

FILE

SUBJECT: GREECE-TURKEY-CYPRUS: Trouble Ahead

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Central Intelligence Agency



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## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

4 September 1986

GREECE-TURKEY-CYPRUS: Trouble Ahead?

Executive Summary

Tensions are once again on the rise in the eastern Mediterranean as Greeks and Turks step up their wrangling over air corridors, the continental shelf, the Greek island of Limnos, and Turkey's relationship with the EC. Further aggravating the situation is the failure of the latest UN peace plan on Cyprus and recent Turkish Cypriot moves aimed at solidifying the independent status of the northern third of the island. Although alternating periods of tension and relative calm have become a common feature in the relationship between Greece and Turkey, a number of factors suggest that the situation is worsening in subtle and potentially dangerous ways. Turkey, for example, appears to be adopting a tougher policy toward Greece as suggested by Prime Minister Ozal's public statements this spring about the limits of Turkish patience. Likewise, Prime Minister Papandreu

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has gone beyond previous limits in his warning that any attempt to "expand the Turkish occupation" in Cyprus would lead to open conflict. Although we continue to believe that neither side is spoiling for a fight--both leaders recognize the potential costs of hostilities--we are concerned that relations have marginally deteriorated over the past months and that the potential for miscalculation or an accidental incident is greater now than in the past. Any military confrontation between Greece and Turkey would have serious repercussions for US and NATO interests and could place in jeopardy US facilities in one or both countries.

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This memorandum was prepared by the Office of European Analysis. Questions and comments are welcome and may be addressed to [redacted] Deputy Chief, West European Division [redacted].

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### Background

Greece and Turkey have been at odds over Cyprus, the Aegean, and a variety of other questions for many years. (For a more detailed discussion of the issues, see Appendix.) The degree of tension has varied--ranging from periods verging on open hostility to periods of relative calm. The Greek-instigated coup on Cyprus and the subsequent Turkish invasion in 1974 marked an obvious low point, although the two sides nearly came to blows again twice in the decade over mineral exploration rights in the Aegean. Since then, diplomatic skirmishes have become a common feature of the relationship and have occasionally brought the two sides close to conflict. The periods of stability in the last two decades have fallen far short of anything approaching friendly relations.

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Over the past three to four months Greece and Turkey seem to have entered another period of tense relations. A sharpening of the dispute over Greece's right to militarize the island of Limnos, for example, is again threatening to disrupt NATO defense planning and to jeopardize US bilateral relations with the disputing parties. Similarly, a recent flap over the designation of air corridors in the Aegean and wrangling over the normalization of Turkish-EC relations are turning essentially technical and economic forums into political battlegrounds. At the same time, mounting tensions on Cyprus--in particular, Greek Cypriot rejection of the UN Secretary General's peace plan, recent Turkish Cypriot challenges to the status of the UN peacekeeping forces, and reports of increases in Turkish troop levels and the upgrading of Turkish armor capability on the island--are adding further strains to relations between Athens and Ankara.

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### At Stake

US interest in maintaining the stability of NATO's southern flank and in retaining bases in both Turkey and Greece gives it a major stake in the preservation of peace in the region. Together Greece and Turkey form a critical part of Western defenses on the southeastern flank of NATO, for the forces they supply as well as the bases and intelligence monitoring facilities they provide to the United States and other Allies. Contingency planning for southwest Asia, protection of oil supply lines from the Middle East, and the security of Israel, moreover, all hinge on an effective and committed Allied effort in the eastern Mediterranean. Assessing the extent to which this latest round of tensions goes beyond the "normal" pattern of the past decade and threatens more serious consequences is therefore crucial to US security interests.

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Since the Cyprus crisis of 1974, the uneasy peace between Greece and Turkey has been punctuated by periods of sharp tension. Turkish efforts in 1976 to assert a right to an equal share of the Aegean by sending a research vessel and naval escort into contested waters ushered in one such period. The Panther incident in 1984, when three salvos fired by Turkish warships conducting an antiaircraft exercise landed close to a Greek destroyer shadowing the exercise, created another. Papandreou's proclamation in early 1985 of a "new" defense doctrine formally identifying Turkey as the main threat to Greece led to a third period of tense relations. At a less publicized level, both sides routinely schedule military exercises at overlapping times, a practice that frequently brings armed aircraft and naval vessels into close proximity to one another. [REDACTED]

