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May 13, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I write regarding your forthcoming meeting with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the White House on May 16, 2022.

This meeting comes at a very opportune time, as Greece continues to demonstrate its leadership in all areas of critical importance to advancing U.S. interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in regard to energy and defense. Furthermore, Greece's support for Ukraine, and synergistic relations with other key U.S. partners in the area, such as Israel and Egypt, demonstrate its positive regional leadership. However, Greece continues to encounter unnecessary challenges to its national sovereignty by fellow NATO member, Turkey.

It is in the United States' best interest for Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean to be politically, economically and socially stable, and for democratic principles to flourish, including adherence to the rule of law. Greece is an immensely valuable link as "a pillar of stability" in the region as several high-level U.S. government officials have noted.

The U.S.-Greece relationship has reached new heights by virtue of an ongoing Strategic Dialogue, where avenues for cooperation among many sectors that include regional cooperation, defense and security, and trade and investment, among others, are plotted for implementation, as well as the upgraded Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA) between Greece and the United States.

Greece is a pivotal and dependable NATO ally to advance U.S. interests and is a frontline state against terrorism. Moreover, Greece is a critical defense partner in the projection of United States interests vis-à-vis North Africa, the Balkans, Middle East, and Black Sea. For its part, Greece further demonstrates its commitment to the Alliance as one of the few NATO members to have traditionally met NATO's minimum standard on defense expenditures; even before Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

More specifically, Greece is home to NSA Souda Bay, on the island of Crete, the most important U.S. military facility in the Mediterranean Sea. Recently, the United States approved an appropriation of \$50 million to be used to upgrade infrastructure at the

NATO naval base in Souda.¹ The Stefanovikio Hellenic Army airbase improves NATO transit capability. In addition, Greece enables a substantial portion of the U.S. Army's 10th Combat Aviation Brigade to enter the European theater through the port of Thessaloniki and to depart through Alexandroupolis, a port in Northern Greece. Alexandroupolis, has recently been referred to as the "Souda of the North" by the Chief of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff, Konstantinos Floros, because it has become an important staging point for the transiting of equipment to Ukraine and Europe's Eastern flank. This is especially important, as Turkey has shut down the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, the chokepoint between the Mediterranean and Black Seas, to military vessels. For its part, Greece has sent two C-130 transport aircraft loaded with military aid, that has included rifles and portable rocket launchers to Ukraine, among other items, in addition to humanitarian aid.

It is evident Greece contributes significantly to U.S. interests. However, it becomes increasingly challenging for Greece to fulfill this important role when it constantly is expending valuable resources to defend itself against aggressive and provocative behavior emanating from a fellow NATO member, Turkey. Turkey's routine challenges to Greece's sovereignty must cease and desist.

- In April, 2022, Turkish F-16's engaged in a barrage of violations of Greece's airspace, including over the Greek islands of Panagia, Oinousses, and Farmakonisi.²

On that day, approximately 163 violations were recorded, of which 43 were flown over populated Greek territory, armed, and in some cases flying at an altitude of only 1,000 feet from the surface!

Turkey has masqueraded its closeness with Russia as an asset, pitching itself as a "mediator" between Russia and Ukraine. However, Turkey is more of a "fence-sitter," rather than a "mediator." Turkey's alleged attempts to intercede between Russia and Ukraine have been fruitless, and it is an attempt to distract from conflicts with its own NATO obligations. Turkey's provocative posture toward Greece is only one of many ways Turkey undermines the NATO alliance. Turkey's use of the Russian S-400 missile defense system, especially in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is especially abominable, given the risks the system poses to NATO assets. Turkey, unlike Greece, has refused to go along with multilateral sanctions against Russia. In fact, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, has openly advertised the country as a haven for Russian oligarchs, and notable Putin-linked Russian businessmen, such as Roman Abramovich, are moving their assets, including superyachts, to Turkey, a serious concern that Secretary of State Blinken should raise with him when they meet this week.³ By contrast, Greece has fully supported EU sanctions against Russia.

A May 11, 2022, article published in the *Wall Street Journal* reported that your "... administration has asked congressional leaders to approve the sale of advanced weapons and other equipment for Turkey's fleet of F-16 jet fighters."⁴ If accurate, this would be the height of strategic malpractice, and violation of United States laws. The United States removed Turkey from the F-35 joint strike fighter program due to the danger of co-locating the F-35 with Turkey's Russian S-400 missile system. In December 2020, President Trump sanctioned Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) as well. Furthermore, the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) stipulates that countries can only use American supplied military equipment for "legitimate self-defense."

