

Greece Looks to Israel for Defenses Against Turkish Drones

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Turkey's drones have gained international fame helping Ukraine defend against Russia's unprovoked invasion. However, Turkey also uses its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to threaten its NATO ally, Greece. Now, Greece has implemented a counter-unmanned aerial system (C-UAS) using Israeli technology to defend against a recent spike in Turkish violations of Greek airspace. As Turkey increasingly behaves as an unreliable ally, the United States should increase its support for the growing Greek-Israel partnership, especially efforts to bolster their C-UAS and other air defense capabilities.

What Happened?

- Greece has [deployed Israeli C-UAS technologies](#), similar to the [Israeli Drone Dome](#) in response to Turkish drone threats. The Greek system can “blind” drones and disrupt their flight paths by adapting Israeli technologies to the needs of defending Greek terrain.

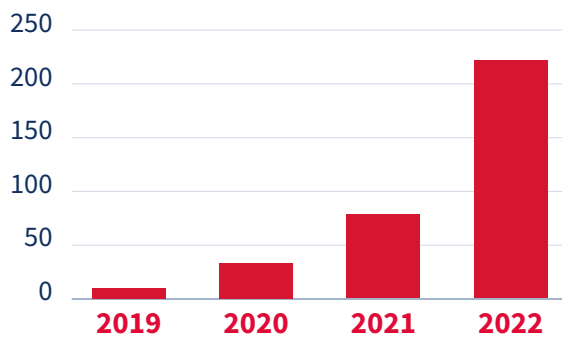
Why Is It Important?

- Turkey's aggression against Greece, increasingly using UAVs, undermines regional stability and cohesion within the NATO alliance. The transfer of Israeli air defense capabilities, including C-UAS technologies, to Greece bolsters deterrence against Turkish belligerency, increases the defensive capabilities of a critical U.S. ally in the Eastern Mediterranean, and builds on ongoing economic, energy, and security cooperation between regional U.S. partners.
 - » Athens has expanded its ties to other U.S. partners through the development of regional structures like the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) and Greek-Cypriot trilaterals each with Israel and Egypt.
 - » Israeli C-UAS technologies would help secure projects like the EuroAsia Interconnector, which is set to be completed in 2024 and will import electricity from Cyprus and Israel, as well as the EuroAfrica Interconnector, which will similarly import energy from Egypt.

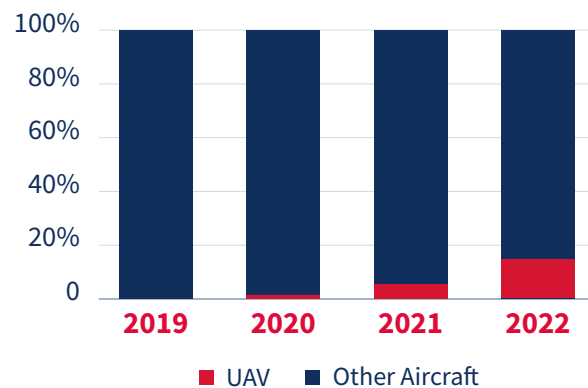
- Turkey has a long history of violating the [International Civil Aviation Organization’s \(ICAO\) air traffic regulations](#) in Greece’s claimed airspace. It is increasingly using its UAVs for this harassment and infringement.
 - » Since 2019, [Greece has documented](#) 346 Turkish UAVs violating its airspace.
 - » While 79 Turkish UAVs violated Greek airspace in 2021, there have already been 223 UAVs engaging in violations in 2022, a 182 percent increase.
 - Retired Greek General Evangelos Yergusis [noted](#) in February that Turkey’s TB2 drones have conducted medium- and high-altitude surveillance operations against Greek warships and defenses on the Meis and Kastellorizo islands.
 - » Turkey also increased the share of UAVs it sent to violate Greek airspace from 11 percent of the total aircraft in 2021 to 15 percent so far in 2022.



