

REVISTA ESPAÑOLA DE DEFENSA

Spanish Armed Forces rescue 266 civilians in two operations

EVACUATION IN SUDAN



SUPPORT TO IRAQ

Lieutenant General
José Antonio Agüero
in command of NATO's
advisory mission



REVISTA ESPAÑOLA DE DEFENSA

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Immediacy and effectiveness

OUR Armed Forces have responded with immediacy and effectiveness in two operations, enabling the evacuation of 266 civilians, including Spanish nationals and individuals of other nationalities, who were trapped in the conflict in Sudan. According to the Defence Minister during her visit to the Operations Command (MOPS) to recognise the work undertaken, these have been “complicated and high-risk” missions. “There is no greater demonstration of generosity than offering our Armed Forces in remote areas to help people in such desperate situations”.

This issue also features the visit of Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov to Madrid, which has helped foster closer ties with a country that is not only defending its own sovereignty and territorial integrity but also upholding the values of peace, freedom and democracy shared with the Western community.

Spain remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine, enabling it to continue to withstand Russia's aggression. This support has been unwavering and is continuously adapted to the evolving needs expressed by the country under attack.

In an interview, General Francisco Martínez Lozano, commander of the Toledo Training Coordination Centre, talks about the training of Ukrainian service members taking place in Spain. This training enhances their chances to survive on the battlefield and improves their performance.

NATO mission Iraq also devotes its efforts to training activities. A Spanish military officer, General José Antonio Agüero, has assumed command of this operation, which has the primary objective of aiding Iraq to build its security institutions and make the Iraqi armed forces even more effective and sustainable, so that they themselves are able to stabilise their country, fight terrorism, and prevent the return of *Daesh*.

At the same time, Spain continues to demonstrate its commitment to the deterrence and defence of Europe on NATO's eastern flank by bolstering its military and deterrent capabilities. It accomplishes this through the participation of ships in the Standing Maritime Groups, the deployment of Air and Space Force aircraft in multiple countries, the installation of a surveillance radar in Romania, and the contribution of the Spanish Army contingent in Latvia. It is essential to continue advocating for peace, recognising that peace is always the outcome of an effort that can be rendered futile if not applied with determination and perseverance.

RED



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UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO PEACE

Margarita Robles receives Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov



Margarita Robles and Oleksii Reznikov review the force that honoured the Ukrainian minister on his arrival at the Ministry of Defence.

«**O**UR support, in collaboration with our NATO and EU partners and allies, is strong and unwavering and will continue to be so for as long as necessary”. Defence Minister Margarita Robles expressed this unfaltering commitment to her Ukrainian counterpart, Oleksii Reznikov, during his visit to Spain on 12 April 2023. The Ukrainian Defence Minister was received with military honours at the Ministry’s headquarters where he reviewed the force along with Margarita Robles, with whom he met later. Robles stressed the support “of the Spanish people and their armed forces for Ukraine’s efforts to regain its sovereignty, freedom, and protection of human rights, which were violated by the Russian invasion”.

The meeting was attended by the Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD), Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón, and the Undersecretary of Defence for Political Affairs (SEGENPOL), Admiral Juan Francisco Martínez Núñez. The Ukrainian delegation was represented by the Ambassador to Spain, Serhii Pohoreltsev, and the head of the Ukrainian Navy, Rear Admiral Oleksii Neizhpapa. After the meeting, the two ministers held a joint press conference.

“I am pleased and honoured to welcome my dear friend Oleksii, who I visited in Odessa. Spain and Ukraine are currently very close”, emphasised Robles, who added that the meeting had given them the chance to learn more about the needs of the Ukrainian Army so that Spain could continue to provide assistance by sending all kinds of material. “Always with the obvious prudence and discretion, because we are in a war”, the minister pointed out.

“Ukraine is not only defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, it is also defending our values, the values of the community that believes in peace and democracy”, said Robles, who assured that Spain would continue with the training effort: “More than a thousand Ukrainian soldiers have been and are still being trained in Spain, and I must admit that they have set an example for us all in terms of heroism and commitment to Ukraine and to peace”.

The defence minister mentioned the six *Leopard 2A4* battle tanks that would be

shipped by sea a few days later after being repaired, as well as the delivery of 20 ATT (Armoured Tracked Transport) vehicles, mostly for the transportation of troops and patients. She also paid special tribute “to all the Ukrainian people, in particular to the deceased and their families”.

PRIORITIES FOR UKRAINE

Minister Reznikov expressed his sincere gratitude to the minister and the entire Spanish government “for their political, diplomatic and humanitarian support”.

“My priority is to keep our service members alive, thus I am very grateful for the help we are receiving from Spain”, the minister said. The Ukrainian Defence Minister stated that right now the most urgent needs for his country’s Armed Forces are air defence and artillery.

Reznikov also highlighted the Spanish Navy’s experience in the field of amphibious vehicles and landings, which are key to guaranteeing security in the Black Sea

“My priority is to keep our service members alive, thus I am grateful for Spain’s help”

and in maritime traffic and transport. In this regard, he claimed that, thanks to the Coalition and to some of the Spanish materiel, the grain produced in Ukraine is guaranteed to reach countries in Africa, allowing for the relief of their famine. “The Spanish Navy is one of the most highly regarded, experienced and best in the world, and we are interested in everything that might help us improve our level and capabilities”, the minister stated. Reznikov said he was “absolutely sure” that Ukraine will win this war, “but we need to think in strategic terms”.

CONTINUED SUPPORT

Bilaterally and in the humanitarian field, Spain has provided continued support since the Russian invasion. More than 150,000 people have arrived in Spain and are receiving temporary protection. The

Visiting the war wounded

AFTER their meeting at the Ministry of Defence, Margarita Robles and Oleksii Reznikov went to the Military Central Hospital *Gómez Ulla*, where they visited several wounded Ukrainians and thanked the medical staff of this centre and of the General Defence Hospital in Zaragoza for taking care of the Ukrainian soldiers who were hospitalised with serious injuries.

After being welcomed by Undersecretary of Defence Adoración Mateos, the two ministers held a videoconference with Ukrainian hospital workers and patients in Zaragoza.

Minister Reznikov then awarded a total of 39 decorations to several of the wounded as well as to the director of the *Gómez Ulla* hospital, General Francisco Javier Areta, the director of the Zaragoza hospital, General Juan Lara Garrido, and to medical Lieutenant Colonel Félix Maimir.

Addressing his nation's injured soldiers, the minister stated: "I am confident that under the care of Spanish doctors, the Ukrainian spirit and morale will triumph". "Ukraine is waiting for you. Come back as soon as you can, when you recover, although I am sure that a part of your hearts will remain in Spain".