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Rhetoric and actions on these and other occasions justify concern about an escalation into military confrontation. Yet in the past both sides have shown a recognition of the potential costs of open conflict and have taken action to prevent incidents from escalating. After announcing a new defense doctrine, for example, the Greeks refrained from any sudden redeployment of troops that might have aggravated Turkish nervousness. Similarly, last Christmas, the Turks cancelled an air and naval exercise when they learned that the timing had excited Greek suspicions and prompted Athens to cancel holiday leaves and put its Air Force on full alert. More recently, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] And Greek and Greek Cypriot forces on Cyprus were warned to avoid provocations along the buffer zone during the recent Turkish exercises in northern Cyprus. [REDACTED]

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#### Recent Developments

A number of events over the past few months appear to signal the beginning of a new period of sharp tension between Athens and Ankara.

Limnos: A SACEUR umbrella defense plan is the latest focus of the dispute over Greece's claim of a right to militarize Limnos--a dispute which contributed to Greece's withdrawal from NATO exercises in 1984 and which has led to recurring difficulties in approving the annual NATO force goals.\* The

\*The Greeks currently have approximately 4,000 troops on Limnos. The Turks insist that this violates a prohibition against the militarization of the island set forth in the Dardanelles Convention of 1923. The Greeks hold that this was succeeded by the Montreux Convention of 1936, which contains no such restriction. [REDACTED]

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[redacted] The Greeks want NATO to include the island in wartime contingency planning because they believe it would give some weight to their desire to station military forces on the island--and more generally, to take whatever action they deem necessary to provide for the defense of the whole of their national territory. Athens also argues that the plan fills a longstanding void in NATO defense of the region. [redacted]

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Ankara objects to the NATO plan because it fears its approval would prejudice the Turkish case on Limnos, and more important, would set a precedent for Greek militarization of other islands in the Aegean--which in Ankara's view is the real motive underlying Greek actions on Limnos. Complicating the issue is Turkey's conviction that the US has actively pushed implementation of the plan, presumably as a quid pro quo for continued access to military bases in Greece. So far, NATO has dodged the issue by keeping the matter under study. [redacted]

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Air corridors: In late May, Athens announced that it would be partially implementing a new ICAO-recommended air route (G-13) running in a direct path from the intersection of the Greek and Yugoslav flight information region near the island of Khios to the Greek island of Rhodes. At the same time, Athens announced that it was redesignating the old corridor as J-60 and that the old corridor, which included a dog-leg over Limnos, would remain in effect until the new route was fully operational. Turkish officials and newspapers reacted stridently, apparently convinced the Greeks were about to renege on full implementation of the new corridor. The Greeks, in turn, cited "technical and operational difficulties" for not fully implementing the new route, but assured ICAO that they would ultimately abandon the old corridor. [redacted]

