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Denmark prepares to claim North Pole

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Denmark will make an official claim to the North Pole, setting the stage for possible tug-of-war with Canada and Russia over the seabed at the top of the world, say reports from Copenhagen.

Citing a leaked draft 10-year Arctic strategy, which wasn't supposed to be made public until next month, Danish media say the country plans to claim five sections of continental shelf: four around the Faeroe Islands and one off Greenland, which would include the pole. Both Greenland and the Faeroes are self-governing Danish territories.

The plan, apparently, contains no exact explanation for Denmark's interest in the area, but the melting of sea ice in recent years could open the door to oil and gas exploration.

The claim will be filed with the United Nations before 2014.

The country, along with Canada and Russia, has been working to map the bottom of the Arctic Ocean, in preparation for making territorial claims.

At issue is whether the seabed is the extension of Eurasia, which would favour Russian claims, or North America, which would help Canada and Denmark establish sovereignty.

The potential dispute, however, may not be as heated as it appears. The three countries have carried out joint scientific missions in the Arctic over the years and are looking to settle the matter through the United Nations.

One Danish media outlet even reported that the Greenland's Prime Minister Kuupik Kleist privately favours an arrangement that would allow the North Pole to remain international.

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