The Minister of Defence thanked all the staff from both hospitals. "You are a wonderful image of Spain, especially in times as difficult as these", said Robles.

Up to mid-April 2023, a total of 57 Ukrainian soldiers had been treated in Spanish hospitals. Thirty of them had already returned to their country, four remained in the *Gómez Ulla* hospital and 23 in Zaragoza. The soldiers evacuated to Spain suffered extensive injuries that were difficult to treat, such as amputations and traumatic wounds caused by firearms or concussions, which in many cases required prosthesis implantations and lengthy rehabilitation processes.

Ministry of Defence has helped transport more than 650 people to Spain on 19 humanitarian flights, including orphans, disabled children, those receiving cancer treatment, war wounded, and family members.

As far as training is concerned, Spain is instructing Ukrainian military members at the Toledo Training Coordination Centre in the framework of the European Union Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine (EUMAM-UA). The number of soldiers trained since last November is now close to 1,000.

On 3 April 2023, Margarita Robles, accompanied by the CHOD, presided over the ceremony to present diplomas to nearly 200 students who had completed the third five-week basic training course at the Infantry School in Toledo. "You have become part of a great family, that of the Spanish Armed Forces", Robles said, who thanked the students for "the lesson you have given us in courage, bravery and comradeship and for your ability to establish bonds of brotherhood with the Spanish soldiers, who defend your cause as if it were their own. We know that you carry Spain in your hearts".

For his part, the commander of the Ukrainian contingent thanked "all the Spanish people on behalf of the soldiers present and the whole of Ukraine for your help, concern and attention". "We have managed to hold out for a year, and we will continue to do so", he said.

In terms of logistical and materiel support, there has been a steady flow of equipment shipments since the beginning of the conflict, including anti-tank warfare, light weapons and ammunition, air defence materiel and naval systems, as well as ATT vehicles and ambulances.

On 19 April 2023, when Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez addressed the Parliament to explain the situation more than a year after the Russian invasion, he referred to the shipping of military equipment and the contribution of funds to Ukraine. He said that Spain would continue to support Ukraine "with determination" so that "it can defend itself, both militarily and diplomatically". In this regard, Sánchez said that the purpose of delivering military equipment is to "guarantee the attacked country's legitimate right to defence". These deliveries, he added, are made



Ilhaki Gómez/NDCE



Marco Romero/NDE

The Mayor of Toledo and the Minister of Defence present diplomas to the Ukrainian soldiers of the third training course at the Infantry School.

“in coordination” with our allies and with Ukraine, and they have “an effective impact on its defensive capabilities, without resulting in an escalation and without significantly reducing our national defence capabilities”.

In addition, the Prime Minister pointed out that, as he himself promised President Zelenskyy during his trip to Kyiv last February, Spain has joined the group of countries delivering battle tanks to Ukraine.

The first six *Leopard 2A4* tanks have already been sent by sea after being repaired at the GDELS-Santa Bárbara Sistemas (SBS) factory in Alcalá de Guadaira (Seville).

On 13 April 2023, the Minister of Defence had the chance to confirm their “perfect working order” during her visit to *Cerro Muriano* military base in Córdoba, where the final tests were carried out to determine

the consistency of the running gear and the firing effectiveness of the gun. Once the programme was completed, the battle tanks were sent back to the GDELS-SBS facilities for a further overhaul and to correct the minor deficiencies observed in the field.

General Ignacio Olazábal, commander of the 10th Mechanised Brigade *Guzmán*

The first six *Leopard 2A4* tanks have been sent to Ukraine

el Bueno (Córdoba), informed the minister about the “excellent results” of the tests performed. “This vehicle is still just as effective today as it used to be. It is far from being obsolete, really powerful and in very good working condition”, the general said. He emphasised that only a few engine malfunctions were found during the tests, some of which were corrected during the process.

Robles asked about the interoperability between the *Leopard 2A4* and *2A6* provided by Germany, as well as between the different US, British and French tank systems that will also be sent to Ukraine. Vehicles that, according to General Olazábal, are “tanks of the same generation, which provide the same ranges, the same reliability and off-road speeds”.

Editorial staff

BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANCISCO GERMÁN MARTÍNEZ LOZANO,
COMMANDER OF THE TOLEDO TRAINING COORDINATION CENTRE

“THE UKRAINIANS ARE CONSTANTLY EXPRESSING THEIR GRATITUDE”

General Martínez Lozano highlights the quality of the training, which has already been provided to more than 1,500 soldiers, as well as the “experience and exemplary nature” of the instructors

“ I T was a challenge for me to start a completely different mission from scratch”, stresses Brigadier General Francisco Germán Martínez Lozano. He is the commander of the Toledo Training Coordination Centre (TTCC), the facility in charge of overseeing the training of the Ukrainian soldiers in Spain as part of the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA). It is indeed a personal challenge, but one in which he is not alone: “I have under my command”, he says, “exceptional professionals from very different units who are fully committed to their work”.

This 57-year-old general from Madrid feels that thanks to his team at the TTCC and the assistance received at all levels his job has been quite easy. According to General Martínez Lozano, military commander of Navarra and head of the Mountain Troops Command, made up of regiments *Galicia 64* (Jaca) and *America 66* (Berrioplano, near

Pamplona) under the command of the *San Marcial* Division in Burgos, “the Ukrainians are eager to learn, perhaps because they are aware that victory is at stake”.

— What is your overall assessment of these months of training?

—The Chief of Defence Staff’s top priority from the outset of the operation, in November 2022, was to meet effectively the Ukrainian armed forces’ requests for training while enhancing Spain’s standing within the European Union. To date, 32 training

“32 modules have been carried out to meet the needs expressed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces”

modules have been taught and more than 1,500 soldiers have received training in response to the needs stated by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Our country is the third largest contributor to this EU operation. Therefore, I think the overall assessment of our Armed Forces is clearly positive, aside from the extraordinary personal experience for each of the instructors and the challenge it represents for the units involved.

The training module programmes are being taught in a flexible way, but without straying from the intended objectives and while completing the required standards. For instance, during the Operational Planning module at the Marine Corps School in Cartagena, Ukrainian students, some of whom were colonels, told me that they had never had tactics explained as thoroughly as in Spain.

— Has daily practice forced you to modify exercises and activities?

—The programmes can be changed to meet the needs of the participants,



whose skills and knowledge are usually not the same as when they started. The module leaders meet with the most senior Ukrainian soldier each day to review what has been done, determine which exercises should be repeated, and plan the activities for the following day. Since they are our “customers”, this exchange of ideas is crucial.