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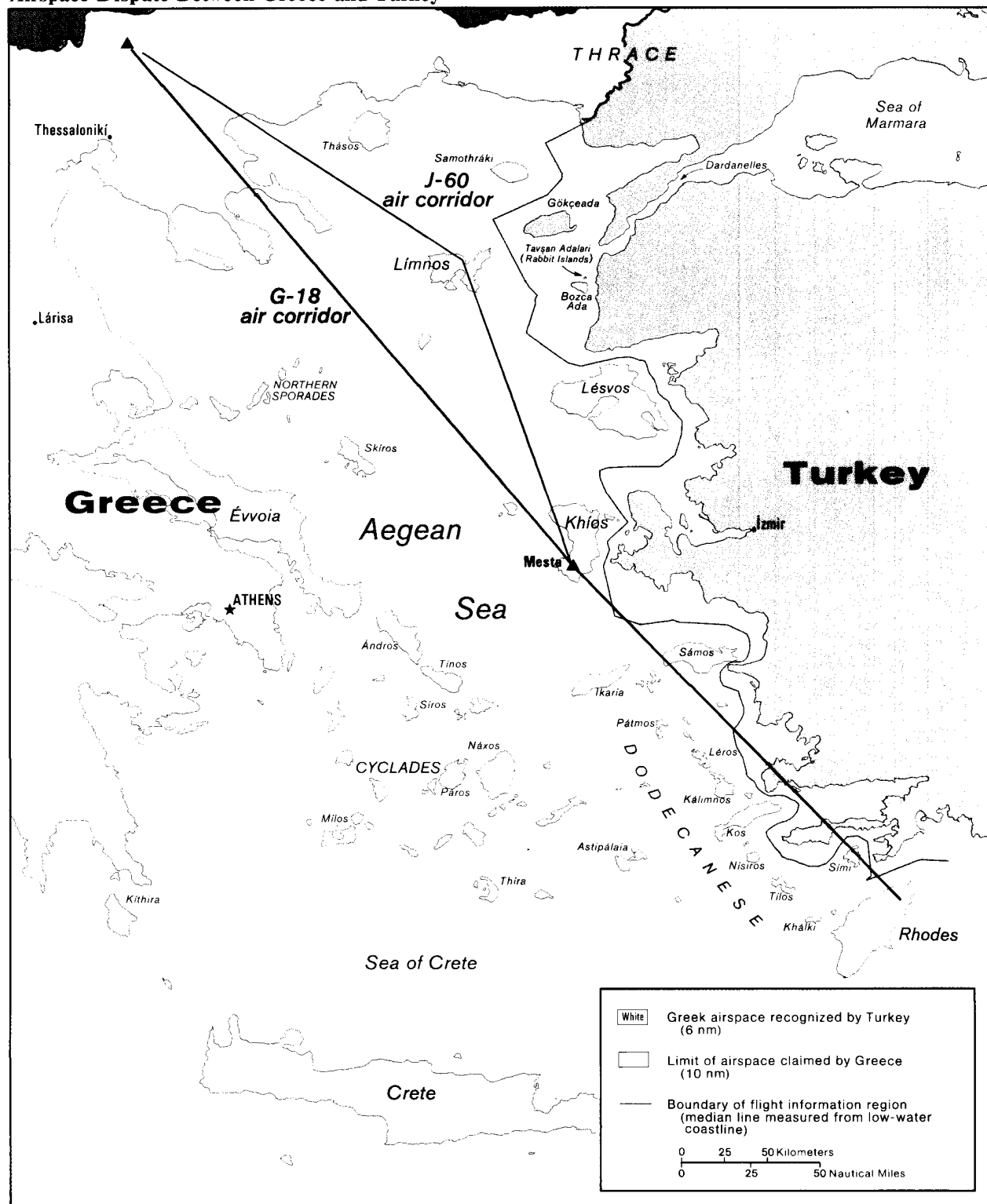
The Greeks [redacted] reluctance to move ahead stems in part from their concern over the periodic intrusion of Turkish military aircraft into Greek-claimed airspace without coordination. They are determined to assert their airspace claims and preserve their civil air service to the Greek islands in the Aegean--a right they suspect Turkey is covertly challenging. For its part, Ankara argues that Athens unilaterally implemented the old route in 1981, knowing that it traversed an area in which the Turkish Air Force regularly exercised. Ankara has also pointed out that the new route is safer and more direct. The flap over the air corridors appears to have subsided for the time being, although recent Turkish press reports indicate Ankara may raise the issue with the ICAO again in September. [redacted]

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# Airspace Dispute Between Greece and Turkey



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Turkey's Relations with the EC: The EC only recently has become a major forum for the ventilation of Greek-Turkish disputes. The Turks are anxious to improve their relations with the EC both for the economic benefits--including the release of about \$540 million in development aid--and for the political symbolism of Western endorsement and confidence in Turkey's stability. Turkey's relations with the EC were effectively frozen after the military takeover in 1980, and Ankara's subsequent efforts to normalize the relationship were stymied until recently because of the reservations of some EC members over the Turkish commitment to democratic freedom and human rights. [ ]

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Most states now appear willing to give Turkey the benefit of the doubt and to support Ankara's efforts to reactivate the Turkish association agreement with the EC, but Greece has begun to place conditions on the process. Athens has said it will sign the association protocol only if Turkey agrees to lift restrictive laws on the property rights of Greeks living in Turkey and accepts limits on the freedom of movement of Turkish labor. Athens has cited its own security concerns and the need for Turkey to conform to EC conventions as its reasons for withholding approval of the protocol. The Greeks view the EC as the one forum in which they have leverage over Turkey, and they appear determined to use their EC membership to press for Turkish concessions on specific issues. As it does in other forums when disputes with Greece arise, Ankara argues that Athens should negotiate the issues bilaterally. [ ]

