

Greece to purchase a fourth French-made frigate for its navy

In a move signaling both strategic confidence and long-term naval ambition, the Greek government has greenlit the purchase of a fourth FDI frigate for the Hellenic Navy — this one to be named HS Themistocles.

The announcement came late Wednesday evening, on the 17th September, following a high-level national security council meeting (KYSEA), chaired by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, with Defense Minister Nikos Dendias confirming what many in Greece's defense community had long expected: the fourth ship is a go. But this isn't just another frigate. Themistocles, named after the famed Athenian naval strategist who changed the course of history at Salamis, will carry with it some serious firepower — and a message.

While the first three FDI frigates — Kimon, Nearhos, and Formion — already represent a generational leap for the Hellenic Navy, Themistocles will arrive with upgrades baked in. It will be the first to be built to the "Standard 2++" configuration, a term that's becoming shorthand for the FDI's most advanced variant. Think longer-range weapons, advanced electronics, better integration with drones, and — most notably — next-generation cruise missiles under the European Long-Range Strike Approach (ELSA) program. These missiles are still in development, but once operational, they'll vastly expand Greece's naval strike envelope. In practical terms, that means Themistocles will be the most capable surface combatant the Hellenic Navy has ever operated.

The combined cost of acquiring Themistocles and upgrading the other three ships will come to €982 million, with payments spread out until 2030. The frigate itself will cost around €810 million, and unlike her predecessors, Themistocles' weapons suite — ASTER and EXOCET missiles — is not yet included in the deal, though negotiations with MBDA are expected to follow.

France, meanwhile, has committed to returning 25% of the investment through industrial participation, meaning around €200 million in work will flow back to Greek defense companies.

Themistocles will be delivered in December 2028, entering service in the Standard 2+ configuration and then upgraded to full 2++ by March 2030. The rest of the class will follow a similar path:

Ship	Standard 1	Standard 2++ (Final)
Kimon	Oct 2025	Sep 2029
Nearhos	Oct 2026	Apr 2029
Formion	Dec 2026	Jun 2029
Themistocles	Dec 2028	Mar 2030

Each upgrade costs about €5 million per ship, with work being performed in Greece after initial delivery from Naval Group's shipyard in Lorient, France.

The addition of a fourth frigate was always part of the original plan. When the Greek government signed contracts with Naval Group, MBDA, and Thales in March 2022, the agreement included an option for one more ship. Now, after months of quiet technical discussions and price negotiations, Greece has exercised that option.

In fact, this fourth frigate might not be the last. Earlier this year, Naval Group offered Greece a proposal to locally build three more Kimon-class frigates, leveraging Greek shipyards and defense firms. While no formal deal has been announced, the groundwork is being laid for a longer-term partnership.

The Kimon-class frigates are more than new ships. They represent a shift in how Greece approaches naval power. With top-tier sensors, advanced missiles, and NATO interoperability, they provide the Hellenic Navy with a modern backbone capable of operating in high-threat environments — from the Aegean to the Eastern Mediterranean. And with the region's security dynamics still in flux, from tensions with Turkey to instability in the Middle East, the timing is no accident. "Safeguarding our homeland is a non-negotiable priority," Prime Minister Mitsotakis said. "This acquisition strengthens our strategic depth without compromising fiscal responsibility."

As Parliament prepares to formally ratify the deal, Greece appears committed not just to acquiring hardware, but to building a modern naval force with long-term resilience.

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