



# GREECE: VALUED ALLY STRATEGIC PARTNER

## Advancing U.S. Interests in the Eastern Mediterranean

Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean combine to form an important geopolitical region to the United States due to the significant energy, commercial and communications resources that transit the region. The discovery of hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean reinforces this position. Further, Greece is a frontline state against terrorism as security threats exist in North Africa, the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, it is in the United States' best interest for the region to be politically, economically, and socially stable, and that democratic principles flourish, including adherence to the rule of law. **Greece is a pivotal ally to advance these interests.**

### Greece Embraces a Commitment to Defense and Security Cooperation with U.S.

- **Defense Agreement:** The United States and Greece signed an extension of an upgraded Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA) in October 2021, addressing the two allies' commitment to address, over a longer term, the security challenges in the region as well as offering more flexibility to deepen cooperation in the defense sector. As a result, the United States will further gain an additional three military bases in Greece (Volos, Litochoro, and the Alexandroupolis).
- **Legislation:** U.S.-Greece Defense and Interparliamentary Partnership Act of 2021 and Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019 further institutionalized the U.S.-Greece defense relationship, as well as the 3+1 alliance between Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and the United States.

### Greece Contributes Significantly to NATO, U.S. Missions

- A NATO ally since 1952, Greece has been only one of few NATO countries to maintain the 2% minimum standard for military expenditures, before Russia's invasion of Ukraine: 3.59% in 2021.<sup>1</sup> This is first—even ahead of the U.S.
- **US NSA Souda Bay, Crete,** successfully implemented joint USN/USAF reconnaissance missions and air refueling support for **Operations Desert Shield/Storm, Enduring Freedom,** and **Iraqi Freedom.**<sup>2</sup>
- **US NSA Souda Bay, Crete,** allows United States Navy vessels—especially aircraft carriers—the ability to dock, make needed repairs and maintenance, and resupply, all within a couple of weeks and without having to return to Naval Station Norfolk .In 2021, the number of U.S. Military Diplomatic Clearances in all of Greece for ship visits totaled 250—a vast majority of them occurring at Souda Bay.
- **US NSA Souda Bay, Crete,** hosts the expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams since 2020, the first U.S. Navy Warship based in Greece in 40 years.

**3.59%\***

Greece is the leading NATO country regarding the ratio of military expenditures to GDP.

### GREECE IS:

**1 of 3 Countries** Allied with the U.S. in Every Major International Conflict of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

*"Greece has been a NATO ally for decades... We work closely together... Souda Bay is one of our most important ports of call in the Mediterranean; in any part of NATO... So they're an excellent ally, all the way through from what they've been working on with the refugees, to the way they support the U.S. Navy operations and the collaboration between our military." - - Then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Oct. 9, 2018*

### US NSA SOUDA BAY

The most prominent and important naval base in the Eastern Mediterranean for NATO and the United States.

