



The Shields of Achilles and David: A Greece–Israel Defense Architecture

Benjamin Gettler Project for East Med Security





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I. Executive Summary

A new defense architecture is taking shape in the Eastern Mediterranean as a key U.S. ally looks to strengthen regional stability and assume a greater share of the collective defense burden. Just as the mythological hero Achilles returned to battle with a new, five-layered shield wrought by a divine armorer, Greece's aptly named Achilles' Shield program would provide defense across five tiers and domains—against missiles, aircraft, drones, ships, and underwater threats—leveraging Israel's combat-proven technologies.¹ The United States should support this major project, and hold it out as a model for other partners to follow.

The Eastern Mediterranean is increasingly contested. Turkey's persistent violations of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and routine airspace as well as its coercive energy exploration erode Greek and Cypriot sovereignty. Russian hybrid warfare and naval operations threaten the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) southeastern flank, while Iranian proxies use Mediterranean waters and airspace as corridors for long-range strikes.

To protect Greece against these myriad threats, Achilles' Shield would unify previously fragmented systems into a coherent multi-domain, multi-tier air and maritime architecture. Supported by a planned \$27 billion investment over the next decade, it is intended to allow Greece to withstand saturation attacks, defend its maritime approaches, and safeguard critical infrastructure.² By turning to Israel as a partner in developing Achilles' Shield, Greece is gaining access to deep operational experience with layered air and missile defense and combat-proven systems, while also pursuing co-production arrangements that would allow Greece to manufacture Israeli technologies domestically and build indigenous defense industrial capacity.

Promoting Greece-Israel defense cooperation presents the United States with a strategic opportunity to shape a more integrated regional security architecture while advancing burden-sharing goals emphasized in the recently published National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.³ Greece's commitment to modernizing its defenses signals a partner willing to assume greater responsibility. Including Israeli systems within Achilles' Shield could also enhance coordination between U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), building ad hoc cooperation into a durable framework for shared situational awareness and joint defensive action.

If successfully developed, the Greece-Israel defense relationship around Achilles' Shield could serve as a replicable model for U.S. strategy elsewhere—demonstrating how capable allies can jointly assume greater responsibility for regional security through integrated defense architectures, co-production agreements, and coordinated operational concepts that reduce demands on U.S. forces while strengthening deterrence. To advance and build on the Achilles' Shield project, the United States should:

- Treat the Eastern Mediterranean as a strategic region to eliminate bureaucratic seams and strengthen coordination across military command areas of responsibility (AOR).
- Mount a diplomatic effort to drive integration that would resolve transfer, co-production, and intellectual property-sharing challenges.
- Deploy air and maritime defense assets to Cyprus that support better intelligence-sharing and protection.
- Grow multilateral defense frameworks by expanding existing trilaterals and the 3+1 framework into formal planning groups, shared concepts, and integrated exercises with Greek and Israeli forces to develop shared doctrine and interoperability.
- Enhance energy and infrastructure security cooperation by integrating U.S., Greek, and Israeli capabilities to protect undersea cables, offshore energy assets, and critical maritime infrastructure.

II. An Increasingly Contested Region

Greece faces an increasingly dangerous and contested region from multiple directions. To the south and east, Turkey has maintained sustained air and maritime aggression aimed at expanding Ankara's influence and constraining Greek and Cypriot freedom of action. Routine military deployments and energy exploration operations contest territorial boundaries. Together, these actions reflect a deliberate strategy to establish regional dominance by steadily degrading Greek and Cypriot operational control and reshaping the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. To the north, Russian hybrid warfare operations—including drone incursions into NATO airspace, cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, and naval activities in the Black Sea—compound regional security challenges and accentuate Greece's strategic exposure along NATO's southeastern perimeter. To the east, Iran and its regional proxies have demonstrated both intent and capability to project force through Eastern Mediterranean waters and airspace, transforming regional conflicts into threats that directly affect Greek security.