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Continental Shelf: Late last month Greece strongly criticized Turkey for sending a research vessel and a naval escort into a disputed area in the Aegean without first asking Greece's permission. Athens maintained that the research vessel was conducting seismic research on a portion of the seabed that is part of its continental shelf. Ankara countered that the vessel was not engaged in seabed research and was accompanied by an armed escort because of Greece's alleged harrassment of past Turkish scientific expeditions in the Aegean. Ankara also complained later to the United States that Greece was violating the 1976 Berne Declaration in which both Greece and Turkey pledged to refrain from exploratory activities in the disputed waters in the Aegean pending a delimitation of the continental shelf. In particular, Turkey expressed concern that last year Greece granted exploration licenses for areas along the northwestern coast of Greece that lay outside Greek territorial waters. (Athens informed Ankara at the time that it had no intention of drilling in the disputed areas but that in any case it no longer recognized the Berne Declaration.) [ ]

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The current flare-up is part of the more fundamental and longstanding dispute between Greece and Turkey over the exploitation and distribution of resources on the Aegean seabed. Over the past four years, however, the issue was relatively dormant, and incidents were handled by Greece and Turkey in a relatively low-key manner. The resort of both sides to publicizing the issue and attempting to secure third-party support will complicate efforts to resolve their differences on this and other recent disputes. [REDACTED]

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Cyprus: The apparent collapse of the UN Secretary General's latest effort to construct a peace plan further complicates Greek-Turkish relations. The Secretary General's peace effort effectively came to an end in April when Greek Cypriots rejected a draft "framework agreement" on the grounds that it was biased. The Secretary General has nonetheless scheduled meetings next month with both Cypriot leaders, and various reporting suggests he will continue to push his current framework. In our view, there is little likelihood that the Greek Cypriots can be brought to accept the UN peace plan in its current form. At the same time, Turkish Prime Minister Ozal and Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash have made it clear that they would be unwilling to consider any changes in the current UN draft or any other UN initiative at this time. [REDACTED]

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Tensions on Cyprus were further heightened by Turkish Prime Minister Ozal's visit in early July to the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus." The Greek Cypriots staged a protest demonstration along the buffer zone separating the Turkish and Greek Cypriot sections of Nicosia--a move that resulted in temporary Greek Cypriot closure of the border. When Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash subsequently closed the border from his side, he initially linked his action not to Greek Cypriot provocations but to "unacceptable" criticism of the Ozal visit by Western governments and the UN, and the need of the north to assert its "legitimacy." Denktash also called on the UN to negotiate on procedures for the movement of UN forces in the north--a step that he hoped would clearly imply the legitimacy of his government. Such statements by Denktash and Prime Minister Ozal have caused considerable nervousness among the Greek Cypriots and their supporters in Athens about Turkish intentions. [REDACTED]

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Military Activities: Greek and Turkish exercises have also contributed to the rise in the political temperature. The Greeks responded to a Turkish exercise in eastern Thrace in May by placing their Air Force on its highest state of alert. Similarly, the Greeks responded to a Turkish exercise involving air, naval, and ground units in the Sea of Marmara and the northern Aegean by announcing an exercise of their own in the

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Aegean. The potential for incidents in these activities was illustrated on 30 June when Turkish naval vessels conducting previously announced live fire exercises off Rhodes continued firing even though a Greek Cypriot cruise liner had moved into the area. Two rounds allegedly were fired in the vicinity of the cruise liner. The Greek response was to announce a joint air and naval exercise involving live firing in the same area. [redacted]

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Other significant military activities also are afoot. [redacted] the Turks plan to send about 5,000 more troops to Cyprus, raising their total strength to somewhere between 23,000 and 27,000. The Turks have also begun replacing some of their older tanks with newer, more modern tanks--perhaps "upgunned" equivalents of the US M48A5 tank. Whether these moves are only contingency planning or connected to potential measures to consolidate the Turkish "state" in the north, they will clearly ratchet up Greek anxiety about Turkish goals in Cyprus. [redacted]