—Have the Ukrainian Armed Forces considered making any changes given how the conflict is changing their requirements?

—What has changed are their priorities more so than the training modules. As a result, new modules are being taught and others have been cancelled.

—What is the procedure?

—It is quite simple. The Ukrainian authorities inform us of their training needs; the Spanish Army and Navy are asked whether they can meet those needs; if they accept the challenge, they propose the module programme and designate the unit in charge of

teaching that module. So far, we have only provided training to individuals and crews, but we have not trained any unit.

—What is the profile of the staff who serve as trainers?

—They are selected by the units that develop those modules. The profile depends on the module. It goes without saying that the profile required for a battalion’s operational planning differs greatly from that of sappers. In any case, experience, subject-matter expertise and, of course, exemplary behaviour are always essential.

—The Combat Training Unit in Toledo was specifically established for this task. Is it working properly?

—When the operation started, we didn’t know the specifics of the training or how long it would last. As a result, it was initially planned that Toledo would serve as the training centre for all five modules, including basic training (recruits), demining, improvised explosive devices, combat medical care guidelines, and select marksmanship. To this end, the Combat Training Unit was established, which groups and coordinates these modules and streamlines communication with the Infantry Academy. But it soon became clear that other modules, such as sappers, forest warfare, planning, etc., had to be taught elsewhere, outside the sphere of control of this unit. Due to its experience and permanence over time, the unit in Toledo is and will continue to be a leading unit in the training of Ukrainian soldiers.

—Some crews have been trained on self-defence systems donated by Spain to combat the invader. Have they been able to use them on the battlefield when they return to Ukraine?

—We really don’t have any information from the Ukrainians once they leave our country.

All we have is what they say after finishing the courses, and they are consistently complimentary of the training they receive. For instance, the trainers’ dedication, the availability of resources (such as simulators, fuel, ammunition

“Throughout this six-month mission, there have been no incidents involving the safety of the troops or the facilities”

and the training area), and, of course, the effort and motivation of the Ukrainian soldiers, allowed them to achieve an excellent level in the tank crew module.

—Are they eager to learn?

—Yes, this is something that has surprised all the instructors. A good example of this is the *Hawk* anti-missile system module, which was mainly attended by command staff posted in Soviet-equipped air-defence units. Despite the module's high complexity and intensity, they often spent a lot of time each day talking to the trainers or asking them questions, trying to learn more about the system. And this was the case in most modules.

—Do the Ukrainian soldiers and their Spanish instructors build an emotional bond?

—Of course, although it might not be the most advisable thing to do. We, the Spaniards, have an unparalleled capacity for empathy and closeness, which has been demonstrated in all the operations we have participated in and has always worked in our favour. The instructors work with the Ukrainian soldiers from dawn till dusk for periods of two to five weeks. That means they spend a lot of time together. And even though the language barrier might seem a huge obstacle at first, they somehow manage to overcome it.

—Do you think the training received in Spain will help them save lives and improve their effectiveness in operations?

—Certainly. Otherwise, we would be wasting our time and money, or

even worse, putting the lives of the Ukrainian soldiers at unnecessary risk. Some of them arrived with an attitude of “What are they going to teach me?” However, a few days later and after seeing the seriousness, rigour and coherence of the training provided, they completely changed their perception and were more open to learning and improving.



“With their will to win and the necessary resources and training, victory will be within Ukraine's reach”, says General Martínez Lozano.

—Are the Ukrainian soldiers satisfied with the training they have received in our country?

—They constantly express their gratitude every time we talk to them. They often mention the difference with the training received in other countries, always in our favour, and appreciate how we treat them. They are particularly grateful for our empathy and closeness, which sets us apart from the other armed forces they have interacted with, and for the quality of life in the barracks they live in. They also appreciate the few field trips they make outside the barracks. On numerous occasions, the

Ukrainian military attaché has officially expressed his satisfaction with the modules taught.

—Have there been any incidents?

—Not a single one in terms of the safety of the troops or the facilities. We have been carrying out this mission for over six months and although it is physically and psychologically very demanding, especially for new recruits, so far the only injury among the Ukrainians has been a dislocated shoulder.

—Spain is responsible for the logistical support of the Ukrainian personnel: transport, food, accommodation, life in our country, etc. How have these aspects been dealt with?

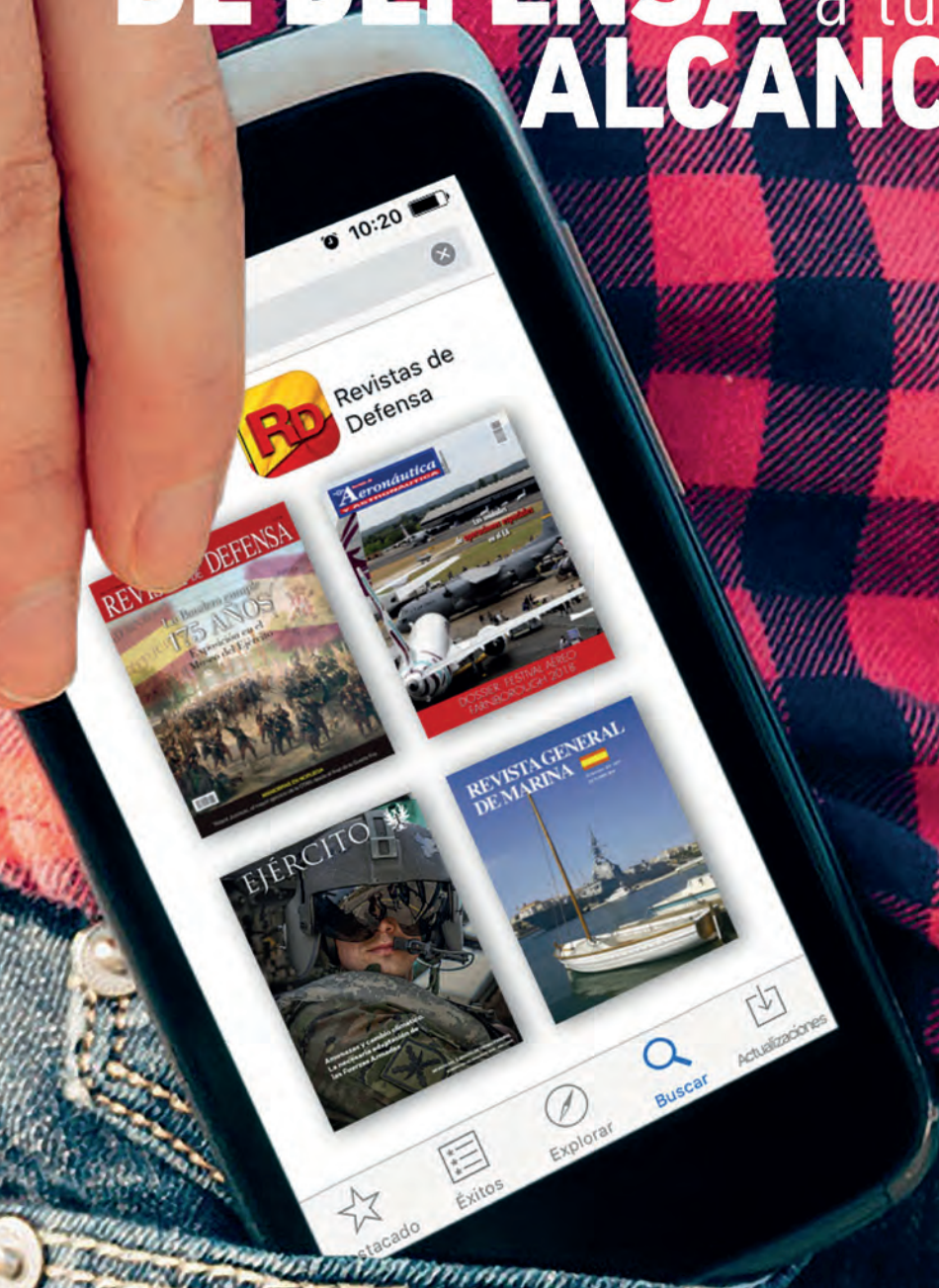
—The Army, Navy and Air Force, underpinned by the Defence Staff Headquarters and the entire Ministry of Defence, have been extremely generous in their support. Although the European Union is expected to cover some of the costs incurred, so far the effort has only been borne by the Ministry of Defence.