A. Maritime Aggression

At sea, Turkey has repeatedly violated Greek and Cypriot exclusive economic zones (EEZs) by deploying drilling and seismic survey vessels—frequently escorted by naval and coast guard assets—into maritime areas internationally recognized as claimed by Athens and Nicosia.⁴ These operations have included hydrocarbon exploration and survey activity conducted without consent, treating contested waters as zones of Turkish operational control rather than areas subject to legal dispute resolution. Ankara justifies these actions through an expansive interpretation of maritime jurisdiction that sharply limits the entitlements of islands and rejects prevailing understandings of exclusive economic zones under international maritime practice.⁵

Turkish warships conducted 2,988 incursions into Greek maritime territory in 2025, part of a sustained pattern that has seen over 14,600 such incursions between 2020 and 2025.⁶ By advancing this interpretation through persistent physical presence, Turkey has sought to impose its claims as facts on the water, normalizing repeated incursions into Greek and Cypriot exclusive economic zones and eroding established norms governing maritime sovereignty in the Eastern Mediterranean.

B. Airspace Violations

In the air domain, Turkish military aircraft continue to conduct large numbers of incursions into areas Greece considers national airspace, as well as repeated infringements of Athens Flight Information Region (FIR) rules. Between 2010 and 2025, the Hellenic Armed Forces reported over 35,000 incursions involving armed aircraft, UAVs, and formation flights over the Aegean. Greece recorded 11,258 airspace violations in 2022, a 310 percent increase over the previous year.⁷ Violations declined to 1,172 in 2023, corresponding with a diplomatic thaw between Athens and Ankara, and further decreased to 225 incidents in 2025.⁸

December 2025 saw the highest monthly incursion rate of the year, coinciding with the Greece-Israel-Cyprus trilateral summit in Jerusalem.⁹ Within days of that summit, additional incursions were reported, followed by five more violations by two pairs of Turkish F-16s in early 2026.¹⁰ These activities force frequent scrambles by the Hellenic Air Force and elevate the risk of midair incidents.

C. Securing NATO's Southern Flank

Greece's geographic position also puts it at risk from Russia at a time when Russian hybrid operations are intensifying across NATO's eastern flank—from drone incursions over Poland and Romania to attacks on

shipping in the Black Sea.¹¹ While Russia has not yet encroached on Greek air or maritime space, the Kremlin has made veiled threats against Athens.¹² But Moscow does seem set on maintaining a naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean even after losing a regional footing. Following the fall of the Assad regime, Moscow lost access to its naval facility at Tartus, Syria, and reportedly pulled out all submarines from the region.¹³ Yet in January 2026, NATO tracked a Russian Kilo-class submarine operating near Sicily while transiting eastward.¹⁴

These risks, along with Greece's geography at the crossroads of the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Black Sea regions, underscore its strategic importance to NATO's collective defense. Greece provides strategic depth for deterrence and defense operations spanning from the Aegean through the Black Sea. Greek territory hosts key NATO installations and serves as a forward operating base for alliance air and naval assets, enabling rapid response to crises across multiple theaters.¹⁵

D. Iranian Projection into the Eastern Mediterranean

The 2023-2025 conflict between Israel and Iranian-backed forces revealed how Middle East threats increasingly exploit the Eastern Mediterranean as an operational corridor. Iranian proxies—including Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iraq-based militias—repeatedly used Mediterranean airspace to route attack drones toward Israeli targets, deliberately flying over international waters to complicate early detection and extend approach vectors beyond Israel's primary sensor coverage. Hamas conducted a seaborne assault on October 7, while Hezbollah threatened strikes against Israeli offshore energy infrastructure and prepared contingency plans for amphibious operations. These attack patterns demonstrate that conflicts originating in the Middle East now routinely extend into the Eastern Mediterranean, creating risks that affect all regional states.

II. Forging Achilles' Shield

To address Turkey's threats at sea and in the airspace, Greece plans to develop a multi-domain, multi-tier air and maritime defense initiative, called Achilles' Shield, which will launch in 2027. With a plan to spend \$27 billion (€25 billion) over the next decade as part of Greece's broader military modernization, Achilles' Shield reflects a shift away from fragmented defenses toward an integrated approach intended to protect Greek territory and preserve freedom of action by preventing combined air and maritime pressure from overwhelming national defenses.¹⁶

A. A Multi-Tier, Multi-Domain Defense

Greece plans for Achilles' Shield to operate as a multi-tier, multi-domain defense architecture that integrates air, maritime, and undersea capabilities into a single operational framework. Announced by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in April 2025, the plan aims to organize Greece's defenses into a single, integrated system that Defense Minister Nikos Dendias described as encompassing "anti-missile, anti-aircraft, anti-drone, anti-ship and anti-submarine" capabilities.¹⁷ By connecting sensors and command-and-control across land, sea, and air, Achilles' Shield is intended to provide layered coverage, shared situational awareness, and coordinated engagements, enabling Greek defenses to manage saturation and operate as a coherent system rather than a set of independent elements.