- Turkey is in violation of the AECA every time it uses a U.S.-supplied plane to violate Greek airspace.

In addition, Turkey's support of the terrorist group Hamas, including individuals who are specially designated global terrorists, is a blatant violation of the AECA. Violations of the AECA can result in sanctions and suspension of arms sales. As such, it is highly questionable from both a legal and practical perspective how the

¹ <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1183839/greek-pm-to-travel-to-us-with-full-agenda/>

² <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1182163/new-violations-of-greek-airspace-by-turkish-fighters/>

³ <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/26/russian-oligarchs-can-do-business-in-turkey-if-not-against-law-foreign-minister.html>

⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administration-asks-congress-to-approve-new-weapons-deal-with-turkey-11652262674>

United States can transfer equipment to Turkey when there are congressionally-mandated sanctions on the Turkish defense industry, and when Turkey is in violation of existing arms controls laws.

More broadly, Russia's invasion of Ukraine highlights the dangers of irredentism and historical revisionism. Turkey, under the leadership of President Erdogan, seeks to establish itself as the regional hegemon of North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and Caucasus. Just as President Putin wants to reconstitute a neo-Soviet sphere of influence, President Erdogan wants to re-establish a neo-Ottoman sphere of influence. Take the case of Cyprus. Turkey's illegal invasion of Cyprus in 1974 mirrors Russia's current invasion of Ukraine. President Erdogan is currently advocating for a "two-state solution" in Cyprus, a move to permanently partition the island, after almost fifty years of an illegal Turkish military occupation. As such, Mr. President, the United States should not be enabling, through weapons sales, the aspirations of an autocrat whose ambitions threaten regional stability and United States interests.

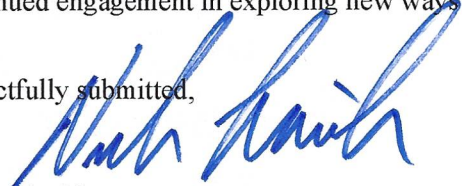
Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has created an urgent need for Europe to get off Russian oil and gas through a diversification of energy sources. Greece is poised to play a fundamental role in Europe's energy security and independence from Russian energy. Greece is quickly becoming an energy hub for Europe, and the transit point for the Southern Gas and Eastern Mediterranean Gas Corridors, both of which contain significant amounts of non-Russian energy. Greece plays a pivotal role in the transit of energy from the Caspian region to Europe via the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, operational since 2020. Greece is leading the expansion of the Southern Gas Corridor into the Balkans through initiatives such as the Gas Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria (IGB), which is projected to be completed this year. In addition, Greece will have a key role in the emergent Eastern Mediterranean Gas Corridor. Proposed pipeline and interconnector projects, as well as Greece's existing Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals, position Greece to be the gateway for Egyptian, Israeli, and Cypriot energy to Europe. By contrast, Turkey promotes Europe's energy dependence on Russia through its Turkstream pipeline.

However, it is important to note that Turkey also threatens Greece's economic development. Turkey exploits its control over the flow of migrants to Europe. Greece has carried the heavy burden of migrant flows to Europe, which has had a detrimental impact upon Greece's economy.

The United States-Greece relationship is a strong and healthy one and your invitation to Prime Minister Mitsotakis underscores the excellent state of relations. The opportunity must be taken during your meeting with Prime Minister Mitsotakis to commit to ensuring Greece's security and economic development, which are being challenged in a multitude of ways by Turkey. Turkey is the perpetrator of instability in the Eastern Mediterranean and broader region which is detrimental to U.S. security interests. Turkey is a failed NATO ally that cozies up to Russia, Iran, and radical Islamist groups, such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. The U.S. must demonstrate strong, unequivocal support of Greece by continuing to strengthen relations across all sectors and by applying the rule of law to Turkey for its illegal actions.

Mr. President, as the United States-Greece relationship continues to flourish, it is important to note this relationship is not only one based on shared interests, but common values, including democratic principles and respect for the rule of law. We look forward to your continued engagement in exploring new ways to advancing the relationship.

Respectfully submitted,



Nick Larigakis
President

CC: Vice President Kamala Harris
Secretary of State Anthony Blinken
Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin
National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan
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