

Turkish Surveillance UAVs over the Greek Navy in the Mediterranean Region - Greece's Military Dilemma

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As Turkey escalates in the Eastern Mediterranean the real question is how determined Greece is to respond.

Greece is confronting a huge diplomatic and military dilemma after Turkey sent a seismic vessel to the eastern Mediterranean to allegedly explore the existence of natural gas deposits.

The vessel began investigating on Tuesday night (16.10.2018) before withdrawing temporarily after the Greek Navy sent a strict radio alert.

After the incident, Turkey sent three frigates and two patrol ships there to protect the movements of their own seismographic ship.

Turkey, however, seems to be pushing tension by sending Barbaros Hayreddin Pasa vessel to explore in an area that includes part of the continental shelf of Greece.

If Barbaros returns to Greek waters, however, [Athens will face a dilemma](#): either issue another radio alert or increase its naval presence in the region to reach strategic balance.

Such a move could, however, scale the situation dangerously, something that would have undefined implications.

Greece is willing to avoid the second option, as it could fuel a sensitive area in which foreign naval warships, including US and Russian ships, are powered.

Diplomatic and military tensions between Greece and Turkey increased sharply this year, as Ankara pursued the arrest and imprisonment of two Greek soldiers.

A few days ago, Turkey issued a NAVTEX announcing that it was planning to investigate the existence of natural gas within and around the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus.

The tensions rose on Thursday (18.10.2018) when the Turkish media announced that there was an "incident" between Barbaros and the Greek frigate "Nikiforos". The incident was denied by the Greek headquarters and Turkey was accused for spreading propagandistic news.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, for its part, announced that Turkey exercised its sovereign rights to investigate the existence of natural gas, while underlining that the Greek sovereignty in the region is unrealistic and detrimental to bilateral relations and regional stability.

This in itself constitutes the creation of a dangerous situation that may turn into a “military confrontation” in the Mediterranean.

ExxonMobil is gearing up to investigate the existence of natural gas deposits in Cyprus, a move that could further exacerbate tensions between Washington, Ankara and Athens.

Diplomatic relations between Turkey and the United States have also deteriorated considerably this year due to continued US support to the Kurds in Syria, the subsequent Turkish invasion of the north, and the imprisonment of Pastor Andrew Brunson and other Americans with allegations of involvement in terrorist organizations.

A few days ago, on 20.10.2018, the Turkish press has publicly announced that [the new UAV surveillance aircraft](#) has been tested and completed and its radius is now 200 km.

This translates immediately that all the disputed areas of the Cypriot and most of the Greek EEZ are within the range and are now targets of Turkish UAVs.

The Turks want to control the movements of Greek ships in the area at any moment, as well as the presence of one or two Greek submarines operating in the Mediterranean, which are one of Greece’s most important leverages against the Turkish Navy.

According to the Turkish website Meteksan Defense, it is reported that the C-Band Data Link System has been developed to provide communication between the Turkish UAVs and their ground control stations over 200 kilometers.

The system can be used in UAVs flying at high, medium and low altitudes, and will be used to transmit the data in live time for uninterrupted and, in particular, making in-time decisions during a crisis.

This means that in the area of the current crisis in the Mediterranean, we will soon see Turkish UAVs, which will “comb” the whole region while they will also provide extremely valuable information to Ankara.

However, there has been a great deal of concern in the Greek general staff for dealing with the threat from unmanned aircraft used by the Turkish Armed Forces in the Eastern Aegean and Thrace.

The latest achievement of the Turkish defense industry is the UCAV AKINCI, which was developed by Baykar Company and is scheduled to carry out its first flight in 2019 and will enter into a wartime operation in 2020.

This is the new truly important upgrade to Turkey’s intelligence gathering area, with the presence of unmanned aircraft, which with the current available technology offer the ability to monitor and track targets of interest, not only within the Greek FIR but also within the National Airspace (LRU).

The main advantage of all these UAVs is that they are unmanned, so there is no reason to

lose staff if they reach dangerous targets and they provide extremely valuable information in real time.

In case of any possible Turkish operation, many of our military units in the islands and Evros and now in Cyprus will become “targets” of Turkish unmanned aircrafts.

Meanwhile, within the boundaries of the Greek continental shelf, the frigate of the Hellenic Navy continues to travel, overseeing the Turkish research vessel Barbaros.

According to information from sources in Nicosia, there is calm in the area despite the provocative presence and behavior of the Turkish Navy and seismic vessel, while Barbaros seems to be outside the boundaries of the Greek continental shelf.

But the Turks are estimated to have just measured international reactions in the past few days, and after the CN-235 spy planes are preparing to send a UAV with a clear mission to continue monitoring Greek military personnel and submarine units.

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