

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today in the premises of Istres Airbase, on the occasion of the transfer of the first Rafale fighter jet to the Hellenic Air Force, marking the significant upgrade of its operational capabilities.

This is also a remarkable moment for the Hellenic Armed Forces, as we are adding today in our fighter jet arsenal a tremendous force multiplier, a game changer so to say, which fully satisfies our operational requirements.

The first Rafale fighter aircraft, which we are now admiring in our national colors, along with the next seventeen aircraft that the Hellenic Air Force will integrate in its squadrons in the immediate future, are the mere expression of our efforts to continue reinforcing our deterrence capabilities, with the objective to secure our airspace in a most convincing manner.

This tremendous fighter jet, having the enormous potential we all know very well, along with the variety of missions it can undertake, offers Greece a clear strategic advantage and brings the Hellenic Armed Forces to the forefront of a new era!

It is worth mentioning that this is the fourth time Greece chooses French fighter jets to upgrade its Air Force capabilities, which starting with the Mirage F-1 and going to the Mirage 2000 and Mirage 2000-5 and now to the Rafale fighter jet, it has provided the Hellenic Armed Forces with the capability to establish their presence in the Hellenic Skies on a 24/7 basis and on a time span of more than 45 years.

Taking a closer look also on how the agreement for the procurement of this aircraft was set and signed, we all understand that it constitutes the tangible proof of the excellent bilateral relations between France and Greece.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a well known fact, that our countries share the same values, have the same vision and work constantly and closely together to secure peace and stability in the Mediterranean region and beyond. Therefore this procurement creates another vital link in our special relationship, strengthening also the already existing military ties established by several common endeavours, such as joint exercises and training along with advanced multinational activities and cooperation; with the French Armed Forces and their Greek counterparts developing synergies which constitute the pillars of what we have achieved so far together, and what lies ahead in our brilliant common future.

Turning now to those who made today's historic event become true, I would like to congratulate them for their tireless efforts, which gave us the opportunity to admire the Hellenic National Colors on a Rafale fighter jet aircraft for the first time.

I am confident that you will all continue your excellent work and with the same determination for the remaining 17 aircraft, which we are all expecting them to be delivered the soonest possible.

You have done it before and you will do it again, and there is no other way around it!

Concluding, I would like to point out that our Nations have long chosen together setting themselves in the right side of history, which goes along with the respect for international law, good neighborly relations and the support of peace and stability.

Therefore, I assure you of the Hellenic Armed Forces commitment to further enhance our bilateral military cooperation and of our determination to strengthen our military ties and take them to the next level.

Vive la France!

Vive la Grece!

Vive les relations Franco-Grecques!