



# AHI

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May 8, 2018

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Jens Stoltenberg  
Secretary General  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
Boulevard Leopold III  
1110 Brussels, Belgium

Dear Secretary General Stoltenberg:

Although it is not the standard practice of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) to write to international organizations, the Institute is compelled to convey its strong concern regarding the actions and behavior of NATO member Turkey toward fellow Alliance member countries, and to convey further, the Institute's profound disappointment with NATO's inability to address intra-Alliance conflicts because it lacks a provision or mechanism to deal with such an issue. Turkey's actions are contradictory to NATO's core purpose, which is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members.

Turkey continues to demonstrate it is not a true and dependable NATO ally. As you are well aware, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan threatened United States military forces with an "Ottoman slap" if they continued to partner with Syrian Kurds. Turkey's military campaign against the Kurds in Syria places U.S. troops in Manbij at risk of peril at the hands of a NATO partner. Further, Turkey's \$2.5 billion purchase of four divisions of S-400 surface-to-air missiles from Russia has raised concern among NATO members.

Turkey's antagonistic behavior—or "gunboat diplomacy"—in the Aegean Sea against NATO member Greece, have been taken to new dangerous heights. As you know, Turkish coastguard vessel collided with a stationary Greek coastguard vessel near the Greek island of Imia, on February 12, 2018.

In addition, Turkey continues to violate Greece's airspace. According to press reports, 33 Turkish aircraft have violated Greece's airspace during the first twelve days of February 2018.<sup>1</sup> Further, a Turkish helicopter flew at a low altitude around the perimeter of the inhabited Greek island of Ro at nighttime. This suspicious and provocative behavior on Turkey's part prompted Greece's military to fire warning tracer shots at the helicopter and unnecessarily placed lives in harm's way. Moreover, Turkish fighter jets harassed a Chinook helicopter carrying Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Chief of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff Admiral Evangelos Apostolakis.

- According to the Hellenic National General Staff, in the first quarter of 2018, there have been 351 violations of Greece's sovereignty on the sea and 920 violations of Greece's national airspace.

<sup>1</sup> <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2018/02/13/turkish-forces-violate-greek-airspace-waters/>



Combined with what transpired on the seas, these are very serious and egregious reoccurring incidents that risk placing lives in harm's way and violate international law. They have led U.S. Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt to express concern over the possibility of an "accident" happening over the Aegean. These incidents also cost the Greek government approximately \$400 million a year at a time when Greece endeavors to emerge from an economic crisis. Yet, despite the extra \$400 million annual expense, Greece takes its obligation to NATO seriously. Greece is a top contributor to the defense efforts of NATO (second only to the U.S. by percentage), spending an estimated 2.36% of its GDP on defense in accordance with NATO standards. In addition, Greece just agreed to a \$1.5 billion (U.S. dollars) upgrade for its 85 F-16 fighter jets. Contrast this to Turkey's \$2.5 billion purchase of Russian S-400 missiles.

Furthermore, Turkish warships harassed the surveying vessel of Italian oil company Eni and threatened on February 23, 2018 to sink it in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus. According to press reports, Eni's ship was forced to make maneuvers to avoid a collision after the Italian captain's request to the Turkish vessel to change course went unanswered.<sup>2</sup> This example of Turkish aggression toward a multinational oil company headquartered in NATO-member Italy is egregious and occurred in the EEZ of the Republic of Cyprus—an EU member that has aspired to join NATO's Partnership for Peace, but whose application would be subject to veto by Turkey.

Therefore, the Institute is dismayed with your non-confrontational approach on these intra-Alliance incidents perpetrated by Turkey. In reference to tensions caused by Turkey toward Greece, you stated it is "not an issue for NATO,"<sup>3</sup> thus demonstrating a lack of leadership. You could have at least expressed concern about the possibility of an unfortunate accident or incident occurring—similar to Ambassador Pyatt's statement. Instead, you praised Turkey in an April 16, 2018 tweet, "*Turkey is a valued Ally that makes essential contributions to #NATO operations. NATO stands with Turkey in the fight against terrorism and supports Turkey's security including by deploying air and missile defense systems, AWACS flights and naval patrols.*" How can NATO stand with Turkey when Turkey is taking its so-called "fight against terrorism" against the U.S.-allied Kurds in Syria, placing U.S. troops in Manbij at risk? Moreover, Turkey is complicit in giving rise to ISIS as President Erdogan's government apparently helped arm, sell oil from, and open Turkish territory for use by ISIS.

Clearly, Turkey does not share NATO's core purpose or best interests. Numerous foreign policy and defense policy analysts and journals have called into question Turkey's actions as a NATO ally. It is unbecoming of a NATO member to act in the aggressive and provocative manner as it has toward fellow Alliance-member countries, United States and Greece. We believe it is time for NATO to explore how to ease tensions and address Turkey's intra-Alliance unproductive behavior.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/226092/article/ekathimerini/news/turkish-ships-threaten-to-sink-eni-drill-vessel>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/227673/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-turkish-tension-not-an-issue-for-nato-alliance-chief-says>