

Greek Forces to Train in Israel as Syriza-Led Government Deepens Alliance

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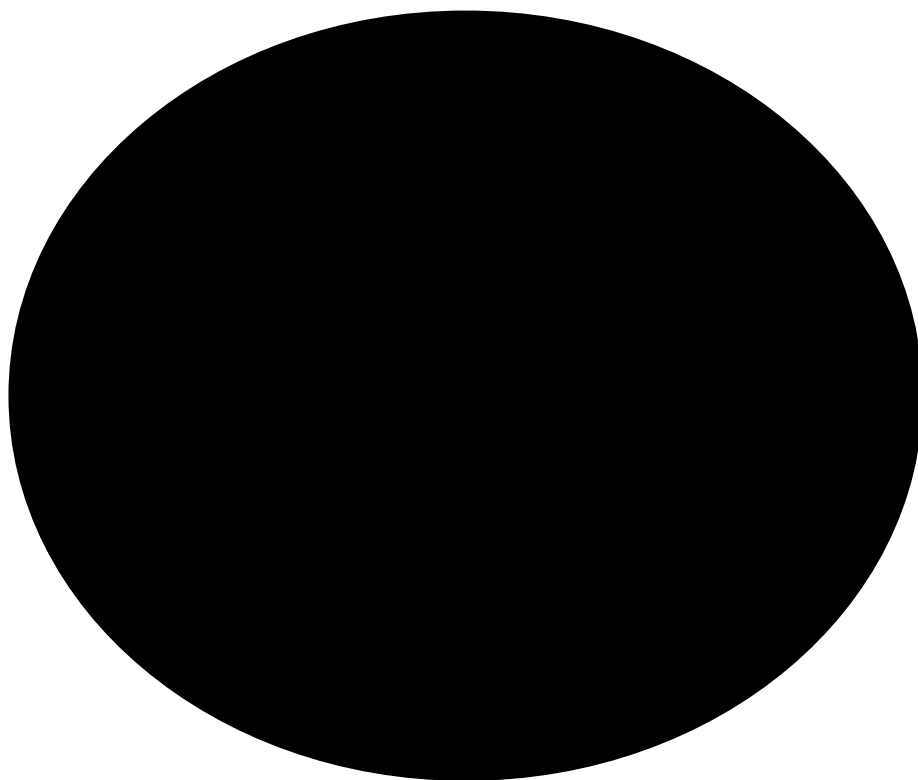
Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

Greek, along with Italian, military forces are soon to train in Israel.

This is the latest indicator of the deepening military alliance being forged between Israel and [Greece's](#) government led by the leftist Syriza party.

Last month, Israeli helicopter pilots completed an unprecedented 11-day combat training exercise near Greece's Mount Olympus.

In May, the Syriza-led government also signed a [military accord with Israel](#), matched only by a similar one between Israel and the US, granting legal immunities to each other's military personnel while training in the other's territory.



An image posted by the Israeli air force shows an Israeli pilot embracing a Greek colleague. The Israeli's face is obscured in the original.

The military deal was signed on behalf of the government by Panagiotis Kammenos, the defense minister from Independent Greeks, Syriza's rightwing, junior coalition partner. But

there is no doubt that Syriza is giving its full backing: in July, the Syriza-nominated Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias traveled to Jerusalem for high-level talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to [“strengthen bilateral ties between the two countries.”](#)

Earlier this year Israeli warplanes [carried out extensive training missions](#) in Greece, experience that will undoubtedly be used to attack the Gaza Strip in future Israeli military assaults.