—Do you think the training of the units is more decisive in this war than the assets used?

—Personnel, assets and resources, procedures, organisation and training are all part of a system in which everything has to work perfectly in order to be effective. Everything is decisive and everything is interrelated. Given the Ukrainian people's constant will to win, victory will be within their reach if they have the necessary resources and training.

Santiago F. del Vado
Photos: Pepe Díaz

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RESPONSE AND DETERRENCE

Spanish Armed Forces contribute to various operations on NATO's eastern flank

MORE than 1,100 Spanish military personnel, one-third of those deployed on international missions, have been involved in recent months in NATO operations aimed at deterring any aggression against allies on the eastern flank. A mechanised company task force and two anti-aircraft systems of the Spanish Army; eight fighter jets and a surveillance and control radar of the Spanish Air and Space Force; and two Navy ships contribute to these defensive deployments aimed at preventing what is happening in Ukraine from spreading to other parts of Europe.

After six months patrolling Romania's skies, the Spanish contingent ended its *Enhanced Air Policing* mission on 8 June 2023. The *Viespe* detachment, which consisted of 130 soldiers and eight *F-18* fighters from the 15th Wing, started its mission on 1 December 2022.

Subsequently, on 1 April, the change of command took place and the assets were replaced by seven *F-18*s from the 12th Wing and 133 troops. During this time, more than 1,200 flight hours have been flown in air policing missions.

NATO's air shielding mission was set up in 2014, following Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula. The primary objective is to defend allied airspace from intrusions by Russian aircraft violating

airspace regulations, without a flight plan, or ignoring radio identification requests.

The deployment of the *Viespe* detachment has been carried out in conjunction with the Romanian, Italian and French Armed Forces to ensure the round-the-clock protection of the Eastern airspace.

Since 2006, Spain has also regularly contributed several fighter jets to the *Baltic Air Policing* mission through the *Vilkas* detachment in Lithuania and the *Ambar* detachment in Estonia.

**Eight fighter jets
and a surveillance
radar reinforce
NATO's air shielding
in Romania**

SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL

As part of NATO's enhanced air policing mission, Spain has also deployed a surveillance radar of the Mobile Air Control Group (GRUMOCA) in Romania. The *Tigru* detachment's radar arrived in the area of operations on 20 October 2022 and, since then, it has operated outside Spanish territory for more than 4,000 hours. The

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS



Mechanised units of NATO's battlegroup in Latvia during exercise *Crystal Arrow* in early April.



A Spanish *F-18* and an Italian *Eurofighter* patrolling Romanian airspace.

Security personnel of the *Tigru* detachment next to the AN/TPS43M air surveillance and control radar.

The detachment in Latvia is the largest, with more than 600 troops in a multinational battlegroup



Minehunter *Tajo* sails in waters of the Mediterranean as part of the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group.

data detected by the radar are received at the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Torrejón, which is responsible for directing air and missile defence on NATO's southern flank.

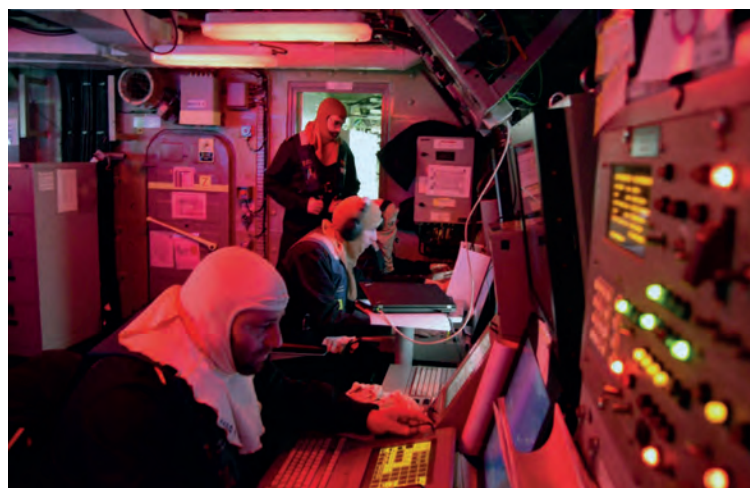
BALTIC COUNTRIES

At Camp Adazi, located 20 kilometres from Riga and some 120 kilometres from the Russian border, around 600 Spanish soldiers make up the multinational battlegroup deployed in Latvia as part of NATO's enhanced *Forward Presence* (eFP) mission.

Primarily comprising soldiers from the 12th Brigade *Guadarrama*, the twelfth contingent joined the mission on 13 January 2023 and has been deployed there until mid-June, when it was relieved by members of the same unit. The contingent participated in exercise

Crystal Arrow 2023 in early April, seeking to enhance cooperation between the armed forces of allied nations and certify the eFP's multinational battlegroup.

The Spanish Army has also had an Air Defence Unit (ADU) of NASAMS surface-to-air missile systems in operation for more than a year at Lielvarde air base, Latvia.



