

## **GREECE**



**Greece** occupies a strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean, which provides advantages for U.S. interests in promoting peace and stability from the Balkans to the Middle East and Afghanistan. U.S. assistance contributes toward the interoperability of Greek forces within NATO, helps focus Greek officers on the positive impact Greece can have within the wider Alliance, and reinforces Greece's ability to support U.S. strategic interests in a broader context.

### **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Greece's foreign policy is aligned with that of its EU partners. Greece gives particular emphasis to its close relations with Cyprus but also has growing political and economic ties with the Balkan countries and the Middle East.

Greece maintains full diplomatic, political, and economic relations with its Southeast European neighbors, except with Macedonia (see below), and regards itself as a leader of the region's Euro-Atlantic integration process. It provides peacekeeping contingents for Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. Greece has good relations with Russia and has embassies in a number of the central Asian republics, which it sees as potentially important trading partners.

Prominent issues in Greek foreign policy include Greek-Turkish differences in the Aegean, illegal migration, Turkish accession to the EU, the name dispute with Macedonia, the reunification of Cyprus, the international community's recognition of Kosovo's independence, and Greek-American relations. For 2005-2006, Greece held a 2-year, rotating seat on the UN Security Council.

### **U.S.-GREECE RELATIONS**

Greece is an important partner in many of today's highest U.S. policy priorities. As a leader in the region Greece has also been an ally to the U.S. in promoting Balkan stability and economic development, supporting Turkey's bid for accession to the European Union, and supporting the diversity of Europe's energy supplies. Greece's geostrategic position also makes it an important ally in engagement and dialogue with the Muslim world. As an entry point into Schengen Europe for migrants from the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia, Greece shares an interest both in humanitarian treatment of migrants and in supporting the development of conditions in their home countries that would ease the pressures for migration. Serving in the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Greece has navigated these problems as well as assisting in mediations over the recent conflict in Georgia. In addition, Greece has been an active participant in Operation Atalanta--the EU's counter-piracy deployment off the coast of East Africa.

Greece has had some success in recent years in its fight against domestic terrorism. In the summer of 2002, Greek authorities captured numerous suspected members of the terrorist group "November 17." In 2003, 15 members of the terrorist organization, which since 1975 had killed many prominent Greeks and five U.S. mission employees, were found guilty and convicted of a number of crimes, including homicide. In 2007, an appellate court acquitted two of the defendants, but otherwise largely upheld the results of the initial trial, leaving the leadership of the defunct group serving multiple life sentences and others serving long prison terms. Under the Greek system, however, two of the convicted prisoners were eligible for parole almost immediately (no action taken as of mid-November 2007), and another was to be eligible 18 months after imposition of the sentence.

In the early morning hours of January 12, 2007, terrorists fired a rocket-propelled grenade through a front window of the U.S. Embassy. A group calling itself Revolutionary Struggle later claimed responsibility for the act. Some see the domestic terrorist organization as a splinter group arising from the remnants of November 17 followers. Revolutionary Struggle also claimed responsibility for attempting to assassinate the Minister of Culture and former Minister of Public Order Georgos Voulgarakis in a bomb blast in May 2006. A new group, Sect of Revolutionaries, has claimed responsibility for a recent spate of shooting attacks on police. In June 2009 an anti-terrorist unit officer was murdered while on duty guarding a witness in a trial relating to a 1990s-era terrorist attack, in an attack which is widely believed to have been committed by Sect of Revolutionaries.

There is smooth cooperation between U.S. and Greek counter-terrorism officials. Greek and American diplomatic, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies worked closely together in the build-up to and throughout the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens. In January 2006, the United States and Greece signed protocols updating treaties covering extradition and mutual legal assistance, which further strengthened this cooperation.

An estimated three million Americans resident in the United States claim Greek descent. This large, well-organized community cultivates close political and cultural ties with Greece. There are approximately 90,000 to 100,000 American citizens resident in Greece. Greece has the seventh-largest population of U.S. Social Security beneficiaries in the world.

The United States has provided Greece with more than \$11.1 billion in economic and security assistance since 1946. Economic programs were phased out by 1962, but military financial assistance continued until the early 1990s.

In 1953, the first defense cooperation agreement between Greece and the United States was signed, providing for the establishment and operation of American military installations on Greek territory. The United States closed three of its four main bases in the 1990s. The current mutual defense cooperation agreement provides for the operation by the United States of a naval support facility that exploits the strategically located deep-water port and airfield at Souda Bay in Crete.

**Peace and Security:** U.S. assistance is focused on enhancing regional stability, building closer ties and mutual understanding, and assisting with the continued development of the Greek military. U.S. assistance substantially increases NATO interoperability through hands-on equipment training, facilitates understanding between the U.S. and Greek militaries, and augments sales of U.S. defense-related items that are crucial to NATO effectiveness. U.S. assistance also reinforces the involvement of the Greek armed forces in multinational peacekeeping in the Balkans and Afghanistan as well as cooperative programs with other Allies and Partnership for Peace members. These programs will be implemented through the U.S. Department of Defense.