i. Missile Defense

Achilles' Shield will integrate a range of anti-missile systems to address ballistic and cruise missile threats. Greece currently fields U.S.-made Patriot and Soviet-era S-300 PMU-1 systems as its principal long-range air-defense assets, providing coverage against aircraft and cruise missiles and limited capability against ballistic threats.¹⁸ Greece has discussed acquiring Israeli upper-tier systems, including David's Sling, as part of broader efforts to modernize long-range air and missile defense and eventually replace legacy Russian systems.¹⁹

ii. Anti-Aircraft

The anti-aircraft defense layer will address manned aircraft and cruise missiles operating at medium and low altitudes. Greece fields a diverse mix of systems, including Patriot, IRIS-T SLM, legacy HAWK batteries, Crotale, and older Soviet-origin platforms.²⁰ Achilles' Shield would restructure these assets into overlapping coverage zones linked by shared command-and-control rather than fixed, battery-centric sectors. Greece is considering acquiring Barak MX (Barak-8 family) as a modern medium-range system to replace aging HAWK batteries and close gaps between short-range defenses and Patriot, alongside European options already in service or under consideration.²¹

iii. Counter-Drone

The counter-drone layer will form a distinct tier designed to absorb the most numerous threats at the lowest possible cost. Greece fields short-range guns and missiles for point defense of bases and infrastructure, complemented by electronic warfare systems and indigenous counter-drone capabilities. Greek-developed systems such as Kentavros provide detection, tracking, and electronic attack against small drones and loitering munitions by disrupting navigation and command links.²² Achilles' Shield would integrate these tools into a dedicated counter-drone layer intended to prevent low-cost drones from exhausting higher-end interceptors.²³ Greece has discussed modern short-range air-defense systems, including Israel's SPYDER, as potential additions to this tier alongside European and domestic solutions.²⁴

iv. Anti-Ship

In the maritime domain, the anti-ship defense layer will provide surface defense against hostile vessels. Greece fields Harpoon coastal defense systems that provide shore-based anti-ship strike coverage and reduce reliance on naval patrols. The Hellenic Air Force possesses F-16s armed with AGM-84 Harpoons and Mirage 2000-5 and Rafale aircraft armed with AM39 Exocets, enabling flexible airborne maritime strikes.²⁵ At sea, Hydra-class frigates of the MEKO 200HN design contribute additional anti-ship firepower.²⁶ Achilles' Shield would integrate these strike assets with air-defense sensors and maritime surveillance, while Greece's planned acquisition of Israeli PULS long-range rocket artillery would expand shore-based strike options against ports, coastal infrastructure, and maritime targets at extended ranges.²⁷

v. Subsurface Protection

Further extending maritime protection, the underwater domain constitutes a core pillar of Achilles' Shield, rather than a supporting naval mission. Greece maintains Type-214 air-independent propulsion submarines and upgraded Type 209 boats, which provide persistent undersea surveillance and strike capability.²⁸ Greece supports this force with P-3B Orion maritime patrol aircraft, shipborne helicopters equipped with dipping sonar and torpedoes, and surface combatants fitted with hull-mounted sonar and towed arrays.²⁹ Achilles' Shield integrates undersea sensing and maritime patrol data into the broader

defensive network to protect sea lines of communication and undersea infrastructure, including cables and energy assets.

Achilles' Shield – Layered Systems Overview



Layer	Currently Fielded Systems	Israeli Systems (Under Consideration & Potential Additions)
Missile Defense	Patriot PAC-III variant S-300 PMU-1	David's Sling* Arrow-2 Arrow-3
Anti-Aircraft	Patriot IRIS-T SLM HAWK Crotale Soviet-origin short/medium systems	David's Sling* Barak MX (Barak-8 family)*
Counter-Drone	Kentavros (indigenous C-UAS) Short-range guns and missiles Electronic warfare systems Point-defense systems	SPYDER* Iron Dome Laser-based systems (e.g., Iron Beam)
Anti-Ship	Harpoon coastal defense batteries F-16 w/ AGM-84 Harpoon Mirage 2000-5 & Rafale w/ AM39 Exocet Hydra-class (MEKO 200HN) frigates	PULS long-range rocket artillery* Gabriel V naval missile Naval Barak-8 integration
Subsurface Protection	Type-214 AIP submarines Upgraded Type-209 submarines P-3B Orion Shipborne anti-submarine helicopters	No major Israeli system discussed yet