Training of the *Álvaro de Bazán*'s crew during multinational exercise *Joint Warrior 23* in the Norwegian Sea.

Its task is to reinforce the protection of Latvian airspace against threats at medium altitude, i.e. between 3,000 and 8,000 metres, particularly cruise missiles and armed drones. According to Major Juan Luis Rodríguez Lahore, commander of the first contingent, who was relieved in mid-January after a six-month mission, these are a crucial capability for the Alliance, as demonstrated in the conflict in Ukraine. The NASAMS battery can neutralise this type of threats thanks to its homing guidance AMRAAM 120 C5 missiles ("fire-and-forget" type), which are effective up to eight kilometres in altitude with a range of another 25 kilometres.

In such a short time, its responsiveness depends on its *MPQ-64 Sentinel* radar, responsible for detecting and identifying targets. It covers a radius of 75 kilometres and is capable of handling 80 blips at a time.

Another NASAMS battery of the 73rd Anti-aircraft Artillery Regiment of Cartagena, which is stationed at Amari air base in Estonia for an initial period of four months, joined this endeavour last April. The system, which arrived by sea to the Estonian port of Paldiski, will provide the Baltic country with air defence capabilities until it takes delivery of the systems of this type that it plans to purchase.

Along with other anti-aircraft units from allied countries, including the US *Patriot* and French *Mamba* batteries, the Spanish ADUs in Latvia and Estonia are part of NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence System under NATO's Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) headquarters at Ramstein, Germany.

MARITIME GROUPS

Frigate *Álvaro de Bazán* has been integrated in the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1), fulfilling its mission in operation *Brilliant Shield* as part of the Very High Readiness



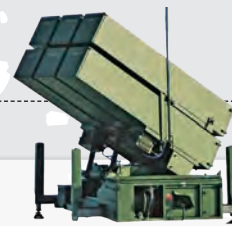
SPANISH TROOPS ON THE EASTERN FLANK



ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE



- A mechanised company task force and field artillery, sapper, engineer and logistic units at Camp Adazi (Latvia). **600 troops.**



AIR AND MISSILE DEFENCE



- A NASAMS battery at Lielvarde air base (Latvia) and another at Amari air base (Estonia). More than **80 troops.**



NATO MARITIME FORCES



- Frigate *Álvaro de Bazán*. has been part of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) in the North Sea. **Crew: 200.**



- Minehunter *Tajo* has been part of the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group in the Mediterranean. **Crew: 46.**



ENHANCED AIR POLICING



- *Viespe* detachment, consisted of eight *F-18* aircraft and **130 soldiers** of the 12th Wing at Fetesti air base (Romania).



- *Tigru* detachment with an air surveillance radar and **40 soldiers** at Schitu barracks, Romania.

Rafael Navarro / Revista Española de Defensa / Source: EMAD and RED.

Joint Force (VJTF). It sailed in the North Sea, carrying out enhanced surveillance and naval presence activities, and also undergoing training with the other ships of the allied maritime task force in exercises such as *Joint Warrior* and *Baltops* in the Norwegian Sea and the Baltic, while remaining available to carry out tasks according to the guidelines of the Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM).

After a four-day stop in the Norwegian port of Trondheim, this frigate set sail again to participate in exercise *Dynamic MongOOSE 23*, organised by NATO and focused on training in anti-submarine warfare procedures.

The Spanish vessel, led by Commander Jesús Viñas, began its deployment in mid-

January and has been deployed there until the end of June. It features a 200-strong crew on board, including an airborne unit (equipped with an *SH-60B* helicopter), and an operational security team belonging to the Marine Brigade.

Frigate *Álvaro de Bazán* has remained in the SNMG1 until mid-June

In addition, minehunter *Tajo* has sailed as part of the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group, which it joined at the end of February.

In recent weeks it has patrolled the waters of the Mediterranean to ensure freedom of navigation, contributing to the multinational exercises carried out by this naval task force specialised in detecting and neutralising mines.

In turn, the *Tajo* participates in operation *Sea Guardian* seeking to combat illegal activities at sea, while securing national and international maritime spaces. Its crew, which is supported by a team from the Mine Countermeasures Diving Unit, is made up of 46 people.

Víctor Hernández/Photos: EMAD

SPAIN LEADS NATO MISSION IRAQ

Lieutenant General José Antonio Agüero Martínez assumes command of the advisory mission to the Iraqi armed forces



Lieutenant General Agüero is presented with the NATO flag, symbolising the change of command in the advisory mission to the Iraqi armed forces.

DURING a ceremony held in Baghdad on 24 May 2023, Lieutenant General José Antonio Agüero Martínez assumed command of NATO Mission Iraq (NMI-I), taking over from Italian Lieutenant General Giovanni M. Iannucci, who had been in the post since May 2022.

The handover ceremony was chaired by Admiral Stuart B. Munsch, Commander of Allied Joint Force Command Naples, and was attended by Lieutenant General Fernando García González-Valerio, Chief of the Joint Defence Staff (JEMACON). During his speech, Lieutenant General

Agüero Martínez emphasised NATO's collaboration in training the Iraqi armed forces. He expressed his gratitude to his predecessor for the outstanding work done and conveyed his commitment to advancing in the ongoing objectives. "Our Iraqi colleagues have their own history, culture, organisation and tradition", the new mission commander remarked. "It is up to them to organise their national security framework. Through NATO mission Iraq, we will continue to adapt our advice to their specific needs".

Approved at the 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels, NMI-I is a non-combat advisory

and capacity-building mission. "Its primary objective is to aid Iraq to build its security institutions and make the Iraqi security forces even more effective and sustainable, so that they themselves are able to stabilise their country, fight terrorism, and prevent the return of *Daesh*", Lieutenant General Iannucci said. All the activities undertaken have the explicit consent of the Iraqi government and are conducted in complete respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In early November of last year, the Council of Ministers promoted José Antonio Agüero to the rank of Lieutenant General after his tenure as Chief of Staff of the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Spain (NRDC-ESP) in Bétera, Valencia, a post he held for eleven years. Born in Toledo and aged 59, he previously served in the 7th Brigade *Galicia*; the *Castillejos* Division; the Infantry Academy; and the Spanish Army Personnel Directorate. He has also participated in international missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan.

In one of his initial engagements as commander of the mission in Iraq, General Agüero met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the organisation's headquarters in Brussels on 3 May 2023. Also in attendance were the Permanent Representative to NATO, Ambassador Federico Torres Muro, and the Spanish Military Representative to NATO and EU Military Committees, Lieutenant General Francisco Javier Fernández Sánchez. According to the Defence Staff (EMAD), during the meeting, discussions were held on matters concerning the situation in Iraq and other territories in the region, as well as future opportunities and challenges, NATO's commitment to the Iraqi people and the expansion of the mission to other areas.

