



United States Department of State

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

*[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)*

April 7, 2021

Nick Larigakis  
President  
American Hellenic Institute  
1220 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your March 22 letter to Secretary Blinken. The Secretary asked me to respond on his behalf.

The Biden Administration is committed to ensuring stability in the Eastern Mediterranean. We believe the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected and protected. We also hold that disagreements in the region should be resolved peacefully through diplomacy rather than through provocative actions. Our longstanding belief is that resource development in the Eastern Mediterranean should promote cooperation and provide a foundation for durable energy security and economic prosperity throughout the region. The growing partnership among Greece, Israel, and the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) promotes regional stability, peace, and security.

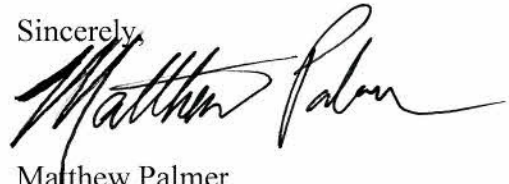
The U.S. relationship with Greece is at an all-time high. As President Biden expressed to Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis during their March 25 phone call, the United States is committed to further deepening our strong bilateral ties in this Greek bicentennial year. Greece is an important NATO Ally and leader in efforts to maintain peace, stability, and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, and Western Balkans. Together, we are working to enhance our defense and security cooperation, counter climate change, create new trade and investment opportunities, expand technology partnerships, and strengthen our educational and cultural ties. Greece also hosts U.S. forces at Naval Support Activity Souda Bay in Crete, where Prime Minister Mitsotakis recently visited the USS Eisenhower aircraft carrier. Souda Bay remains a strategic location for the projection of U.S. power, and U.S. defense cooperation with Greece continues to grow. The 2019 update of the U.S.-Greece Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement deepened the bilateral security relationship and is already paying dividends, as evidenced by the homeporting of the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams at Souda and the use of the Port of Alexandroupolis to facilitate important military exercises in southeastern Europe.

The United States also views the ROC as an important partner for regional stability, security, and prosperity. The United States continues to support a Cypriot-led comprehensive settlement to reunify the island as a bizonal, bicomunal federation, which would benefit all Cypriots as well as the wider region. We welcome the UN Secretary-General's efforts to facilitate the relaunch of political discussions. The status quo is unacceptable, and we hope both sides will approach the talks constructively with openness, flexibility, and a willingness to compromise.

President Biden has promised to call out Turkish behavior that is inconsistent with its commitments as a NATO Ally. At the same time, we have shared interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, deterring Russia, and ensuring regional stability. We will continue to seek cooperation with Turkey on common priorities and engage in dialogue to address disagreements, such as limitations placed upon the rights of religious minorities. We will also continue to call upon the Turkish government to ensure that the Hagia Sophia and its religious iconography remain accessible to all. It is important to keep Turkey anchored to the West rather than taking steps that push it closer to Russia and other adversaries, a goal we share with Greece.

As always, I thank you for your continued attention and engagement on these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Palmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" being more prominent and the last name "Palmer" following in a similar style.

Matthew Palmer  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of European and  
Eurasian Affairs