*Currently Under Consideration

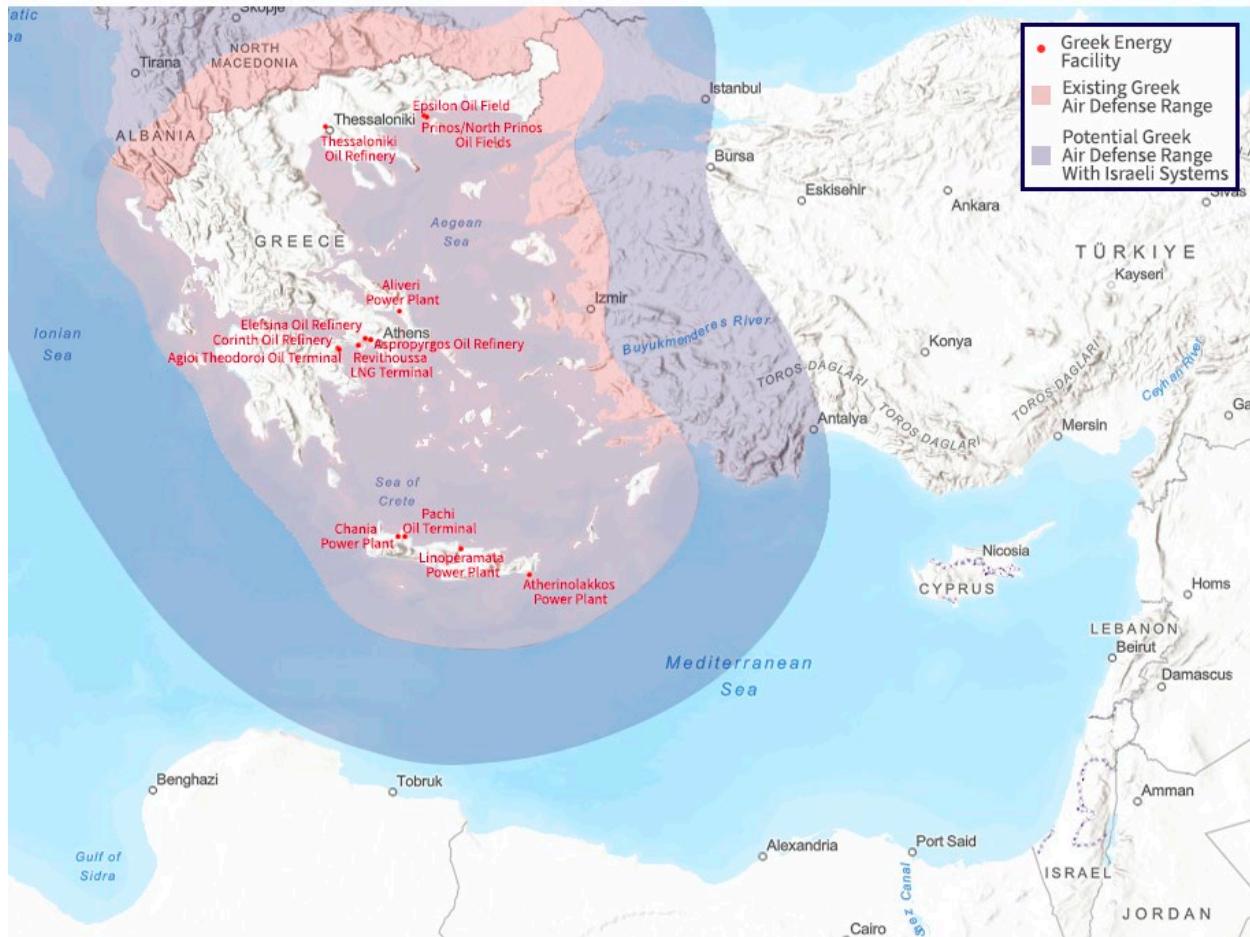
B. Cyprus Outside the Shield

Greece has chosen not to extend Achilles' Shield to cover Cyprus to avoid introducing a new escalation dynamic with Turkey. That decision sets a clear geographic boundary on the architecture, but it also leaves a gap in regional air and missile defense coverage. As a result, Cyprus remains outside the protective envelope of the most advanced integrated defense effort Greece is building.