OPERATION SUPPORT TO IRAQ

Spain contributes to both of the main operations being carried out in Iraq. With 178 service members, Spain stands as the largest contributor to NMI-I, which involves all 31 NATO allies, as well as Sweden and Australia. Based in the capital city of Baghdad, its headquarters serve as a base for allied instructors and advisers who assist the Iraqi government in the field of national security structures and the development of their military education system. The Spanish contingent provides

support and protection to these advisers at the headquarters, as well as during their journeys to Iraqi training centres or other institutions. The current contingent, which comprises units of the General Command Headquarter in Ceuta, was deployed to Iraq at the end of May and will remain there for six months. It is made up of a Force Protection unit —which includes troops from the 54th Group of Regular Forces and the 2nd Legion Tercio *Duque de Alba*— and the logistical units of the National Support Element (NSE).

Furthermore, Spain has an additional 139 service members assigned to the international coalition combating *Daesh* as part of Operation *Inherent Resolve*, led by the United States. Since 2015, this coalition has been training the Iraqi army to prevent the reoccupation of their territory by *Daesh* terrorists. Task Force *Toro*, a helicopter unit deployed at Al Asad air base, is part of this contingent. Its primary mission is to provide air transport to allied troops, utilising four *Cougar* helicopters of the Spanish Army Airmobile Force (FAMET). Spanish instructors also contribute to this operation from the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Centre, where special operation units of the coalition provide training to Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) personnel.

VIDEOCONFERENCE

On 1 June 2023, Defence Minister Margarita Robles conducted a videoconference with the Spanish contingent of Operation Support to Iraq. She extended her congratulations to them on the occasion of Spain's Armed Forces Day and highlighted the importance of the mission, describing it as one of the "most significant" within NATO. "We are strongly focused on Ukraine, but the missions in Iraq are also crucial", said the defence minister. She was

**With 178 troops,
Spain is the largest
contributor to
this mission,
initiated by NATO in
October 2018**



Lieutenant General
José Antonio Agüero
Martínez.



Major General
Aroldo Lázaro
Sáenz.



Vice Admiral
José María Núñez
Torrente.



Brigadier General
Santiago Fernández
Ortiz-Repiso.

In command of four operations

Spanish generals hold key posts in international missions led by the UN, NATO and the EU

THE Spanish Armed Forces are currently commanding four international missions: Lebanon, Mali, Iraq and the Horn of Africa. These missions are conducted under the flags of three different organisations: the UN, the EU and NATO. This unique situation marks a significant milestone in Spain's nearly 35-year history of participating in international operations.

Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz leads the 10,000 blue helmets from 45 countries who comprise the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). He assumed this post on 28 February 2022, for a period of two years.

Since March 2019, Spain has also been in command of the operational headquarters (OHQ) of EU Operation *Atalanta* based at Naval Air Station Rota, Cádiz. The current commander is Vice Admiral José María Núñez Torrente, who was appointed on 23 February 2021. Spain is the only EU country that has participated continuously in this operation that combats piracy in the waters of the Indian Ocean and provides escorts to World Food Programme vessels off the coast of Somalia. The OHQ is staffed by 100 service members from 19 different nations. Spanish nationals comprise 40 per cent of the staff.

Brigadier General Santiago Fernández Ortiz-Repiso has been in command of the European Union mission in Mali, for a one-year term, since 15 December 2022. This is the fourth time that Spain has been in command of this mission. The Spanish Armed Forces have a total of 316 soldiers deployed in Mali. Spain is the largest contributor to this operation, which primarily focuses on training local security forces.

In two of these missions, other Spanish generals also hold prominent positions. In Lebanon, Spain commands one of UNIFIL's two Multinational Brigades: Sector East. There are over 3,500 troops in this brigade from nine different nations, including the Spanish contingent with 600 soldiers. Brigadier General Luis Jesús Fernández Herrero assumed the post on 26 May 2023 and will serve as commander for the next six months. In Iraq, alongside Lieutenant General Agüero, the new commander of NMI-I, another Spanish Army general holds the post of Chief of Staff of the mission and commander of the Spanish contingent in Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan. Since August 2022, Brigadier General Ricardo Esteban Cabrejos has been serving in that role.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

accompanied by Vice Admiral Iñigo de la Puente, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff of the Operations Command (MOPS).

During the videoconference, Lieutenant General Agüero was joined from Iraq by Brigadier General Ricardo Esteban Cabrejos, Chief of Staff of NMI-I, and Colonel Javier Fernández Conde, the NMI-I liaison officer for Operation *Inherent Resolve*.

The new commander outlined the tasks of NATO's mission, which he described as a "high-level advisory rather than training mission" and stressed that its main objective is to assist Iraq in building its security institutions and making the Iraqi armed forces more sustainable and effective, so that they themselves can stabilise the country and fight terrorism. "Our presence is crucial as it enables a connection with the Western world", emphasised General José Antonio Agüero. In turn, General Esteban pointed out that the mission is "in the spotlight" of the North Atlantic Alliance, and he remarked on the "strong cohesion" that exists within the Spanish contingent.

POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION

Lieutenant General Agüero presented the minister with an assessment of the geopolitical situation in Iraq, including its evolution and medium to long-term prospects. The response of the official Iraqi government, backed by the international coalition, resulted in 2019 in the collapse, after three and a half years, of the terrorist-held caliphate in the Arab nation.



Members of task force *Toro* pose next to one of the four *Cougar* helicopters deployed at Al Asad airbase as part of Operation *Inherent Resolve*.

Following the parliamentary elections in October 2021, a state of deadlock and political turmoil emerged, which was significantly intensified by the power struggle between supporters of Shiite leader Al-Sadr and pro-Iranian Shiite parties. This escalation resulted in fierce battles in Baghdad in late summer 2022. The period culminated with the establishment of a new government led by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudan, which was

officially approved by parliament in October of last year. The current cabinet's top priorities are combating corruption, tackling unemployment, supporting vulnerable groups, reforming the economic and financial sectors and enhancing public services (reports a press release from the Department of National Security).

In the economic sphere, there have been recent announcements of agreements with international companies aimed at boosting the production of oil, gas and renewable energies. Tensions continue to exist, however, regarding the distribution of oil revenues between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Regarding security, the Kurdish-Turkish conflict has continued intermittently, with sporadic military operations by Turkish forces against Kurdish armed groups on the country's northern border. Furthermore, there has been significant progress in fostering cooperation between Iraq and Iran to ensure that the security of Iran is not threatened from Iraqi soil, as well as to strengthen their mutual borders.

