

Greece - The Clearance Sale of Greek Military Bases to the United States

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On 5 October 2019, in Athens, Greek Minister for Defence **Nikólaos Panayotópoulos**, and US **Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** signed a “Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement”.

The Greek Parliament ratified the Agreement, which grants the United States the use of all Greek military bases. They will be used by the US armed forces not only for the storage of weapons, supplies and training locations, but also for “emergency response” operations, which in reality means attack missions.

The base at Larissa is particularly important, where the US Air Force has already stored MQ-9 Reaper drones, and also the base at Stefanovikio, where the US Army has already deployed Apache and Black Hawk helicopters.

The Agreement was defined by Greek Minister for Defence Nikólaos Panayotópoulos, as “advantageous for our national interests, because it increases the importance of Greece in the context of US planning”. An importance that Greece has enjoyed for a long time - we only have to remember the bloody *coup d’État* perpetrated by the colonels, organised in 1967 in the context of the Stay-Behind operation directed by the CIA [1], and followed, here in Italy, with the period of massacres beginning with the attack at the Piazza Fontana in 1969.

During the same year, a detachment of the US Navy was transferred from the base in Sigonella, Sicily and settled in Greece, at Souda Bay on the island of Crete. Today, Souda Bay is one of the most important USA/NATO aero-naval bases in the Mediterranean, used for the wars in the Middle East and North Africa. The Pentagon will be investing in Souda Bay the additional sum of 6 million Euros, which will be added to the 12 million it will be investing in Larissa, announced Panagiotopoulos, presenting it as a great opportunity for Greece.

However, **Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis** pointed out that Athens had already signed an agreement with the Pentagon for the modernisation of the F-16 fleet, which will cost Greece 1,5 billion dollars, and that Greece is also interested by the possibility of buying drones and F-35 fighters from the USA.

Greece is also notable for being, after Bulgaria, the European ally which for many years has given the highest percentage of its GDP (2,3%) to military expenditure.

The Agreement also guarantees that the USA will enjoy “unlimited use of the port of Alexandroupolis” [3], which is situated on the Aegean Sea close to the straits of the

Dardanelles, which link the Mediterranean to the Black Sea across Turkish territory, and therefore constitute an essential passage for maritime transit, especially for Russia. Furthermore, the neighbouring territory of Eastern Thrace (the small European part of Turkey) is the point at which the gas pipeline Turk-Stream arrives from Russia via the Black Sea.

The “strategic investment” that Washington is already making in the port infrastructures, aims at making Alexandroupolis one of the most important US military bases in the region, capable of blocking the access of Russian ships to the Mediterranean, and at the same time, hindering China which hopes to make Piraeus an important port of call on the New Silk Road.

“We are working with other democratic partners in the region to fend off evil actors like Russia and China [4], particularly Russia, which is using energy as an instrument of its negative influence”, declared the US ambassador in Athens, **Geoffrey Pyatt**, emphasising that “Alexandroupolis has a crucial role to play in the energetic security and the stability of Europe”.

The “Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement” with the USA is presented in this context, and was ratified by the Greek Parliament with 175 voices for, from the centre-right of the government (New Democracy and others) and 33 against (Communist Party and others), while 80 declared that they were “present” according to the formula of the US Congress, the equivalent of abstention, in use by the Greek Parliament. Syriza abstained, the Coalition of the Radical Left led by **Aléxis Tsípras**. First of all resigning from the government, now in the opposition, in a country which, after been obliged to sell off its own economy, is now selling off not only its military bases, but also what is left of its sovereignty.

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This article appeared on the Italian web newspaper, Il Manifesto.

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Featured image: ATHENS, Oct. 5, 2019 Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (L) meets with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Athens, Greece, on Oct. 5, 2019. (Credit Image: © Marios Lolos/Xinhua via ZUMA Wire)

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