This security gap could undermine Greek and regional security because Cyprus sits along flight paths and maritime approaches increasingly used by drones and missiles operating across the Eastern Mediterranean. Without inclusion in Achilles' Shield, Cyprus lacks access to the layered sensing, integrated command-and-control, and interceptor coordination that define the architecture. Even as Greece improves its own defenses, Cyprus continues to face exposure to low-altitude drones, cruise missiles, and other threats that exploit distance, cluttered airspace, and limited warning time.

The decision not to extend Achilles' Shield therefore creates a structural vulnerability. Cyprus remains dependent on limited national capabilities rather than a fully integrated defensive network. That exposure underscores the limits of a purely national approach to air and missile defense in a region where threats rarely respect political boundaries.

Deployed and Potential Greek Air Defense Systems



III. David's Shield, Too: Israel's Role in Achilles' Shield

Achilles' Shield aligns closely with Israel's existing approach to integrated, multi-tier defense developed under sustained threat and offers a framework for capable partners to assume greater responsibility for their own regional defense.³⁰ Israeli experience linking sensors, interceptors, and command-and-control across multiple layers provides Greece with capable defenses, reducing reliance on U.S. forces without sacrificing cooperation. For Israel, involvement in Achilles' Shield naturally extends its defense ecosystem into the Eastern Mediterranean, embedding Israeli systems within a more capable regional security

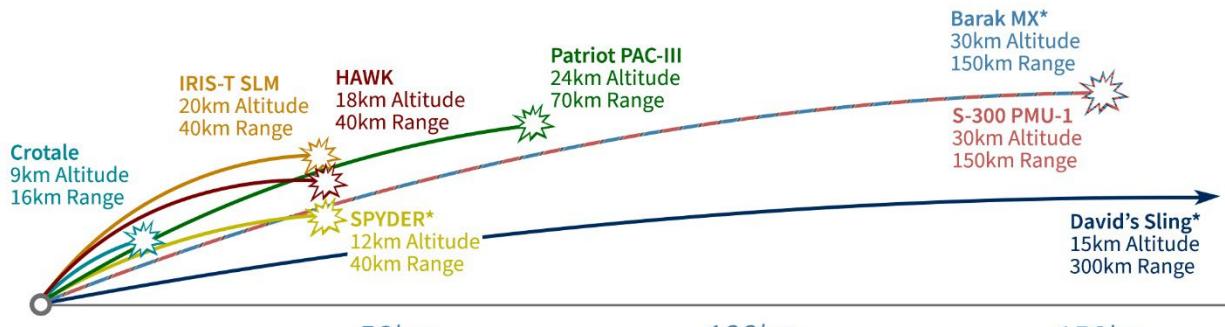
framework, while reinforcing Israel's role as a model partner and net contributor to defense beyond its immediate borders.

A. Strategic Alignment of Eastern Mediterranean Partners

Achilles' Shield provides a natural framework for deepening Greece–Israel defense cooperation around shared, multi-domain security challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean. Both countries operate in environments defined by persistent pressure across multiple domains, where defense effectiveness depends less on individual platforms than on interoperability, layering, and sustained resilience. For Greece, partnering with Israel offers access to combat-proven defensive systems, operational concepts tested under sustained attack, and technological expertise in managing saturation threats.

Greece and Israel have already established a substantial defense procurement relationship. Defense Minister Dendias, when serving as foreign minister in 2023, summarized the bilateral relationship as a “durable partnership at the strategic level, based on common interests and converging perspectives on many challenges.”³¹ In April 2023, Athens purchased roughly \$400 million worth of Israeli Spike anti-tank missiles and Orbiter 3 drones.³² More recently, in January 2026, Dendias met with Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz and announced new partnerships in high-tech defense fields particularly relevant to Achilles' Shield's multi-tier architecture.³³ During this meeting, Dendias said, “We agreed to exchange views and know-how to be able to deal with drones and in particular swarms of unmanned vehicles and groups of unmanned subsea vehicles.”³⁴ This progression from established procurement to advanced technological cooperation in counter-drone and cyber defense illustrates the deepening partnership that Achilles' Shield would formalize and expand.