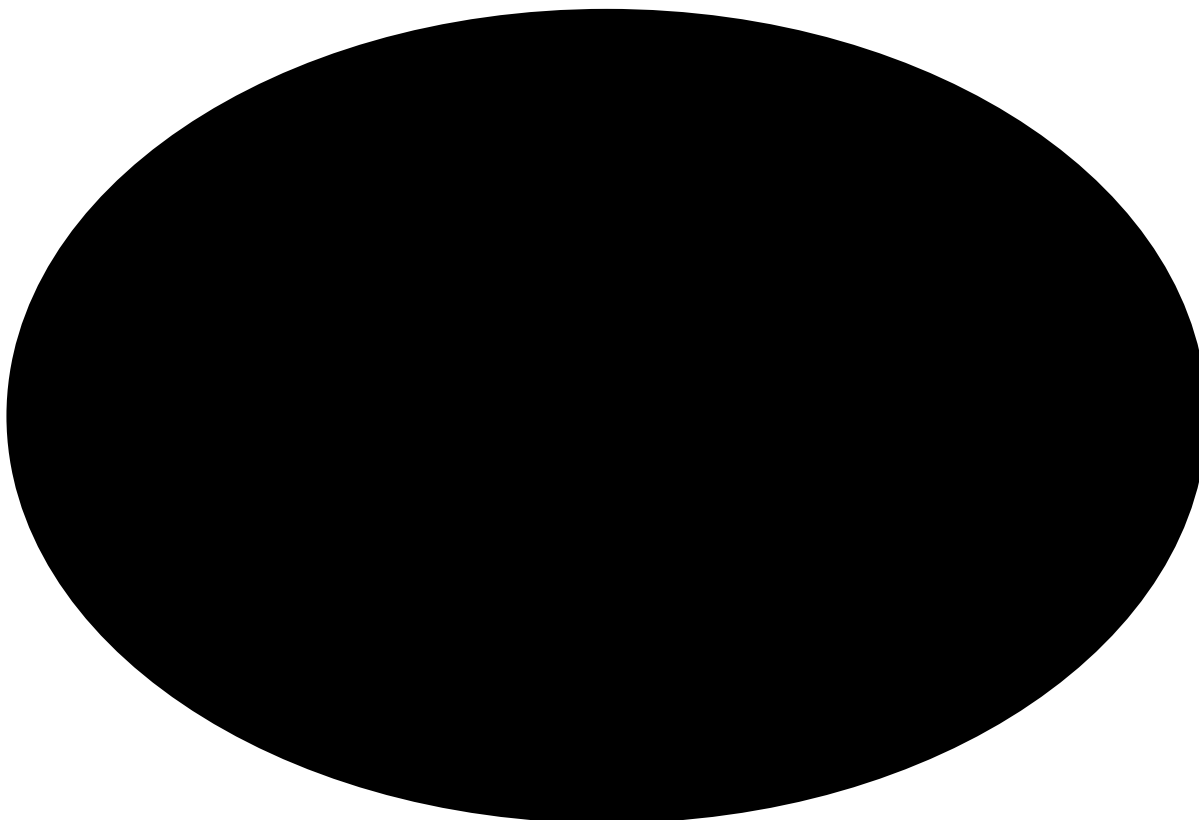
Israeli helicopters in Greece

According to an Israeli air force [press release](#), “Israeli-Greek cooperation is gaining momentum over the last years and in light of the success of recent deployments, the mutual flights will probably continue in 2016.”

“We understand the great importance of the joint activity with the State of Israel, which contributes to the security of both countries,” Greece’s Colonel Dormitis Stephzanki, the commander of Larissa Airbase where the Israeli helicopters were based during the exercises, is quoted as saying.

“Over the past few days we have been working together in a special way,” Dormitis added. “The common language, the deep friendship and the things we’ve learnt together have contributed to the enhancement of cooperation between the forces.”

Dormitis said he believes that the training in Greece had improved the Israelis’ “capability to deal with flying wherever needed.”



An image posted by the Israeli air force shows Israeli warplanes at the Larissa Airbase in Greece.

“We flew over mountainous areas that do not exist in Israel and practiced long-distance flights from the airbase in Israel to Greece,” Israel’s Lt. Col. Matan, a commander of a squadron of US-built Apache helicopters said. (Israeli forces only supply first names, likely to protect personnel from potential war crimes charges.)

The Apache – named after Native American peoples targeted by genocidal colonial expansion in North America – has been extensively used by Israel to carry out extrajudicial executions of Palestinians.

It was used during massacres of civilians in Gaza last summer.

Col. Y, a commander of an Israeli reconnaissance unit, described Israel’s participation in the exercise as “historic,” adding that “it was the first time the intelligence-gathering aircraft had worked with foreign aircraft in challenging, unknown terrain.”

Supporting war crimes

[According to The Jerusalem Post](#), Greek helicopter pilots will train in Israel in coming months.

Greek fighter jets “will also arrive as part of the multinational Blue Flag exercise, to be held over southern Israel,” the newspaper reports.

A [report in Haaretz in June](#) reveals that Italian, Greek and US air forces will take part in the exercise.

The military cooperation between Israel, Italy and Greece continues despite the fact that a recently published [independent inquiry](#) commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council found massive evidence of war crimes by Israel during its attack on Gaza last summer that killed more than 2,200 Palestinians.

[Amnesty International](#) last month [published its own inquiry](#) into Israel’s attack on the southern Gaza town of Rafah – again concluding that hundreds of civilians were killed as Israel committed grave war crimes.

“Public statements by Israeli army commanders and soldiers after the conflict provide compelling reasons to conclude that some attacks that killed civilians and destroyed homes and property were intentionally carried out and motivated by a desire for revenge – to teach a lesson to, or punish, the population of Rafah,” Amnesty found.

Inam Ouda Ayed bin Hammad, quoted in the Amnesty report, recalled the shelling and bombing that took place near her home in the al-Tannur neighborhood of Rafah: “The minute I left the house, an Apache ... started shooting at us.”

Perhaps some of the same Apaches and their pilots were sharing moments of camaraderie in Greece.

The UN report and Amnesty called for accountability for the war crimes committed in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Instead, Greece’s and [Italy’s](#) ostensibly left-wing governments, and of course the US administration of President Barack Obama, only offer Israel complicity and rewards.

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