

## For your eyes only

**RECOMMENDATIONS** to a Greek foreign minister to “show your stuff” on visits to Washington, strong encouragement to a defence minister to buy US fighter jets, accurate and often cutting characterisations of leading politicians and astute political analysis on the state of the political parties - these and much more feature in the ongoing release of classified US diplomatic cables in the Greek media.

To date, almost 30 classified cables, dating from 2005 to as recently as February 2010, have been released via the Skai TV website and Kathimerini daily, which gained access to the documents not through WikiLeaks, but via the Norwegian daily Aftenposten.

In December, the Scandinavian daily announced that it had managed to obtain a complete copy - a leak of a leak - of the cache of 250,000 documents which had previously been leaked to Julian Assange's WikiLeaks website.

In the most recent cable to be published, former US ambassador Daniel Speckhard is recorded as urging Dimitris Droutsas, then alternate foreign minister, to “show Washington he was not just a diplomat but a political decision maker with whom we could work”.

### Counselling ministers

In the February 2010 conversation, Speckhard, “counselled” Droutsas, since elevated to foreign minister, that “most important contribution Greece could make would be to resolve some of the challenges close to home”, referring to the Cyprus and Fyrom issues.

“Show Washington you are a political decision maker able to lead, and somebody with whom we can work together practically to solve problems ... not just a diplomat who can explain positions,” said Speckhard, who served in Athens from 2007 to 2010.

Droutsas, for his part, “asked for Washington's support and understanding” for task facing George Papandreou to manage domestic politics “while moving the foreign policy ball forward”. “This will be a delicate process with some political risk,” the cable paraphrases Droutsas.

In February 2010, Speckhard hinted to Defence Minister Evangelos Venizelos that buying American military hardware could assist Greece in overcoming its financial woes.

Speckhard reminded Venizelos of the “additional value US products represented during this time of economic

difficulty in Greece”, in a meeting called by the embassy after press reports indicated that Greece would replace its existing fleet of American-manufactured fighter jets with the European-built Eurofighter.

For his part, Venizelos assured Speckhard that the procurement would proceed in a transparent, open framework, although he reminded the Americans that the defensive system suites did not work in any of Greece's existing fleet of US-manufactured F-16s.

### Lesser states

Predictably, Greece's main diplomatic concerns - the ongoing naming dispute with Fyrom and the resolution of the Cyprus issue - feature predominantly in the leaked leaks.

In a fascinating insight into one strand of Greek thinking on the name dispute, an August 2007 cable reports a former foreign minister saying it was not simply that some two million Greek citizens considered themselves “Macedonian”, but that Greeks viewed themselves as the historical victims of Great Power politics - but could not abide getting the same treatment from a “lesser state”.

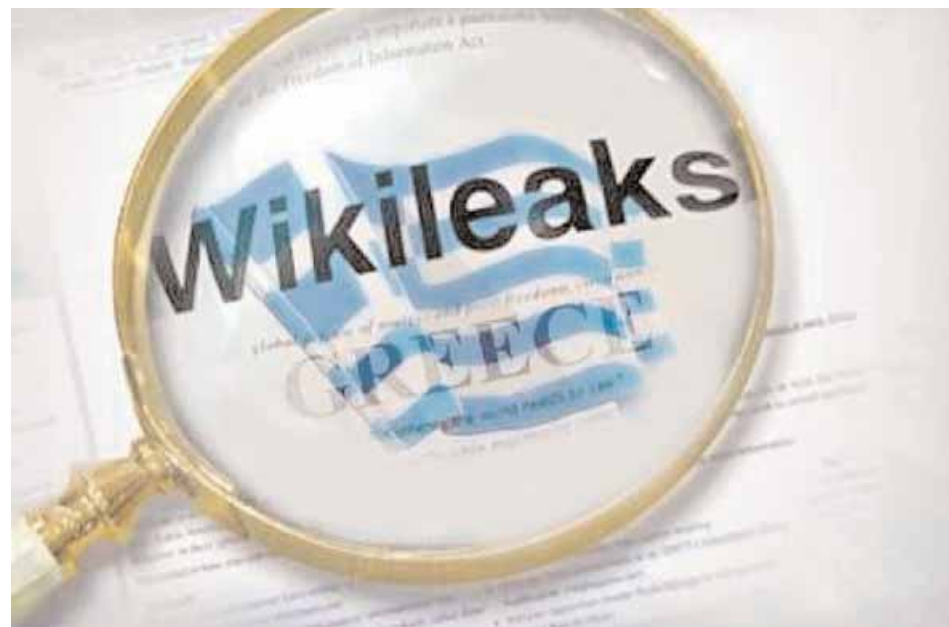
“We are used to being [expletive deleted in the cable] by a big state like Turkey, but getting the same treatment from a small upstart like Skopje is unacceptable [to most Greeks],” a blunt Petros Molyviatis, who was foreign minister from 2004 to 2006, is quoted as saying in informal talks with embassy charge d'affaires Thomas Countryman.

Molyviatis, described in the report as a “confidant” of then prime minister Kostas Karamanlis, spelled out that Greece felt that a vetoing of Fyrom's entry into Nato “might be exactly what was needed to get Skopje to take a more realistic approach to the issue”.

