

# Comment

## A dangerous turn of events in Greece

The fits of temper directed last week by Washington against Athens airport were merely the latest signs of mounting American and western European anger over Greece and its recently re-elected leader, Andreas Papandreou.

For a while it seemed that Papandreou's anti-American and anti-NATO statements were simply irksome theatrics designed to show off Greek independence from its often heavy-handed benefactors in Washington. Too bad if U.S. officials got heartburn when Papandreou called the Soviets "democrats," the Americans "imperialists," and blamed the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 on the CIA.

Now, however, events have taken a dangerous turn. Papandreou has just announced his intent to oust the U.S. from its NATO bases in Greece by 1988. This act symbolizes Greece's withdrawal from NATO and its emergence as a "non-aligned" nation with close links to the Arab world.

At the same time, Papandreou asserted that Turkey, and not the Soviet Union or Bulgaria, was Greece's real enemy. Underlining these belicose words, the bulk of Greece's armed forces are now positioned to move against the Turkish Thracian and Aegean borders. In Greece, the popular leftist-oriented press has been busy beating the old war drums, rousing never very latent anti-Turkish passions among the Greeks.

Greece has begun, in violation of the Lausanne Convention, fortifying the strategic island of Lemnos that controls the exit from the Dardanelles. Athens is also pressing hard its claims to exclusive air and water territorial zones around the Greek Aegean



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Islands, many of which lie within sight of the Turkish coast.

The Turks, not surprisingly, reject Greek Aegean claims. To accept them would mean that Turkey's coast would fall under Greek control. Now that oil has been found in the Aegean, these claims have assumed considerable strategic urgency. While both sides argue, Greece has lately taken to intercepting Turkish and American aircraft over the Aegean, rejecting all attempts to compromise on the issue. For Athens, the Aegean is to be a Greek lake.

As political tension rises, both sides are now massing troops in the disputed area. Greece is fortifying many of the islands and reinforcing its Aegean army and naval units. The Turkish Fourth Army of four division-sized elements, is busy practising amphibious warfare. Overhead, Greek and Turkish military aircraft play "chicken." One accidental clash, or a few hot-headed soldiers, could easily ignite a general war.

Blame a good part of this mounting war fever on Papandreou and his leftist Pasok party who have been using the Turkish bogeyman as a useful distraction from Greece's economic woes. The election is won; why go on beating the war drums?

If Papandreou continues to goad and taunt the Turks, ignoring their calls for negotiations over Aegean waters and resources, a real shooting war could break out almost anytime. Should this happen, the Turks will invade and probably capture many of Greece's Aegean islands. Greece, as it found in Cyprus, simply cannot project sufficient military power to protect its exposed islands off the Turkish coast.

Papandreou, besides risking the Aegean islands, also faces the loss of American military and economic aid, now running at \$700 million annually. How much of this largesse will continue after U.S. bases are ousted from Greece remains to be seen. It could all cease if Greece picks a fight with Turkey.

Waiting in the wings, of course, is the Soviet Union, just ever so anxious to wedge its way through the Dardanelles and into the Mediterranean. Papandreou has been spending a lot of time on the phone lately to Moscow and the KGB is busy-see active in Greece. A war between Greece and Turkey would be a godsend for Moscow by shattering NATO's southern flank, bringing Greece into the Soviet orbit and isolating Turkey.

This must not happen. American and European leaders are all telling Papandreou to calm himself. The Turks are showing uncommon patience — no doubt under stern American tutelage. Canada, already having expressed its displeasure over Greece's growing bombast, pointedly gave some old F-104 aircraft to the Turks. What Ottawa can do now is to impress on ex-resident Papandreou that Greece may join its new pal Libya as an outcast unless it begins to behave with a little more reserve and tact.