Finally, the persistent threat of terrorism from *Daesh* remains a significant challenge for the country, particularly in rural areas and especially in the provinces of Kirkuk, Salaheddin and Diyala.



Rubén Somonte/WIDE

Defence Minister Margarita Robles speaks by videoconference with Lieutenant General José Antonio Agüero and Brigadier General Ricardo Esteban on 1 June 2023.

Victor Hernández
Photos: EMAD



MUSEO DEL EJÉRCITO



El Museo del Ejército está instalado en dos edificios, el histórico Alcázar y el de nueva planta, unidos por los restos hallados en las excavaciones arqueológicas realizadas para la ampliación.

El Alcázar está destinado a la Exposición Permanente, albergando en el nuevo edificio las dependencias administrativas, las salas de Exposiciones Temporales, el auditorio, el archivo, la biblioteca, los talleres de restauración y almacenes, entre otras.

En más de 8.000 m² se distribuye la Exposición Permanente, con 8 salas de discurso histórico y 13 salas temáticas.

2.100 m² de restos arqueológicos que representan las épocas romana, árabe, medieval (Trastámara) y Carlos V.

HORARIO DE VISITAS

Abierto todos los días de 10.00 a 17.00 horas. Permanecerá cerrado todos los lunes (festivos incluidos), y los días 1 y 6 de enero, 1 de mayo, 24, 25 y 31 de diciembre

VISITAS DE GRUPOS

Obligatorio realizar reserva previa a través del Departamento de Reserva de grupos.

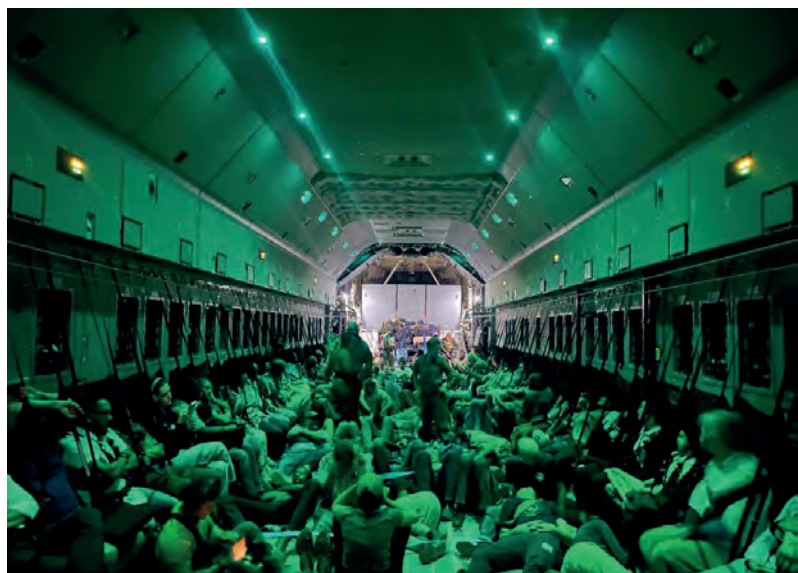
museje.grupos@et.mde.es

Tel. 925 238 816
925 238 909





Three A400M aircraft and one Airbus 330 were used to transport the military material and personnel involved in the operation, a total of nearly 200 soldiers.



The civilians were evacuated by A400M aircraft from Sudan's Wadi Seidna Air Base to Djibouti.



The CHOD greets evacuees on their arrival at Torrejón Air Base on board an Airbus A330 from Djibouti

OPERATION SUDAN

Four aircraft and nearly 200 military personnel evacuate over a hundred citizens trapped in the conflict in Sudan

OVER 100 citizens were safely evacuated from the perilous armed conflict in Sudan. This intricate rescue mission involved the efforts of four aircraft and nearly 200 Spanish military personnel. “These have been days of intense danger, but we are relieved to have successfully brought our fellow citizens back to Spain”, expressed Defence Minister Margarita Robles, as the evacuees arrived at Torrejón Air Base on 24 April 2023. Among the evacuees, there were 34 Spanish nationals, while the remaining individuals hailed from Italy, Ireland, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Portugal, and Poland.

The Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) commenced on Friday, 21 April, with the arrival of the initial A400M aircraft at Djibouti Airport. An Airbus A330 and two additional A400Ms subsequently joined the mission.

The evacuation operation involved a diverse group of participants, including approximately 90 soldiers from the 1st Parachutist Battalion and the Spanish Army's Special Operations Command. Additionally, there were 80 members of the 31st Wing, the 45th Group, the Air Deployment Support Squadron, and the Air and Space Force's Air Evacuation Medical Unit. The joint effort also included a reconnaissance and liaison team from the Operations Command, personnel from the Joint Special Operations Command, the Joint Force Air Component (JFAC), and various other units, all under the operational control of the Operations Command.

Prior to the commencement of the evacuation mission in Sudan, meticulous

diplomatic coordination was carried out, and the necessary protective measures were put in place whilst awaiting the most suitable moment to take action, considering the sensitivity of the situation. Despite the announcement of a three-day ceasefire coinciding with the end of Ramadan, the fighting that had erupted on the 15th persisted without interruption. As Khartoum International Airport was unusable due to the ongoing conflict, the Spanish Armed Forces established their base of operations at Wadi Seidna Air Base, located approximately 16 kilometres north of the Sudanese capital. The initial phase of the operation involved the arrival of an A400M aircraft from Djibouti, transporting two VAMTAC vehicles and ground forces. Several hours later, two additional A400Ms arrived, carrying the remaining military personnel, vehicles and equipment required to support the evacuation mission.

After establishing a secure perimeter, the convoy proceeded with the transportation of civilian personnel from the embassy, where they had sought shelter, to the airport. A ground patrol was dispatched to escort them to the secure zone. This

phase of the operation posed a significant risk, as there was a potential threat of rebel groups launching uncontrolled attacks on the convoy. Fortunately, the convoy successfully reached the secure zone without any incidents. Shortly afterwards, the A400M transported the more than 100 civilians to Djibouti. From there, a group of 70 individuals boarded an Airbus A330 bound for Spain, while the remaining evacuees stayed in Djibouti to arrange alternative means of returning to their respective countries.

On the 24th, the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón, joined the Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, José Manuel Albares, at Torrejón Air Base to welcome the evacuated citizens. On his arrival in Madrid, the Spanish ambassador to Khartoum, Antonio Isidro González Alonso, spoke by telephone with the King, who congratulated all those involved “on the success of the operation”.

