



ORDER OF AHEPA
SUPREME LODGE HEADQUARTERS
AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

June 27, 2019

Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the members of the **American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (Order of AHEPA)**, the leading international grassroots service association of American citizens of Hellenic heritage and Philhellenes, I write to convey our grave concern for U.S. security interests in the Eastern Mediterranean due to hostilities and elevated tensions perpetrated by Turkey. We strongly believe it is time for the United States to take prudent action to respond to Turkey's acts of provocation. It is time to protect American interests in the region, working closely with dependable allies and partners such as Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, which are also threatened by Turkey.

We contend Turkey challenges United States' interests in the Eastern Mediterranean without regard for consequence. Turkey threatens the long-term potential for the Eastern Mediterranean to yield energy resources that could decrease Europe's dependence on energy from Russia, which is in the United States' best interests. The following U.S. companies are placed at risk by Turkish provocation: ExxonMobil, Shell, and Noble Energy; all of which are licensed to explore for hydrocarbons within Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). In addition, oil companies from United States allies and strategic partners drilling in Cyprus' EEZ such as: France, Italy, South Korea, and Israel; are placed at risk by Turkish provocations. In fact, in February 2018, Turkish warships harassed the surveying vessel of Italian oil company Eni and threatened to sink it in Cyprus' EEZ. 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.¹

Turkey also perpetrates a persistent assault upon international law in the region, threatening the sovereignty of strategic partner, Republic of Cyprus, and NATO ally, Greece. This month, Turkey has sent a second drill ship off the coast of Cyprus in clear violation of Cyprus' sovereignty. The first Turkish drillship arrived in Cyprus' designated EEZ in early May.

- Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades called Turkey's intention to drill in Cyprus' designated EEZ a "second invasion."²

Repeatedly, the United States rightfully has recognized the Republic of Cyprus' right to develop resources in its exclusive economic zone. This is greatly appreciated and must continue to be reaffirmed unequivocally.

According to news reports, Turkey's violation of international law in Cyprus' EEZ has sparked concern in Athens that Turkey will engage in similar illegal activities south of Greece's island of Kastellorizo and

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¹ "Turkish ships threaten to sink Eni's drill vessel," *Ekathimerini*, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/226092/article/ekathimerini/news/turkish-ships-threaten-to-sink-eni-drill-vessel>

² Cyprus: Turkey's drilling bid off island 'second invasion,' *Associated Press*, <https://www.apnews.com/e0ad4644ba3648e681ac1e613a7850f1>



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east of the island of Rhodes; which are within Greece’s continental shelf or its designated EEZ.³ We further appreciate the communication between Washington and Athens to discuss the issue of Turkey’s illegal activities as evidenced by June 20’s call between National Security Advisor John Bolton and Greek Foreign Minister Giorgos Katrougalos.

Historically, of course, Turkey has violated international and U.S. law by its illegal invasion and subsequent occupation of the Republic of Cyprus with illegally staged troops and settlers; an injustice which is going on its 45th year. Further, Turkey routinely violates Greece’s airspace and waterways in the Aegean unnecessarily placing individuals’ lives in harm’s way with mock dogfights and by engaging in the practice of “gunboat diplomacy.” A Turkish coastguard vessel collided with a stationary Greek coastguard vessel near the Greek island of Imia, on February 12, 2018⁴, is just one in a countless number of examples.

In March, the United States participated at the Sixth Trilateral Summit between Greece, Cyprus, and Israel, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s attendance. It signaled U.S. affirmation for the trilateral partnership’s stated objectives, which include peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean. In a joint declaration issued at the conclusion of the summit, the four countries agreed to “*defend against external malign influences in the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East.*”⁵ Last week, the House passed a “mini-bus” appropriations bill that carried with it report language expressing U.S. support for its Eastern Mediterranean partners. It also directs Secretary Pompeo to report on State Department programs to support further cooperation between the United States and these Eastern Mediterranean partners. We applaud all these steps toward a strengthened U.S. relationship with its partners in the Eastern Mediterranean.

However, Mr. President, public statements of concern about Turkey’s provocative actions conveyed by the United States and European Union have fallen on deaf ears in Ankara. Therefore, the United States must remain engaged in the Eastern Mediterranean amid what we recognize is a bevy of global hotspots, such as Iran. Clearly, a stronger message must be sent to protect American interests and the United States’ valued strategic partners and allies in the Eastern Mediterranean. The European Union openly has suggested targeted measures, such as sanctions, aimed at Turkey should it not reverse course in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁶ AHEPA would support the United States joining with the European Union in the implementation of strong measures, including sanctions, toward Turkey to protect the United States’ interests in the region. AHEPA is open to further discussion on this pressing matter. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

George E. Loucas, Esq.
Supreme President

³ “Greek armed forces on standby for Turkish moves in East Med, Aegean,” *Ekathimerini*, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/241830/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-armed-forces-on-standby-for-turkish-moves-in-east-med-aegean>

⁴ “Collision of Greek boat, Turkish vessel caught on video,” *Associated Press*, <https://www.apnews.com/2718e4ef72234f57ab600e39ec0d9015>

⁵ State Department statement, Mar. 21, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/joint-declaration-between-cyprus-greece-israel-and-the-united-states-after-the-sixth-trilateral-summit/>

⁶ “EU Threatens Sanctions Amid Turkey-Cyprus Drilling Spat,” *Wall Street Journal*, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/eu-threatens-sanctions-amid-turkey-cyprus-drilling-spat-11561073148>