Ranges of Potential and Deployed Greek Air Defenses



B. Added Benefits for the United States

For the United States, Greece–Israel defense cooperation around Achilles' Shield offers a practical template for greater partner burden sharing, with capable U.S. partners taking on a greater share of regional defense while aligning with U.S. operational concepts. In this context, Achilles' Shield serves not only as Greece's national defense architecture but as an effective vehicle for aligning Greek and Israeli defense approaches within a common, multi-tier operational framework that can scale into a model partnership for other U.S. partners facing similar threats.

Achilles' Shield would also help link U.S. cooperation with partners in the areas of responsibility (AOR) for U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). Israel's transition into CENTCOM—a shift the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA) was at the forefront of advocating as early as 2018—proved decisive during the defense against Iranian missile and drone attacks by enabling unified regional coordination under a single command.³⁵ At the same time, U.S. and allied air and naval assets operating from the Eastern Mediterranean under EUCOM were central to sensing, tracking, and intercepting those threats. Incorporating Israel into Achilles' Shield would institutionalize these cross-command linkages by embedding Israeli and Greek air and maritime defenses within a shared, interoperable architecture, helping translate ad hoc EUCOM–CENTCOM coordination into a durable operational bridge across the Eastern Mediterranean and a repeatable model of partner-led, U.S.-enabled defense integration.

C. Winning the Cost Curve

Israeli systems will provide Greece with a more cost-effective way to achieve depth and sustainability within the Achilles' Shield architecture. These systems would also prove more economical than scrambling fighter jets in response to each Turkish airspace incursion, with F-16 operations costing an estimated \$27,000 per flight hour and F-35 operations costing an estimated \$33,000 to \$42,000 per flight hour.³⁶ As Athens builds a layered defense to counter high volumes of simultaneous threats, the cost per battery and per interceptor is a critical metric for long-term viability. Purchasing Israeli platforms will reduce both upfront and long-term expenditures compared to several of Greece's existing platforms, enabling broader coverage and greater resilience without unsustainable spending.

Similar cost benefits also extend to the medium and lower tiers of defense. A Barak MX (Barak-8 family) battery offers medium-range coverage at substantially lower platform and interceptor costs than Patriot batteries. Similarly, the SPYDER system utilizes Python and Derby missiles that are much cheaper than alternatives.³⁷ At the lowest tier, directed energy systems, like Israel's Iron Beam laser, which costs only a few dollars per intercept, would help Achilles' Shield conserve high-end interceptors and expand coverage without excessive budget strain.³⁸

D. Greek Operational Improvements

Israel has demonstrated an ability to operate multiple defensive tiers simultaneously under combat conditions. Its architecture links upper-tier missile defense, medium-range interception, dense short-range defenses, and counter-drone systems into a single engagement framework that dynamically prioritizes threats and assigns interceptors based on cost and necessity. This approach aligns directly with Greece's objective of managing saturation without exhausting high-end interceptors.

The proven ability of Israeli systems to defeat barrages of missiles and low-flying drones also offers particular value to Greece. Israeli planners designed their defenses to defeat large numbers of low-cost threats, relying on layered detection, electronic warfare, and relatively cheap interceptors. During Iran's large-scale missile and drone attacks on Israel in April and October 2024 and to an even greater extent during the 12-Day War, Israeli and U.S. forces executed a coordinated, multi-layer defense across multiple theaters.³⁹ Israeli systems intercepted threats within Israeli airspace, while U.S. platforms—including naval destroyers, aircraft, and regional missile-defense assets—engaged Iranian missiles and drones outside Israel's borders. Shared situational awareness and coordinated engagement expanded the defended battlespace and reduced pressure on Israeli interceptors.

E. Expanded Israeli Domain Awareness and Protection

Israel could also benefit from expanded sensor coverage in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly as Iranian-backed threats have demonstrated the ability to target offshore energy infrastructure and conduct long-range drone operations beyond their immediate theaters. As previously mentioned, Iran and its proxy network exploited the Eastern Mediterranean throughout 2024 to route attack drones toward Israeli targets, using international waters and airspace to avoid detection and approach from less-defended vectors. Houthi forces have repeatedly used one-way attack drones and cruise missiles to fly hundreds of miles over water, while Hezbollah has targeted offshore gas platforms and maritime assets using unmanned aerial systems and precision munitions.

