

## Israel, Greece and Cyprus: Building a Strategic Shield in the Eastern Mediterranean

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**Publication date: 23 November 2025**

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On 12 November 2025, the Turkish news outlet GZT News aired an investigation claiming that Israel is helping Greece and Cyprus construct a “military envelope” that poses a direct threat to Turkey. The report, which began with the forensic tracking of a TikTok video showing a missile launcher allegedly shipped from Israel to Greece, framed Israel as a “critical partner” for Athens in both technology and operational intelligence and argued that the primary driver of this partnership is Ankara itself.

Beyond the sensational tone, the investigation captures a genuine strategic shift in the Eastern Mediterranean: the consolidation of an Israel–Greece–Cyprus triangle that Turkey increasingly perceives as a counter-coalition.

### **From distant relations to strategic alignment**

For much of the Cold War and into the 1990s, Turkey, not Greece, was Israel’s primary regional security partner. Military cooperation, arms deals and intelligence links between Ankara and Jerusalem were particularly strong in the 1990s. By contrast, Greek–Israeli relations were cool and often colored by Greece’s solidarity with the Arab world.

Over the past decade, however, this pattern has flipped. Diplomatic crises between Israel and Turkey, especially after the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, coincided with major natural-gas discoveries off Israel and Cyprus. These discoveries encouraged Israel to deepen ties with both Athens and Nicosia, not only for export routes but also for diplomatic cover in a more contested Eastern Mediterranean.

What began as pragmatic cooperation around energy and tourism has evolved into a broad strategic partnership. Trilateral summits, regular joint military exercises, and defence-industrial cooperation now define relations between Israel, Greece and Cyprus. Israeli and Greek leaders routinely describe each other as “strategic allies,” while Greek commentators increasingly portray Israel as a key pillar of their national deterrence posture vis-à-vis Turkey.

### **The “Blue Homeland” lens in Ankara**

Turkish concern must be understood through the prism of the “Blue Homeland” (Mavi Vatan) doctrine, which seeks to secure expansive Turkish maritime rights and influence across the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. This doctrine frames Greece, Cyprus and, increasingly, Israel as obstacles to Turkey’s aspirations to be an energy and security hub.

From Ankara's perspective, Israeli–Greek–Cypriot cooperation on energy projects such as the EastMed gas pipeline and electricity interconnectors is not only about exports but about re-drawing the region's geopolitical map in ways that marginalize Turkey. In that context, every new trilateral military exercise, defence contract or intelligence arrangement appears as an incremental step in a broader anti-Turkish alignment. GZT's investigation therefore reflects a wider narrative in Turkish media and think-tank circles, which casts the triangle as a "front" aimed at constraining Turkey's room for maneuver.

### **Arms transfers, training and the "Achilles Shield"**

The Turkish report highlights Greek procurement of Israeli-made precision munitions, including variants of Spike anti-tank and multi-purpose missiles, Spice guided bombs and stand-off munitions such as Rampage, as well as intensified training links between the two air forces. These trends are consistent with open-source reporting on a broader Greek effort to modernize its forces with Israeli technology and expertise.

Athens has announced a multi-billion-euro, long-term defence overhaul centered on a layered air and missile defence architecture dubbed "Achilles Shield," explicitly justified by tensions with Turkey.

Greek officials have confirmed that negotiations with Israel cover advanced rocket artillery (such as the PULS system) and air-defence components that would fit into this network, with a significant share of industrial work to be carried out domestically.

In parallel, Israel and Greece operate a joint aircrew training center in southern Greece and conduct frequent joint exercises, which deepen interoperability and provide Hellenic pilots exposure to Israeli combat experience in dense, contested airspace. For Turkish observers, these arrangements suggest not merely arms sales, but a progressive integration of Greek and Israeli operational planning.

### **Cyprus, Barak-MX and the intelligence dimension**

Nowhere is Turkish anxiety more intense than over Cyprus. Local and international media reported in late 2024 that Cyprus had quietly taken delivery of Israel's Barak-MX air-defence system, replacing older Russian platforms. Subsequent commentary in Turkish and regional outlets described the system as "more dangerous than the S-300s" once deployed to the island, because its modern radar and networked architecture provide wide-area coverage and robust integration into allied systems.

Turkish officials have publicly warned that Cyprus's armament program, centered on Israeli systems, could destabilize the island and lead to "dangerous consequences."

Commentaries aligned with this view argue that if Barak-MX batteries and associated sensors are integrated with Israeli networks, they could track Turkish air movements over southern Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean almost continuously.

The GZT investigation echoes these fears, portraying the prospective deployment of additional Israeli systems, sometimes compared rhetorically to Turkey's planned "Steel Dome" – as part of an emerging "Achilles Shield" that stretches from mainland Greece to Cyprus, backed by Israeli intelligence and strike capabilities.

### **Lobby politics and the F-35 dispute.**

The Turkish report goes further, alleging that Greek and Jewish lobbies in the United States have worked to block Turkey's re-entry into the F-35 fighter-jet program. This narrative aligns with recent

Turkish and regional coverage highlighting coordinated lobbying campaigns by Greek-American and pro-Israel organizations in Washington opposing any resumption of F-35 deliveries to Turkey.

Such lobbying efforts are real, but they operate alongside more structural constraints: Turkey was formally removed from the F-35 program after acquiring Russia's S-400 air-defence system, triggering U.S. sanctions under the CAATSA framework. In practice, the lobbying dimension amplifies, rather than creates the underlying strategic rift between Ankara and Washington – a rift that also shapes Turkey's deteriorating trust in Israel and Greece.

### **Conclusion: Defence partnership or encirclement?**

The GZT investigation captures a core paradox of the emerging Eastern Mediterranean order. For Greece and Cyprus, deeper cooperation with Israel, in energy, air defence, intelligence and advanced weapons, is presented as a defensive response to a far larger and increasingly assertive neighbor. For Turkey, the same developments look like a deliberate attempt to build a hostile ring of capabilities that undercuts its "Blue Homeland" ambitions and its quest to regain technological parity, especially in the air domain.

In strategic terms, the Israel–Greece–Cyprus triangle now functions as a nascent security community, underpinned by economic interests and shared threat perceptions. It is unlikely to be dismantled by short-term diplomatic fluctuations. Yet the way it is narrated in Turkish media, as an offensive "envelope" directed against Turkey, risks hardening zero-sum thinking on all sides.

Whether this emerging architecture ultimately stabilizes the Eastern Mediterranean or further militarizes it will depend less on individual weapons deals than on whether the actors involved can embed their cooperation within broader de-escalation and crisis-management mechanisms, something still largely missing from the region's rapidly evolving security landscape.