

Greece mulling defense deal extension with US



Athens is looking to extend the US-Greece defense agreement, also known as the Souda Agreement, by a year when US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visits in October or November, it emerged after Wednesday's meeting between Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and US House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey at the Maximos Mansion in Athens.

Meanwhile, the prospect of a meeting next month between Mitsotakis and US President Donald Trump was also reportedly discussed.

Lowey also met with Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias and his deputy Antonis Diamataris for talks that reportedly focused on areas of the US-Greece Strategic Dialogue and efforts to promote common interests in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

In a tweet, US Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt, who was at both meetings, said the discussion with Dendias focused on

“progress in all areas of the US-Greece Strategic Dialogue and the commitment of both our governments to do even more to promote common interests in the EastMed and strengthen Greece as regional pillar of stability.”

As for the meeting between Mitsotakis and Trump, this could reportedly take place on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in late September. Pyatt reportedly said that the timing is right for such a meeting.

Meanwhile, Mitsotakis begins his tour of European capitals on Friday, starting in Paris for talks with French President Emmanuel Macron.

The prime minister is expected to tout the momentum of New Democracy’s election victory, which has been reflected in the positive reaction of markets, as well as the notion that his government is a pillar of stability in the European south.

The bottom line is to restore confidence in Greece and to convey the message that it is no longer a “problematic” country in Europe, but one that is ready to undertake and support EU initiatives – among them Macron’s green agenda and the strengthening of European defense cooperation.

By getting this message across, Mitsotakis aims to pave the way for discussions on the primary surpluses Greece has agreed to achieve.

He is expected to provide reassurances that the targets for 2019 and 2020 will be met, but also that his reform package to stimulate the Greek economy will allow for a new outlook as of 2021.