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Rhetorical Exchanges: As is usually the case, rhetorical exchanges again have played a part in poisoning relations between Athens and Ankara. This time--in contrast to the "normal" pattern--Papandreou has not been the sole instigator of inflammatory rhetoric. Indeed, Ozal has matched his Greek counterpart's occasional bellicose outbursts, beginning with a speech in western Anatolia in late April, when he warned that Turkey's patience with Greece had reached its last stage. [redacted]

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### Causes for Concern

Although the latest series of incidents are unlikely to lead to open conflict, we see a number of factors suggesting that relations between Greece and Turkey are worsening in subtle and potentially dangerous ways. [redacted]

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Turkish attitudes appear to be hardening. Ozal in the past consistently held out a willingness to meet with Greek leaders to discuss outstanding issues between the two countries. Ozal's public warnings this spring about the limits of Turkish patience strike an uncharacteristically tougher note. [redacted]

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Turkish domestic political motives may also be at work. The slow return to democracy has expanded the range and sharpened the

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tone of political debate in Turkey.

Turkey also may be anxious about perceived Greek gains in their competition for international support. As already noted, the Turks saw the proposed NATO plan for the wartime reinforcement of Limnos as an indication of a Western tilt in favor of Greece. Similarly, they fear that the Greeks will somehow block Turkey's rapprochement with the EC. They have long charged that the United States and other Western allies appease Papandreou, and they may have concluded that a harder and more demanding line will pay dividends.

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On the Greek side of the equation, the forced retirement of Greek President Karamanlis in 1985 removed an important moderating factor in Greek-Turkish relations.

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Equally important was the Turkish perception that as long as Karamanlis was in office, he would prevent Papandreou from acting rashly. The absence of Karamanlis has almost certainly deepened Turkish uncertainty about possible Greek behavior in a crisis.

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Papandreou's posturing in some ways has also gone beyond previous limits. His tougher tone toward Turkey can be attributed in part to his need to redirect domestic attention as he mends fences with the United States. Although always given to inflammatory rhetoric about Turkey, however, Papandreou generally has avoided painting himself into dangerous corners. Thus, his speech before the EC in late June, in which he warned that any attempts to expand the Turkish occupation in Cyprus would lead to open conflict, was a significant departure from previous statements. This laying down of markers will make it more difficult for him to back down in a crisis without losing face.

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The failure of the UN initiative on Cyprus adds another disturbing new element to the picture. As long as the peace process was alive, both sides had an interest in appearing

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moderately reasonable--if for no other reason than to earn credit within the international community. In the short term, the most likely threat to the status quo on the island comes from Ankara and the Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriots appear to be positioning themselves to solidify their hold on the northern third of the island. Beyond their recent attempts to challenge the status of the UN forces on Cyprus, the steps they appear to be contemplating include settlement of the deserted city of Varosha and a full scale push to secure diplomatic recognition from other countries. [redacted]

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The Turkish side, now that the Greek Cypriots have assumed the onus for torpedoing the UN plan, may believe it can risk new nation-building efforts in northern Cyprus. Ozal's strong statements in support of the political equality of northern and southern Cyprus during his visit last month may have been intended to test the reactions of the UN and Western governments. Any further movement in this direction almost certainly will trigger a new series of actions and counteractions on the part of Athens and Ankara. The Greek Cypriots, moreover, would be likely to speed up their defense procurement program in response to any upgrading and strengthening of Turkish forces on the island. Athens and Nicosia might also consider sending additional Greek troops--or possibly even tanks--to the island. Such a series of steps would be profoundly destabilizing. [redacted]

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### Outlook

We do not believe either side is contemplating an act of overt aggression, and we see no likelihood that either would do so as things now stand. On the other hand, we see no evidence that either side is prepared to undertake the sort of statesmanlike but politically risky action that could break the present pattern of mutual distrust and suspicion--for example, a Turkish offer to draw down significantly its forces on Cyprus or a Greek offer to sit down with the Turks to discuss their differences and ways to ameliorate them. [redacted]

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Indeed, all the signs point toward continuing intransigence. For example, both Athens and Ankara appear to believe that the US will somehow save the two sides from themselves and prevent open hostilities. [redacted]

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[redacted] In our view, this mind-set discourages leaders on both sides from taking the kinds of political risks involved in peacemaking and promotes a potentially dangerous disregard for the implications of their own actions. [redacted]

