a NATO occupation. But, by making public the entire fiasco while flooding the ground with their own troops, the assessment had changed to one of rage and humiliation at the political level. The White House would struggle to come up with any possible justification for a re-run of the operation. The

opposition within Congress and the Senate alone would be enough to derail any appetite for support. And the public protests within the USA would be significant and pile further pressure on the current administration.

Aksel entered the main personnel door of SIGMA 1 and returned a fist bump with one of his Team Leaders as they passed one another. Making his way along a grey, concrete passageway, he gave a nod to one of the guards at the second doorway and the sentry stood aside to let Aksel into the room. As he passed the guard, Aksel saw that every table in the large room was occupied by American soldiers sat around them. No hoods or blindfolds, but with hands and feet in restraints. The white camo suits afforded no real identification as to what units they were from but each man wore the same expression on his face. A mix of anger, shame, and impotence. Aksel had no doubt that most if not all the detainees were weighing up their chances of escape and that, given even the smallest of opportunities, they would take it. But Aksel's men and the SAS soldiers were aware of this and gave the detainees no possible opportunities or even reasons to believe that it could happen. As he walked through the room, he met the glances of the dejected Americans and even recognised a couple of them. This had been expected and even covered during Mission Prep. The special forces community was a small one, even worldwide, and it was inevitable that some of the men sat around these tables had crossed paths with Aksel on training courses or operations in the past. The SAS soldiers were probably experiencing the same thing as they had a very close working relationship with Delta. But the brief had been clear; no engagement of any kind, regardless of how deep the relationship.

As Aksel made his way to the far side of the room where Corbett and the main element of the SAS were gathered, a message came over the comms informing him that the diplomats and Greenland authorities had arrived with the Press contingent. Aksel saw John Corbett turn away from a conversation with his guys and give Aksel a slow nod to show he'd received the same message. The men tasked with guarding the detainees had also heard the message and moved to take up positions that allowed them to better deal with any reaction to the arrival of the diplomats and Press Corps. Aksel knew that the Americans would be unhappy with being addressed and filmed and could already see some of them exchanging knowing glances as they suspected something was about to happen. Aksel pulled a chair up, stood on it and raised his voice to be heard above the hubbub of hushed conversations.

'Okay, enough. Listen to me. In a moment representatives of the Greenland government are coming here to address you. They will have press and camera crews with them.' He held up his hands and shouted louder to be heard over the indignant yells from the detainees. 'What the fuck did you expect? You invaded a peaceful country and were prepared to fight and kill your allies and partners. Not one of you was carrying non-lethal weapons. Not one. You fucking assholes came to steal what wasn't yours and now you're crying because it failed, you've been caught, and the world is going to see your faces.'

A loud shout from one of the tables interrupted Aksel as a burly Green Beret stood to make his point. 'This is against the Geneva Convention you Danish prick.'

Aksel held up his hand and shouted over the cheering and catcalls of support. 'It would be if you were prisoners of war, but you're not. There is no war or even conflict here.'

You're criminals. That's all. Common criminals. All you are entitled to is a trial by jury and a long spell in prison.' He let the words hang in the air as the detainees absorbed their situation. The same Green Beret yelled again.

'There's no way the US is going to stand for that buddy, of that I can really fucking assure you. You got the drop on us tonight, yeah, but the entire might of the American military will be gearing up even as we speak.'

'They're not.'

All heads turned to see who had spoken the quiet words. Aksel nodded to the Danish Ambassador to the USA and indicated for him to continue. The Ambassador unzipped his heavy parka as he walked to the centre of the room and addressed the seated men in his calm yet confident voice. 'NATO and the UN just now received formal assurances from your current administration that there will be no further escalation of this situation. It is over. In return, the Greenland Autonomous Authority, in conjunction with Denmark, has agreed that no charges will be brought against you. You will be boarded on repatriation flights within the hour and handed back to your military chain of command at Hanscom Air Force Base. This has all been agreed with your current administration.'

The Ambassador ran a hand through his hair and sighed before continuing. 'Look, you were doing your job as soldiers, special forces. We understand that. You are embarrassed and ashamed at your failure to achieve your mission and your subsequent capture. We also understand that. But you need to know that this was not your fault. Your mission was compromised before it even began. Individuals within your government, military, and intelligence communities who were horrified with this operation, have been supplying us with every detail. That is why we had non-lethal weapons and made every effort to cause no casualties. I deeply regret the deaths and injuries here today. That is not what we wanted. But Greenland did not want to be invaded and occupied by a foreign force and we were duty bound to ensure that did not happen.' The Ambassador paused and gave another sigh. 'Go home gentlemen. Go home and be with your families and remember the mercy and compassion shown here today which allows you to do that.' With that, the Ambassador turned and made his way back to the group of diplomats and press assembling just inside the door.

There was silence for several seconds, then the diplomats and press corps made their way to the centre of the room. The detainees turned away, ensuring their faces were not caught on camera, which was fine with Aksel. The aim wasn't to identify these men, merely to show the world the truth; that they had tried to invade a country and had been caught. With the situation under control, Aksel made his way out of the room and back towards the entrance. In his fifteen years of operations with Danish Special Forces, tonight had to rank as the weirdest one ever. Deploying on a mission to save a country, not kill the enemy, and avoid World War Three. All while using non-lethal weapons. Taking a deep breath of the frigid Arctic air, Aksel wondered what the real reaction and fallout from tonight's operation was going to be. While the White House might have agreed to call a halt to hostilities in the immediate term, there was no way they were just going to accept this defeat in the long term. And while Aksel didn't know what the eventual response was going to be, the one thing he did know was that there

would be one. And the second thing he knew, as a soldier rather than a diplomat, was that he and his men would, once again, be tip of the spear in the defence against it.

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