- **US NSA Souda Bay, Crete**, serviced 873 ships from the United States, and 898 from NATO countries United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, & Canada, between 2014-2021.
- **Alexandroupolis**: 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. It has already demonstrated its value. In 2021, ten large vessels carrying a total of over 3,100 cargo pieces, including 165 helicopters (33 AH-64 and 132 UH 60 Blackhawk), 30 M1 Abrams, 75 M2 / M3 Bradleys, and 2,000 vehicles of various types, were transported through the port of Alexandroupolis. 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.
- **Alexandroupolis**: The MDCA also envisions the continuation and expansion of activities through the port of Alexandroupolis, which will be strengthened by the important infrastructure projects that have started to be implemented in the area. It will include the modernization of the railway line that will become electric and dual traffic, the connection of the port with the main road axis of Northern Greece, the Egnatia Odos and finally the privatization of the port.
- **NATO Joint-Command HQ**: Thessaloniki hosts a NATO Rapid Deployment Corps combined with its Third Army Corps for two years.
- **Operation Atlantic Resolve**: 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.
- **Afghanistan**: Tens of thousands of aircraft use Greek airspace, including 30,000 allied flights during one, two-year period. **Resolute Support Mission**: In 2018, Greece increased its footprint in Afghanistan within the NATO-led mission. Greece provides advisors to the Afghan Air Force at the Kabul Air Wing.
- **Libya**: 400 U.S. Marines deployed at US NSA Souda Bay were “part of contingency planning to provide the president flexibility on full range of options regarding Libya” along with the amphibious assault ships USS Kearsarge and USS Ponce.<sup>3</sup> Tens of thousands of civilians were also evacuated to Athens.
- **Egypt**: American citizens evacuated to Athens during Arab Spring.
- **Noble Dina Trilateral Exercise**: Held annually between U.S., Greece & Israel.
- **Alexander the Great Exercise**: Large-scale joint exercise of U.S., Greek Marines.
- **Bilateral Training**: Hellenic Special Forces and 7<sup>th</sup>/67<sup>th</sup> U.S. Special Operations Forces joint exercise training in Greece.
- **MQ-9 Reaper Drones**: USAF temporarily operates drones from Greece’s Larisa Air Force Base.
- **Stefanovikio**: The United States’ increased aircraft and soldier involvement at Hellenic Army airbase improves NATO transit capability.
- **NATO Air Policing**: Greece participates in mission over Slovenia, Albania, & North Macedonia.
- **Operation Active Endeavor** and **Ocean Shield**: counterterrorism and counter-piracy missions in the Mediterranean Sea and off the Horn of Africa.
- **Peacekeeping Operations**: Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

## Ukraine

**\$0.26 billion**

Greece ranks 8<sup>th</sup> among countries in military aid commitments to Ukraine  
*(Source: Keil Institute for World Economy)*

Greece has sent two C-130 transport aircraft loaded with military aid that included rifles, portable rocket launchers, air defense missiles and thousands of cartridges to Ukraine, among other items, in addition to humanitarian aid.

## Helping U.S. Support of Ukraine

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.

## America Values Alliance with Greece

**U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken:** *"As the world celebrates the 200th anniversary of Greece's independence, Greece and the United States stand together again as sister democracies – strong advocates for the rule of law, for human rights, deeply committed to ensuring that our governments and our economies actually deliver results, actually deliver opportunities for our people."* – October 14, 2021, Secretary Antony J. Blinken with Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias for the U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue and Signing of the Renewal of the U.S.-Greece Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement

**Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joe Dunford** on the bilateral relationship between U.S., Greece: *"is probably as good as it has been in many, many years"* and added he *"greatly benefited from the perspective of the Greeks."* Dunford said the Greeks *"expressed interest in expanding our access to their bases."* – Sept. 4, 2018 visit to Greece

**Then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis:** *"Today, Greece and the United States share a commitment to ensuring a safe and prosperous world for future generations of Greeks and Americans, and we live this commitment to our growing defense relationship. With increased joint exercises and training, expanded basing cooperation and enhanced defense-industrial partnerships. So thank you for your continued hosting of U.S. forces at Souda Bay, one of the most popular locations for U.S. sailors anywhere in the world. The U.S. recognizes Greece's vital role in maintaining regional security in a difficult neighborhood. Appreciate your perspective on challenges facing NATO's southern flank, and on your leadership in promoting Balkan stability. I commend Greece's strong investments in defense capabilities by not only meeting, but exceeding the NATO's pledge -- exceeding the NATO's -- NATO's Wales pledge of two percent of defense spending. You illustrate your nation's commitment to collective defense."* – October 9, 2018

**Secretary of State Mike Pompeo,** noting the "historic progress" in U.S.-Greece relations: *"Greece has been a critical ally of the United States. Now, more than ever, we are pleased to see that Greece emerges again as a leading force of regional stability in the Eastern Mediterranean. This area is an important strategic border. The U.S. is working to strengthen our relations with stable democracies and democratic allies there. Allies like Greece, Cyprus, and Israel."* – December 13, 2018

**From the Joint U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue Statement on Defense and Security:** *"The United States and Greece discussed common security concerns, such as international terrorism and instability in the Eastern Mediterranean region and reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance their strategic defense and security partnership, which promotes stability and prosperity in the region and contributes to the strength of NATO. The two governments also expressed their desire to modernize and expand their multifaceted defense relationship in order to better meet the needs of both countries and to more effectively address regional and global security challenges, citing recent successes in combined joint training and security exercises, and an increase in our joint activities."* – December 13, 2018

