

Interview with the Deputy Minister of National Defence Mr. Giannis Kefalogiannis



The Greek Ministry of National Defence has outlined an ambitious restructuring of the Hellenic Armed Forces, dubbed "Agenda 2030," with the objective of bringing Greece's military into a new era of advanced capabilities and resilience. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis emphasized that this modernization drive is central to the nation's strategy for a robust Greece, capable of meeting escalating security and stability challenges in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean.

"Agenda 2030" represents a multi-faceted approach, encompassing significant acquisitions of advanced weapon systems and bolstered international alliances, particularly with France and the United States. This modernization effort also considers Greece's complex relations with neighboring Turkey, aiming to enhance Greece's deterrent stance and security readiness.

In an exclusive interview with Greek Defence News, Deputy Minister of National Defence Mr. Giannis Kefalogiannis shared insights into these recent initiatives and discussed the progress on key defense reforms under the new policy agenda.

What are the Hellenic Armed Forces' transformation priorities? Could you please elaborate on the priorities set for the modernization and digital transformation of the Hellenic Armed Forces and how these align with Greece's Defence Policy strategic goals?

In an ever-changing international environment, with armed conflicts in our region and technology evolving rapidly, determining means and ways of conducting military operations, the Greek Armed Forces must move into a new era. We call this strategic approach "Agenda 2030", through which we adopt a set of bold reforms that will shape a modern Defense Doctrine. With an emphasis on interdisciplinary, the utilization of domestic innovation, the upgrading of military training and the creation of new structures, such as indicatively in the field of cyber security and the use of autonomous systems. Especially in terms of digital transformation, we have proceeded to set up the joint IT body that brings together IT forces from all branches, with the aim of optimal adaptation prevention and early response of the digital infrastructures of the armed forces to cyber security challenges as well as achieving a unified doctrine of utilization and integration of artificial intelligence and big data analytics in the operation of the Armed Forces.

Are you optimistic about the future of Greek-Turkish relations? Given the historically complex relationship between Greece and Turkey, do you see any potential for a more stable and cooperative future between the two countries?

There are significant differences with Turkey in the way we approach various issues. We have no illusions about what we can and cannot achieve. We wish to maintain the climate of recession and the positive dynamics that have developed in Greek-Turkish relations recently. At this juncture, we must adopt a standard code of communication and behaviour through a road map that will improve our bilateral relations on a more solid basis. We are not discussing just for the sake of discussing but to resolve what we recognize as our only differences, namely the delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone



and the continental shelf. Failing that, the second-best option is to remain helpful neighbours, both agreeing to disagree.

How do you assess the current security situation in Ukraine, the Balkans, North Africa, and the Middle East? What role can Greece play? What role do you envision for Greece in contributing to regional stability?

Greece constitutes and is treated as a pillar of stability in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Through a principled foreign policy, it declares itself present in all major issues of the region. From a position of principle, it supported Ukraine from the first days of the war and continues without asterisks in the same course of providing military, diplomatic, defence and humanitarian support. Our country also approached the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with corresponding principled positions. We mediate, respecting our strategic alliances with Israel and also important Arab countries, such as Egypt, amid an objectively highly complex situation. We have accumulated a significant international capital of credibility that allows us to talk to all parties involved, knowing that no second thoughts are hidden behind our attitude. We will keep working thoughtfully and methodically for this Greece of reliability and self-confidence in facing national, regional and global challenges.

What are the long-term procurement program priorities for the Hellenic Army, Navy, and Air Force under the current defence budget limitations?

Despite the difficulties of the times, the national armament program is being implemented based on long-term planning by the general staff. We are committed to ensuring our Armed Forces have the material resources to carry out their mission. We can satisfy the military leadership's requirements through targeted prioritization to ensure our country's deterrence capacity. I mention the future purchase of the most modern aircraft in the world, the F-35, the construction program for 4 BELHARA frigates, the modernization programs of the MEKO frigates, the Roussen missile boats, and, of course, our submarines, which will immediately begin to be implemented in Greece. We should not omit Greece's participation in the design and subsequent construction of the new CONSTELLATION frigate, our involvement in the Eurocorvette program and, of course, the creation of an impregnable missile wall in the Aegean.

The Hellenic defence industry is facing various challenges, especially in terms of development. How is the Ministry of Defense addressing these issues?

We lack - and this is what we are trying to fix - the institutional framework and the mentality that will bind all of us - political system, military leadership, military and civilian educational institutions, research centres - to a logic of production of defence products in Greece. The question is, on the one hand, how we will increase the percentage of domestic industrial production and technology in the support, maintenance and modernization of existing and future weapons systems and on the other hand, how will we effectively integrate the ecosystem of private Greek companies that produce technology and innovation into the current and future needs of the Armed Forces. I don't like zeroing. We indeed have a troubled state defence industry for which a consolidation plan has been launched.

However, we also have more than 100 Greek companies related to the defence industry that employ 20,000 workers. The next day of the defense industry can only be shaped with their active partnership. We want to integrate and orient this ecosystem to give us original solutions that will meet the needs of the Armed Forces both at the production level and maintenance and support of weapon systems. We have the human resources to design intelligent and cheap weapon systems – from drones to robotics and artificial intelligence applications. And yes, we can be export-oriented and achieve economies of scale in such cases.

The United States has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to supporting the modernization of the Hellenic Armed Forces through the ongoing US-Greece defense collaboration. How do you assess the status of Greek-U.S. military cooperation, and what are the key areas of focus for the future?

Our relations with the U.S. are at an all-time high and will continue to be so because they have "structural depth." They are based on a shared understanding and alignment of interests on the conditions for stability and security in our wider region and the joint effort to maintain an international order based on international law. This is the value base from which our agreements for defence cooperation and strengthening of our weapons systems derive.

© MOD