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In the short term, the most likely prospect for the Aegean region is a continuation of the present cycle of alternating periods of tension and relative calm. In our view, however, these repeated cycles of tension are incrementally moving the two sides further from reconciliation and contributing to an increasingly volatile climate. As a result, we believe the chances for a miscalculation or accident are marginally greater now than in previous years. [REDACTED]

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Furthermore, we can no longer assume that open conflict brought about in this manner will necessarily be limited to a quick skirmish on Cyprus or in the Aegean. [REDACTED]

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Unless measures to limit conflict were exerted by both sides immediately following an initial incident, there is at least the possibility that an expanded and bloody confrontation could occur. [REDACTED]

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Beyond the deleterious impact on NATO of any fighting between two member states, should conflict occur between Greece and Turkey, both sides would look to the United States for support. Both would also interpret anything less than total backing as covert support for the other side. Even without a crisis, US relations with both capitals are likely to continue to be complicated by this enduring regional feud. [REDACTED]

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APPENDIX

The Issues

The two areas in which Greek and Turkish interests are most directly and inextricably in conflict--the Aegean and Cyprus--involve quarrels of long standing. Almost all of the more than 2,000 islands in the Aegean belong to Greece, a circumstance that gives the Greeks control over almost all of the Aegean sea and air routes--including sea and air approaches to the Dardanelles and western Turkey. Some of these islands lie within 3 miles of the Turkish coast. This proximity inevitably pits Greek sovereignty and national security against Turkey's national interests. [REDACTED]

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Both sides can cite treaty provisions and points of international law. Often, however, the issues that divide them have less to do with differing interpretations of international law and more to do with the long and bloody history of the two peoples. Greeks across the political spectrum see Turkey as a growing regional power with designs on Greek territory, particularly the Greek islands. Athens claims a right sanctioned by international law and treaty to take any action necessary to maintain control of air and sea communications between the mainland and the islands and to defend its national territory. The Turks, for their part, believe that Greece is seeking to make the semi-enclosed Aegean into a "Greek lake" and thereby preempt Turkish rights in the area. Ankara asserts a need to protect its security and ensure vital commercial and naval access routes through the Dardanelles and Aegean. [REDACTED]

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Many of the disputes probably could be resolved easily if they were not seen by both sides as bearing directly on more fundamental issues. Among these more fundamental issues are:

Continental shelf rights: Greece maintains that its inhabited islands have their own continental shelves, while Turkey argues that many of the Greek islands lie on the Anatolian shelf. At issue are the exploitation and distribution of the Aegean's seabed resources.

Territorial waters: Athens, citing recent international conventions, reserves the right to extend its sea boundaries from 6 to 12 nautical miles. Ankara argues that the Aegean is a special case and that extension of territorial waters would cut off Turkey's direct access to international waters. It has warned that any attempt to enforce such an extension would be a casus belli.

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Airspace and air traffic control: Greece claims an airspace of 10 nautical miles around its islands and insists for safety reasons that all Turkish aircraft entering its Flight Information Region file flight plans. Turkey recognizes an airspace of only 6 nautical miles and, like the United States, refuses to file plans for military flights.

NATO command and control: Greece is seeking to regain the NATO command and control responsibilities in the Aegean that it lost when it temporarily withdrew from NATO in 1974. Turkey is pressing for some formula that would allow for joint control.

Limnos and Samothrace: Athens argues that the Montreux Convention, which allows Turkey to militarize the Straits, also gives Greece the right to station troops on the islands of Limnos and Samothrace. Ankara counters that the convention does not mention Limnos and Samothrace by name.

Militarization of the Greek Aegean Islands: Greece points to the creation of the Turkish "Aegean" army in 1975 and argues that the right of self-defense overrides any treaty provisions providing for the demilitarization of its Aegean islands. Turkey notes that the treaties under which the islands were ceded to Greece dictate that they remain demilitarized.

Minorities: Greece and Turkey accuse each other of failing to respect the safeguards for minority communities outlined by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and of discriminating against the ethnic communities living under their respective jurisdictions.

Cyprus: Greece points to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 as proof of Ankara's aggressive intentions and has called for the withdrawal of Turkish troops as a condition for meaningful negotiations between the two Cypriot communities. Turkey counters that the Athens-inspired coup on Cyprus prompted its intervention and says it must maintain a military presence on the island in order to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority pending an acceptable Cyprus solution.

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