If shared with Israel, the expansion of Greek air, sea surface, and undersea sensors could extend Israel's early warning and tracking depth westward, improving cueing against low-flying drones and sea-skimming threats approaching from outside Israel's traditional sensor envelope. Greek sensors positioned across the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean would provide earlier detection of threats transiting through this corridor before they reach Israeli airspace. This expanded sensing layer would enhance Israel's ability to detect, classify, and engage threats earlier in their flight, reduce reaction timelines, and support coordinated defense alongside U.S. and partner forces. However, realizing these benefits would require moving beyond the currently envisaged procurement and co-production model for Achilles' Shield toward a genuine integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) structure.

F. Challenges to Deeper Greece-Israel Cooperation

Israeli systems can become an important part of Greece's force structure, but current Greek plans focus primarily on platform acquisition and co-production rather than full IAMD integration with Israel.⁴⁰ The shared regional threats underlying Greece's desire to build Achilles' Shield highlight the need and potential to move Greece–Israel defense cooperation beyond a relationship primarily of ad hoc weapons sales toward a more integrated defensive network.

Arms sales and co-production agreements, by themselves, do not expand integration. Purchasing advanced systems and manufacturing them under license increases capability at the platform level, but it does not automatically enable shared data flows, fused situational awareness, or coordinated engagement across multiple layers of defense. Achieving greater integration depends on whether each nation's systems connect to one another, allowing sensors, command-and-control, and interceptors to operate within a shared defensive framework. Without deeper connectivity, Greek and Israeli defensive architectures would remain largely self-contained, operating in parallel rather than as part of a unified network.

A key barrier to deeper integration remains cybersecurity and the protection of intellectual property. Data-link technologies such as LINK-16 can promote interoperability by allowing allied systems to share tracks, cues, and situational awareness, but only among platforms equipped with those links. Even then, such tools do not create a fully integrated defense architecture, and information sharing remains limited to what the link can carry, rather than enabling true sensor-to-shooter integration. Moving from Israeli platform purchases and co-production to genuine IAMD integration would require Greece and Israel to share sensitive operational data, expose command-and-control architectures to potential vulnerabilities, and resolve complex questions about who controls engagement decisions when threats cross national boundaries.

IV. U.S. Role in Building Achilles' Shield

This moment presents the United States with a rare opportunity to shape a more integrated regional security framework that strengthens allies, deters adversaries, and reduces the operational burden on U.S. forces. Greece's decision to launch Achilles' Shield, and, in the words of Prime Minister Mitsotakis, to "enhanc[e] [Greek] deterrence and deepen [Greek] alliances," signals that a key U.S. partner is willing to assume greater responsibility for regional security, fully aligned with the burden-sharing priorities emphasized in the recently published National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.⁴¹ By coordinating diplomacy, aligning regional planning, expanding multilateral defense structures, and deepening industrial and technological cooperation, Washington can maximize the strategic value of Achilles' Shield while strengthening trilateral defense cooperation and building a unified, U.S.-led security architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean.

A. Treat the Eastern Mediterranean as a Strategic Region Instead of a Seam

The United States should harmonize State Department and Department of Defense planning by treating the Eastern Mediterranean as a coherent strategic region rather than a bureaucratic seam between Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Current organizational boundaries, including the State Department's regional bureaus and the Department of Defense's division between U.S. EUROC, CENTCOM, and Africa Command (AFRICOM), create policy gaps that adversaries exploit and that complicate U.S. engagement with Greece and Israel. JINSA has long recommended viewing the Eastern Mediterranean as a single, integrated theater defined by shared air, maritime, energy, and infrastructure challenges.⁴² Washington should promote cross-bureau and cross-combatant command planning mechanisms to ensure consistent policy, synchronized military posture, and unified diplomatic messaging. This alignment would strengthen U.S. leadership, reduce operational seams, and reinforce trilateral cooperation as Achilles' Shield develops.

