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Dr. Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
1400 Defense Blvd
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Esper:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I write to raise a concern brought to my attention during my visit to NSA Souda Bay, Crete, Greece earlier this month.

Greece is vital for the projection of U.S. geostrategic interests by being home to the most important U.S. military facility in the Mediterranean Sea, NSA Souda Bay, Crete. It is the integral cog for the strong defense and security cooperation that exists between longstanding NATO members, United States and Greece. The increased volume of U.S. and NATO operations conducted at NSA Souda Bay in recent years is evidence as are annual training exercises such as “Noble Dina” held by the U.S., Greece, and Israel. Further, the revised Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement signed in October 2019 between the United States and Greece, and ongoing Strategic Dialogue held between the two NATO allies, illustrate their commitment to address over a longer term the security challenges in an ever-increasingly important part of the world. Additionally, just in this past month alone, there have been at least two joint military exercises, generally, “Stolen Cerberus VII,” and the “Hellenic Tank Challenge 2020.”

The United States demonstrated the value it places in NSA Souda Bay by “putting its money where its mouth is.” The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019 NDAA) authorized \$47.85 million to be appropriated for two U.S. Navy construction projects at NSA Souda Bay – at the Joint Mobility Processing Center and Marathi Logistics Support Center. Congress appropriated the full funding level of \$47.85 million in the ‘Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019, which became law (PL 115-244).

Therefore, during my visit to NSA Souda Bay, where I received a high-level briefing from military officials, it was to my dismay to learn the \$47.85 million has yet to be provided for the construction of those two projects at the Joint Mobility Processing Center and Marathi Logistics Support Center. Incidentally, three U.S. naval vessels were docked at Souda Bay during my visit, which is a further testament to the United States’ increased presence there.

Furthermore, NSA Souda Bay's inclusion on the Department of Defense's list of at-risk military projects that could be delayed or cut as part of the Section 2808 funding pool for border barrier projects also is a disappointment. Therefore, Secretary Esper, could you please:

1. Confirm what the current status is of the \$47.85 million that Congress authorized and appropriated for FY2019, and when can we expect that this funding will reach the intended very important construction projects at Souda Bay?

Because of NSA Souda Bay's demonstrated importance to U.S. security interests in the region, to NATO's mission, and to U.S.-Greece defense and security cooperation, it is imperative that this appropriation be provided without further delay for its intended use for the two projects.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis
President

CC: Secretary of State Michael Pompeo
Robert O'Brien, National Security Adviser
Senator James Inhofe, Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee
Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee
Rep. Adam Smith, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
Rep. Mac Thornberry, Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee
Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Co-Chair, Congressional Hellenic Caucus
Rep. Carolyn Maloney, Co-Chair, Congressional Hellenic Caucus
Geoffrey R. Pyatt, Ambassador of the United States to Greece
Ross Johnston, Greek Desk Officer, Department of State