The naming dispute between the two countries was deemed “ridiculous” and a “disaster from the beginning” by Theodoros Pangalos, then a member of the opposition and now deputy foreign minister, in a talk with ambassador Speckhard in a February 2008.

The cable continued: “Now that the Republic of Macedonia had been created, he argued, the Macedonians should be allowed to use whatever name they wished. Indeed, Greece should be honoured by Macedonia wanting to use the name.”

The style of many of the reports show that humour has a strong place in internal diplomacy, as demonstrated



by a July 2006 cable on the Greek media entitled How to Read the Greek Press: A Guide for the Uninitiated:

“Homer reported on the Trojan War a few hundred years after it happened, and used the facts of the war to create a poetic tale of battles among gods, with men as pawns. Current Greek media uses the same blend of fact and fiction, with an equally judicious dose of deus ex machina (outside forces) that controls events.”

### What the US embassy cables say about...

• The Athens News “Even the relatively balanced English-language Athens News recently ran four pages of stories on Iran with reporting from Athens and Tehran and comments about the US planning military strikes from Souda against Iran, without any reference to the actual US position.” - 13 July 2006 (referring to articles by George Gilson and Iason Athanasiadis published in our 5 May 2006 edition)

• The Greek media “[The] Greek media industry is controlled by business tycoons whose other successful businesses enable them to subsidise their loss-making media operations. These media operations in turn enable them to exercise political and economic influence.” - 13 July 2006

• Kostas Karamanlis “Karamanlis at times became animated, particularly when discussing the Macedonia name issue and Kosovo. He sat on the edge of his seat and took out his Greek worry-beads. He spent over an hour with the ambassador, more than double the allotted time.” - 5 January 2008

• Theodoros Pangalos “French-trained, influenced by the teachings of the French Maoist movement, and negatively inclined towards capitalism” - 7 October 2009

• The December 2008 riots “The anarchists appeared to get what they wanted in the December 6 shooting of Grigoropoulos, and they used blogs and SMSes to spread the news and mobilise their forces. As anarchist violence escalated, other university and eventually high school and even middle school students, some disgruntled, others attracted by the radical chic, joined in.” - 18 December 2008

• The Greek far left “The ideology, tactics and goals of the Greek ‘hard left’ remain much as they were during the Cold War, and these parties have served as a retiring ground for many ageing anarchists.” - 18 December 2008

• George Papandreou “Despite the fact that he is a scion of Pasok's leading family, the American-born Papandreou is generally believed to prefer young outsiders - people he views as modern technocrats - over the traditional Greek politicians who worked for his father.” - 27 November 2009

**Petros Molyviatis**, New Democracy foreign minister 2004-2006, quoted in 2007 in informal talks with US embassy charge d'affaires: “We are used to being [expletive deleted in the cable] by a big state like Turkey, but getting the same treatment from a small upstart like Skopje is unacceptable [to most Greeks]”

**Deputy Prime Minister Theodoros Pangalos**, then a member of the opposition, quoted in a US embassy cable after talks with US ambassador Daniel Speckhard, in February 2008: “Now that the Republic of Macedonia had been created, he argued, the Macedonians should be allowed to use whatever name they wished. Indeed, Greece should be honoured by Macedonia wanting to use the name”

**US embassy cable on Kostas Karamanlis**, then prime minister, in January 2008: “Karamanlis at times became animated, particularly when discussing the Macedonia name issue and Kosovo. He sat on the edge of his seat and took out his Greek worry-beads. He spent over an hour with the ambassador, more than double the allotted time”

### Former US ambassador

to Greece Daniel Speckhard to Dimitris Droutsas, then alternate foreign minister, in February 2010: “Show Washington you are a political decision maker able to lead, and somebody with whom we can work together practically to solve problems ... not just a diplomat who can explain positions”.

## Greece offers medical aid to first group of foreigners injured in war-torn Libya

Greece offered medical assistance to the first group of foreigners injured in war-torn Libya and transferred to the Greek southern island of Crete during the weekend, announced Greek authorities on Sunday, as cited by Xinhua.

Four nationals of Qatar -- three men and a woman -- are hospitalized in Chania, suffering wounds at the head and legs, said the hospital's director, George Arhontakis.

According to Greek officials, they are civilians who were working in Libya and reached Greece on board a Qatari airplane which evacuated a group of Qatari nationals from the northern African country via Crete.

The plane which landed at the military base of Souda on Crete, left the island for Qatar early Sunday, transferring also the body of another Qatari national who succumbed to

his injuries during the flight.

Greek authorities in cooperation with Qatar have granted the injured and six relatives who accompany them visa for two weeks. Greece facilitates support operations in Libya and has expressed willingness to assist humanitarian operations, providing medical assistance and other services.

Prior to the military operations, Greece aided the massive evacuation operation of thousands of foreign nationals from Libya via Crete, including over 13,000 Chinese in late February until early March.

After the launch of the military intervention, foreign Air Force planes and Navy ships have used the military bases of Souda for refueling. Among them are six Mirage 2000 planes of Qatar which take part in the operations.