Congress should fund a standing EUROC-led joint planning cell for the Eastern Mediterranean with liaison elements from CENTCOM and AFRICOM, building on the Israel-CENTCOM-EUROC coordination mechanisms that operated before Israel's transfer to CENTCOM, when Israel remained formally under EUROC but threats and operations routinely crossed command boundaries. That earlier structure enabled shared planning and intelligence coordination across the seam between commands. Institutionalizing it through a permanent, EUROC-led cell with integrated planning staff from CENTCOM and AFRICOM would reduce bureaucratic friction and support integrated regional defense efforts as Achilles' Shield develops.

B. U.S. Leadership to Drive Interoperability and Industrial Cooperation

The United States should leverage its central diplomatic and military role in the Eastern Mediterranean to facilitate Greek-Israeli defense cooperation and to address any transfer or third-party release issues that may arise with incorporating Israeli systems within Achilles' Shield, ensuring that co-developed technologies can be included in Greek modernization plans without bureaucratic delay. Washington is also uniquely positioned to coordinate solutions to potential intellectual property concerns by serving as a trusted convener for intelligence sharing, technical disclosure, and interoperability planning among all three partners. By emphasizing the operational and strategic value of linking Greek and Israeli systems and by smoothing the policy and technical pathways needed to make that interoperability possible, the United States can help ensure Achilles' Shield evolves into a genuinely interoperable, trilateral framework aligned with U.S. interests.

Washington can facilitate trilateral partnerships in areas such as counter-drone technology, maritime surveillance, AI-enabled sensor fusion, and precision-guided munitions, where U.S. companies bring scale and advanced research and development, Israel contributes combat-proven systems and rapid innovation

cycles, and Greece offers strategic geography and expanding industrial capabilities. This cooperation would directly support Achilles' Shield's core objective to strengthen and modernize the Greek defense industry so that Greece can sustain its own systems, participate in co-production, and become a more capable contributor to regional security.

C. Expand U.S. Posture in Cyprus

As Greece assumes greater responsibility for defense through Achilles' Shield, the United States can redirect resources and attention to other theaters and higher-priority missions. U.S. deployment of additional air and maritime sensors to Cyprus would extend early warning and tracking across the Eastern Mediterranean, providing intelligence that can be integrated into Achilles' Shield's operational picture. This approach would enable the U.S. presence in Cyprus to reinforce the architecture through sensing and awareness, while Greece remains responsible for operating and sustaining its own defensive system.

D. Build Multilateral Defense Frameworks and Expand Training

Washington should formalize a trilateral defense structure that links U.S., Greek, and Israeli forces across air, maritime, and missile-defense missions, building on the existing U.S.–Greece–Israel trilaterals and the broader 3+1 framework with Cyprus. The United States already participates in regular diplomatic and defense dialogues with Greece, Israel, and Cyprus, and U.S. forces routinely join Greek- and Israeli-hosted exercises that bring elements of all three militaries together. These mechanisms provide a ready-made foundation for institutionalizing cooperation between EUCOM and CENTCOM, mirroring the operational reality that threats in the Eastern Mediterranean routinely cross command boundaries. Washington can expand these trilaterals and the 3+1 into standing joint planning groups, shared operational concepts, and integrated training pipelines that bring Greek and Israeli systems together under U.S. coordination.

The United States should also broaden its air and maritime domain training exercises with Greece and Israel to develop shared doctrine for multi-tier air and missile defense. U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Missile Defense Agency personnel can provide critical expertise in integrating sensors, command-and-control systems, and interceptors from multiple national inventories. Incorporating Greek and Israeli systems into major U.S.-run exercises, such as Austere Challenge, Iniochos, and Noble Dina, would accelerate practical interoperability and ensure Achilles' Shield aligns with U.S. operational concepts.⁴³ Regular trilateral and 3+1 drills focused on saturation defense, counter-drone operations, and long-range strike would deepen interoperability and reinforce the U.S. role as the region's primary convening power.

E. Grow Cooperation on Energy and Critical Infrastructure Security

The United States should promote trilateral cooperation to protect critical energy and infrastructure assets across the Eastern Mediterranean, including undersea cables, offshore gas fields, liquid natural gas terminals, and key ports. Washington can help integrate U.S., Greek, and Israeli maritime and air-defense assets into a shared infrastructure protection plan, with joint exercises and information-sharing mechanisms developing operational concepts for shared defense.

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