Turkish UAVs Violating Greek Airspace Increased 173% This Year Already



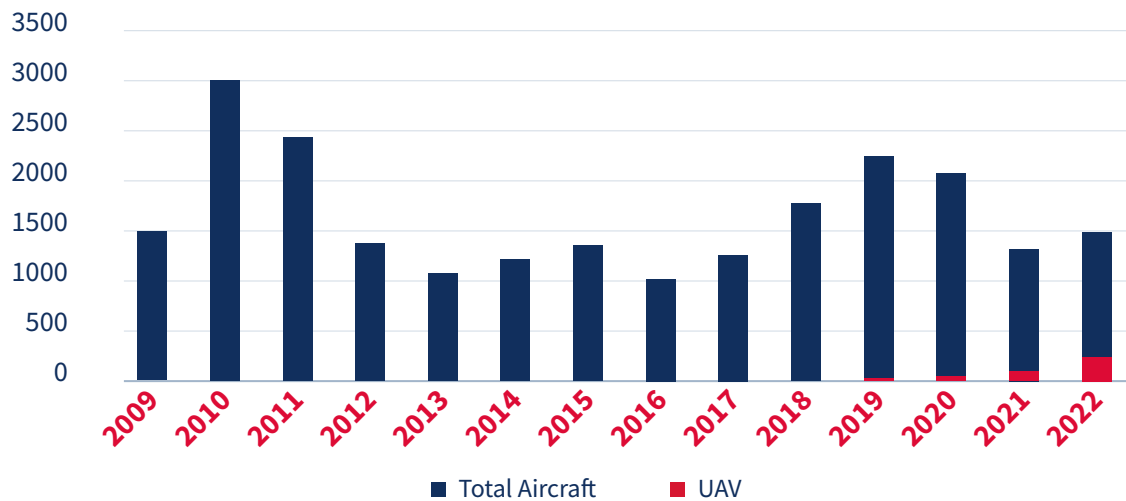
Turkey Increasingly Relies on UAVs to Violate Greek Airspace



Violations of National Airspace – Infringements of Air Traffic Regulations ICAO, <https://geetha.mil.gr/en/violations/violations-of-national-airspace-infringements-of-air-traffic-regulations-icao/>

- » Ankara has sent a total of 1481 aircraft to violate Greek airspace this year, already a 12.6 percent increase from the 1315 in 2021 but a drop from the decade highs of 2243 aircraft in 2019 and 2073 in 2020. Over the same four-year period, Turkey’s use of UAVs has steadily risen.

Turkey's Total Violations Down, Drone Use Up



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- With Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the rise of global strategic competition, and the discovery of offshore energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece has become an increasingly vital security anchor for stability in the region. Yet, Turkey’s behavior as an unreliably ally, including by routinely violating the airspace of its NATO ally, Greece, builds discord within the alliance and degrades regional stability. Helping Greece better deter Turkish aircraft with improved air defenses is a critical U.S. security interest in the Eastern Mediterranean.
 - » Greece frequently scrambles its aircraft and warships in response to airspace violations but a further increase in the number of Turkish drones and other aircraft could overwhelm Greek capabilities. Given that the Turkish systems would not have to worry about a crew, they could surround and conduct unsafe maneuvers that deter Greece’s crewed platforms.
- Turkey [expanded its drone posture](#) in the Eastern Mediterranean by deploying at least two TB2 drones to the Gecitkale (or Lefkoniko in Greek) air base in northern Cyprus in August 2021. The drones had previously been deployed there in 2019.
- Iran and its proxies throughout the Middle East have increasingly relied upon drones to attack American personnel, partners, and interests in the region. In response, Israel has adapted and developed air defenses that have repeatedly proven capable of neutralizing unmanned systems.
 - » Israel’s [Drone Dome](#), which Greece has adapted to its needs, provides 360 degree protection that can neutralize drones up to 3.22 km away by jamming their communication and GPS or through a 10 kW laser, if the drone is autonomous.
 - » Israel’s short-range air defense Iron Dome system has also been updated to deal with UAV threats. It [intercepted several drones](#) during the May 2021 conflict in Gaza.

- In addition to its recent integration of Israeli C-UAS technologies, Greece operates several air defenses, including:
 - » U.S.-made Patriot (PAC-3) and MIM-23B Improved Hawk surface-to-air missiles that are capable against jet and rotary aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and cruise missiles;
 - » Swedish Velos short-range anti-aircraft;
 - » French Crotale anti-ship and anti-aircraft systems and Mistral missile defenses;
 - » German STINGER systems; and
 - » Russian OSA-AK/AK (SA-8 Gecko) surface-to-air missile and 21 TOR-M1, ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns. Greece also acquired a Russian S-300 air defense system from Cyprus as part of an agreement to end a crisis between the Cypriot and Turkish governments between 1997 and 1998.

What Should the United States Do Next?

- The United States should expand funding for joint research and development on C-UAS projects with Israel and other partners in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean.
 - » In particular, the Biden administration should explore funding and co-development of [Israeli laser C-UAS](#), including the Iron Beam, which President Biden viewed on his recent visit.
- The Department of Defense should also expand America's presence in the Eastern Mediterranean by:
 - » Forward deploying additional air wings in Greece;
 - » Changing the recently announced deployment of two destroyers (DDGs) to Rota, Spain in 2024, which already hosts four DDGs, so that the ships deploy to Greece, where they will have more rapid access to Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean;
 - » Enlarging U.S. military deployments at underutilized Greek facilities, including Larissa and Stefanovikeio; and
 - » Integrating Greek air and naval assets into U.S. units deployed there.

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