



HALC
HELLENIC AMERICAN
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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The Honorable Bob Menendez
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, Chairman Reed, and Ranking Member Inhofe:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the Hellenic American Leadership Council (HALC) and our activists who are also your constituents, we are writing to express our alarm over the Republic of Turkey's request to buy 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16 fighter jets and nearly 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes and the State Department's notice of pending Foreign Military Sales for air-to-air missiles and radar/avionics upgrades to Turkey.

It has been less than two years since sanctions were imposed on Turkey under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). Despite these sanctions and its ejection from the F35 program, Turkey remains unrepentant with regards to the underlying condition that led to such sanctions – its acquisition of Russian S-400 missile systems. Turkey remains in violation of American law and is relying on the State Department's invocation of technicalities and formulation of legal fictions to advance the sale of new F-16s and upgrade kits.

The Department of State has advanced various rationales for considering Turkey's request. The first – recently outlined by Secretary Blinken in a Congressional hearing – is that Turkey may be one of “a number of countries [that] are rethinking their relationships [with] Russia.” Despite this assertion by the Secretary, Turkey's public proclamations and behavior indicate exactly the opposite. Turkey has consistently and prominently vowed to continue acquiring

and coproducing Russian weapons systems. Furthermore, while Turkey has allegedly kept its already acquired S-400s inactive, there is no technical reason that prevents them from activating them. Not a single Administration official or analysts has presented a scenario under which American technology is fully protected from the co-location risks inherent in American jets being located in the same theater as S-400s.


Another State Department rationale, as laid out in a letter to Congressman Frank Pallone, is that there are “compelling long-term NATO Alliance unity [interests] that are supported by appropriate U.S. defense trade ties with Turkey.” Turkey undermines this case by using American made F16s against a NATO ally, Greece. With alarming regularity, Turkey challenges Greek sovereignty with American made F16s including 168 airspace violations and 42 illegal overflights over Greek islands in a single day on April 27.

Contrary to the State Department’s reasoning, Turkey undermines NATO Alliance unity interests and U.S. national security interests on an almost daily basis by creating a flashpoint *within* NATO. Greece does not violate Turkish airspace, but it is forced to scramble its own jets – and engage Turkish jets – in defense of its airspace and territory. Former U.S. Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt expressed his fear of a “horrible incident” between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean, where “lethal, complicated military systems” are facing off. Since then, Turkey has not only increased its airspace violations and overflights but has taken steps to challenge Greece’s sovereignty over inhabited Greek islands.

Turkey is recklessly risking war within NATO. To grant them new and upgraded F-16s would be equally reckless. Any American arms sales to Ankara must at a minimum be restricted to prevent their use in a way that risks conflict with Greece. Overlooking this risk undermines the national security interests that Congress itself asserted in the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019 and the U.S.-Greece Defense and Interparliamentary Partnership Act of 2022.

We urge you to apply the strictest scrutiny to any potential sale or transfer of F-16s or any major weapons system to Turkey. Ankara’s disregard for U.S. law, interests and alliances has to be reversed before it regains privileged access to advanced U.S. weapons systems.

Sincerely,



Endy D. Zemenides
Executive Director, The Hellenic American Leadership Council