

GREECE

The Hellenic Republic

Greece occupies the southeastern extremity of Europe and is bounded on the northwest by Albania, on the north by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria and on the east partly by Turkey. It is otherwise surrounded by sea, facing the Ionian Sea on the west and the Aegean Sea on the south and east, and includes a majority of islands in these waters. This key position makes the country a crossroads between three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa.

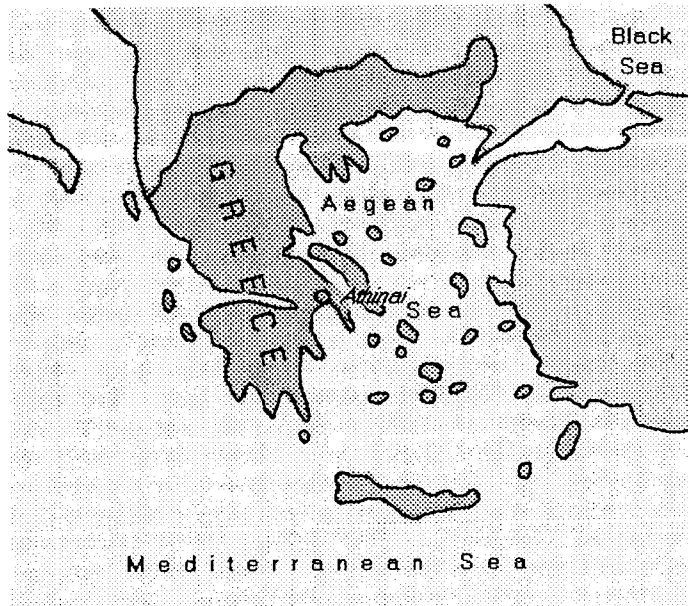


FIG. 1.- Greece.

The country has a land area of 131,957 km² and a population of 10,259,900 (1991). The capital city is Athina (Athens), with one of the world's most famous landmarks, the Acropolis. The largest port of Greece, Peiraias (Piraeus) is situated nearby. Other major towns as well as ports are Thessaloniki, Patra, Irakleio, Volos and Alexandroupoli.

The Hellenic Republic is a parliamentary democracy, the present Head of State being President Konstantinos STEFANOPOULOS.

A traditionally maritime nation since the era of the Minoan sea-power (2,000 B.C.), Greece now has a coastline of considerable extent, i.e. 18,400 km, which equals 0.6 of the coastline length of the African continent. In the surrounding seas there are over 9,800 islands, islets and rocks, as well as 1,600 gulfs and bays, 160 straits or channels and finally over 300 harbours, ports and marinas. Islands account for one fifth of the total area of the country one sixth of the population.

Though the mainland is mostly mountainous, the Greek economy is basically agricultural. Main products are wheat, tobacco, cotton, grapes and olives. There is also a wide range of mineral production, including iron ore, nickel, copper, lead, zinc and bauxite, while industry is growing and diversified. The mercantile marine, fisheries and tourism - mainly on the islands - play a vital part in supplementing the national income, a fact that underlines the dependence of the country on the water element.

Greece claims a territorial sea with a 6 mile breadth, which covers an area of 105,000 km², Greece currently has a total of 30,263,000 merchant tonnage (gross tonnage), a fleet that ranks amongst the largest in the world. In addition there are about 22,000 commercial fishing vessels and 3,000 pleasure craft, excluding those with less than 10 tonnes (gross tonnage).

Hydrographic Service

History in hydrography and study of the sea date back to the ancient times. The "Periplus" by ECATEUS from ancient Miletus, the "Geographic Study" by STRAVO and the "Geographic Navigation" by Claudius PTOLEMY were the first known nautical documents in use between the 5th century B.C. and the 13th century A.D.

In the modern times, KEPALAS, a Greek navigator, published in 1817 in Marseilles, France, nautical charts of the Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean archipelago in the Greek language. Later on, some years after the establishment of the Greek state, the Ministry of the Navy established a Hydrographic Office in effort to develop hydrographic activity in the country. The pioneer in the field, Lt. Matthaïos MATTHAIPOULOS, published in 1898 a book under the title "Hydrographic Surveying and Nautical Chart Construction" for use by the students of the Naval Academy. He led in 1907 the first hydrographic surveys and later became the first Director of the Hellenic Navy Hydrographic Department which was finally founded in 1919.

In 1930, legislation was enacted to establish the Hellenic Navy Hydrographic Service, an independent agency coming directly under the Hellenic Naval General Staff. Since World War II, it has been active in the fields of Geodesy, Astronomy, Hydrographic Surveying, Nautical Charting, Marine Meteorology, Geomagnetism and Physical Oceanography.

Today the Hellenic Navy Hydrographic Service is located in Athens and has a total complement of 158 naval and civilian personnel. Its surveying flotilla consists

of three modern vessels, HOS NAFTILOS, HOS PYTHEAS, HS STRAVON, plus the independently operating surveying launch AK-14.

The Service after its reorganization now deals with Hydrography, Oceanography, Safety to Navigation, Maritime Studies and Computer assisted Cartography.

The current portfolio includes 184 charts of Hellenic and adjacent waters. Small scale charts of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea are also in preparation. Other publications include a four-volume pilot, bathymetric charts and oceanographic studies.

The present Director of the Hydrographic Service is Rear Admiral Alexandros MARATOS, who was appointed to his post on 25 February 1994.