**U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt:** *"The United States looks at Greece not just as an important bilateral partner, but as a pillar of our strategy in the region."* – September 19, 2017

**U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt on NMIOTC:** *"NMIOTC is especially important. It trains our militaries in the skills, interoperability and cooperation at sea that is essential among allied and partner-nations. It reflects Greece's strong naval capability and deeply rooted maritime traditions in a way that helps us to navigate challenges that our forces confront."* – October 19, 2018

**U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt:** *"Our security relationship is not just about hardware. It's about a commitment to long-term partnership, based on shared strategic interests and values that have united our countries now for 200 years."* – This op-ed was originally published in Greek in *To Vima*, April 25, 2021

**Capt. J. Stephen Hoefel, U.S. Navy (ret.), former Commanding Officer at US NSA Souda Bay (2000–2003):** *"I feel strongly about the strategic value of Greece today and in the future... Greece is the finest strategic partner the U.S. could ever have...Greece stands beside it [the United States] even when it hurts [Greece]."* – May 3, 2011, at an AHI Policy Forum

<sup>1</sup> 2021 estimate. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/3/pdf/220331-def-exp-2021-en.PDF](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/3/pdf/220331-def-exp-2021-en.PDF), page 8.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cnic.navy.mil/SoudaBay/About/MissionAndVision/index.htm>

<sup>3</sup> "U.S. troops arrive in Greece in Libya buildup," USA Today as reported by the Associated Press, March 3, 2011

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_114242.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_114242.htm)

## From U.S. and NATO Missions to International Peacekeeping:

*Greece Contributes to American National Security and Interests*



# MILITARY OPERATIONS

**OPERATION** NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Center (NMIOTC)  
**WHERE** Souda Bay Naval Base, Crete  
**APPLICATIONS** Maritime Interdiction Training



NMIOTC opened in 2008. Funded by Greece, NMIOTC provides training for allies and partners of NATO, enabling them to better execute maritime interdiction operations. Greece also lends its maritime expertise which includes extensive experience with commercial shipping and port security.

- **30 percent of global maritime traffic passes through waters adjacent to NMIOTC, including 27 percent of oil shipments, making it an ideal locale.**

NMIOTC is a cutting-edge training center, improving skills, interoperability, and cooperation among naval units through sea training and simulations. Fifty training modules are designed for a whole crew of modern naval vessels from the commanding officer down to the members of the boarding crew.

NMIOTC offers practical training in:

- Container inspection,
- Small arms handling,
- Suspect and small-boat handling,
- Boarding team tactical sweeps,
- Rigid-hull inflatable boat inspection,
- Fast rope insertion, and
- Operations under multiple-threat conditions.

To reach a broader audience, NMIOTC also deploys Mobile Training Teams (MTT) worldwide to share knowledge and expertise with member nations. As a result, NATO forces are better prepared for counter-piracy, counter-WMD proliferation, counter-illegal trafficking, counterterrorism, and enforcing law at sea.

- **In 2015, more than 65 U.S. ships and 1,200 trainees utilized NMIOTC**

**OPERATION** U.S. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Souda Bay  
**WHERE** Souda Bay Naval and Air Base, Crete  
**APPLICATIONS** Operational Support, Forward Logistical Site



U.S. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Souda Bay provides operational support to U.S. and allied and coalition forces deployed within the European Command, Central Command, and African Command's areas of responsibility.

**NSA Souda Bay successfully implemented joint USN/USAF reconnaissance missions and air refueling support for *Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom*, and additional joint and multinational operations.**

**OPERATION** NATO Missile Firing Installation (NAMFI)  
**WHERE** Souda Naval and Air Base, Crete  
**APPLICATIONS** Tactical Firing Range for Air Defense Systems



NAMFI is the only ground-to-air/surface missile firing range in Europe that provides missile training for NATO forces. This missile firing station is equipped with large scale firing systems for practicing the use of surface-to-air missiles (SAM), short-range air defense missiles (SHORADS), surface-to-surface missiles, and other systems.

- **In 2017, 14 U.S. & NATO units utilized NAMFI**

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