The operation in Djibouti was supported by personnel from the *Orión* detachment, which is currently deployed as part of Operation *Atalanta*, acting as a forward base for the evacuation and enabling the deployment of both air and ground assets from Spain.

WELCOME CEREMONY

Within a span of 48 hours, the aircraft transported the military equipment and personnel involved in the rescue operation back to Spain. On the 25th, the Minister of Defence welcomed 53 of the soldiers at Torrejón air base. The CHOD, the Chiefs of Staff of the Spanish Army, Amador Enseñat, and of the Air and Space Force, Javier

**The evacuation
was very
complicated due to
the threat of attack
by rebel forces**

Salto, and the General in charge of the Parachutist Brigade (BRIPAC), Luis Jesús Fernández Herrero, were also present for the homecoming. "It has been a difficult evacuation. It has taken many hours to perform each of your tasks, but I have nothing but words of praise and thanks. Once again, as in Kabul, you have placed Spain in high regard", the minister stressed in her address to the members of the contingent. The CHOD also expressed his gratitude to the soldiers for "accomplishing the mission", which was not without risk, for their "response capacity" in resolving unforeseen challenges and for their "dedication and spirit of sacrifice".

Colonel Alberto Fajardo of the Operations Command, the head of the Spanish contingent, also emphasised the coordination between the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs, as well as the agility of the Operations Command in "transforming the contingency plan into an actionable plan that could be implemented within a 24-hour timeframe".

The key to this rapid reaction, the colonel added, "has been the timely work of the armed forces, identifying personnel

with the necessary skills for the mission, and coordination on the ground between elements from Foreign Affairs, Defence and authorities from Sudan and other countries".

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Juan José Pereda, commander of the 1st Battalion of the Parachutist Brigade, shed light on the challenges encountered in moving the convoy of civilians amidst the threat of attack by armed groups.

CONFLICT IN SUDAN

Fighting in recent weeks between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the country's primary paramilitary force, has shattered any hopes of a peaceful transition to civilian rule. These two groups orchestrated the joint coup that toppled the transitional government in October 2021.

The situation escalated on 15 April 2023 as armed clashes between the two factions intensified. In the days that followed, UN estimates reported a death toll of at least 460 individuals and 4,000 injured. The Spanish embassy in Khartoum issued an advisory urging nationals in the country to remain at home and avoid non-essential travel.

Fighting persisted despite multiple announcements of truces from both sides. Khartoum Airport remained inoperable and borders closed. Essential services were disrupted, exacerbating shortages of water, food and fuel. Some 10,000 Sudanese citizens fled to neighbouring Chad.

On the 21st, the Sudanese army expressed its willingness to facilitate the evacuation of foreigners, while the paramilitary group also gave assurances of partially opening controlled airports. The fragile truce provided a window of opportunity for several countries to evacuate their diplomats and citizens, including UN mission personnel in the country, who boarded a French frigate at Port Sudan. Meanwhile, over 1,000 evacuees from 58 different countries arrived at Jeddah Naval Base in Saudi Arabia.

The rescue of the Spanish nationals was carried out without incident, even in the face of resumed fighting on the second day of the ceasefire. Convoys from other countries were not so lucky and encountered attacks.

Víctor Hernández/Photos: EMAD



On 25 April, the Minister of Defence welcomed 53 soldiers of the contingent at Torrejón air base.



Evacuees board frigate *Reina Sofía* docked in Port Sudan. After the identification process, they were provided with healthcare, food and accommodation on the ship.



Photos: ENAD

EVACUATION BY SEA

Frigate *Reina Sofía* rescues 162 civilians in the second such operation conducted by the Spanish Armed Forces in Sudan

BETWEEN 4 and 6 May 2023, 162 civilians trapped in the conflict in Sudan were evacuated as a result of a new rescue mission by sea. At the request of the European Union, Spanish frigate *Reina Sofía*, the flagship of Operation *Atalanta* in the Indian Ocean, picked up the foreign residents in Port Sudan, the nation's main commercial port in the Red Sea, and took them to the port of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), some 300 kilometres away. Foreign residents of a dozen different nations, including France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Sweden, United States, and Canada, were among the evacuees; however there were no Spanish nationals.

The frigate, with a 204-strong crew, received the planning order for a potential intervention on April 27 at the request of the European External Action Service (EEAS). On May 4, the frigate, led by the Operations Command, arrived at the Sudanese port. The following day, civilian staff members who had gathered in a hotel waiting to be evacuated were transferred to the ship.

During the transfer and boarding of the evacuees, the Force Protection team provided all the necessary means of surveillance and weaponry to ensure their safety. Once on board, and after the identification and triage process, the evacuees were offered medical assistance, their documentation was checked and they

were provided with accommodation. Taking full advantage of its capabilities, the ship set sail towards the port of Jeddah that evening at top speed. This allowed personnel to disembark in a matter of hours and reach their destination as soon as possible.

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, congratulated Spain on the success of the evacuation. Several countries also expressed their appreciation for this rescue mission: "The Spanish and the French have done an extraordinary job", said Irish Deputy Prime Minister Micheál Martin on Irish state television. Poland also thanked Spain for its assistance, which allowed eleven Poles to flee Sudan. Up to that point, 2,500 individuals had been successfully evacuated from the conflict zone thanks to the joint action of European countries, some by airlift from Sudan to Djibouti and others by land, travelling the roughly 600 kilometres from Khartoum to Port Sudan in convoys.

On May 12, 2023, Defence Minister Margarita Robles visited the Operations Command (MOPS) at Retamares military base in Madrid to thank the soldiers for their efforts in planning, conducting and implementing these evacuations. She said, "There is no greater demonstration of generosity than offering our Armed Forces in remote areas to help people from other countries".

V.H.M.



INTERNATIONAL ANALYSIS

SUDAN'S DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN JEOPARDY

Conflict between Sudanese Armed Forces and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces threatens regional stability

“THIS is not the Sudanese people's war. It's a couple of generals fighting for wealth and power”, says Abdelaziz Sakin, Sudan's most widely read and popular writer, exiled in Austria since 2012. These are undoubtedly the real factors behind the confrontations that broke out on 15 April 2023 in the capital, Khartoum, between the armed forces supporting the two highest authorities in the country. Namely, the Chairman of the Transitional Council, Gen-

eral Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and Deputy Commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (alias Hemedti), Commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group.

Now that their former rivalry has escalated into a bloody and uncertain conflict, the African country is once again the scene of violence and war in which its population has lived since its emancipation from British colonial rule. With an estimated population of over 45

million people and the third largest country in Africa (1.8 million km²), Sudan's history as a sovereign state has been marked by a succession of military governments and coups d'état (up to 16, some successful and some failed), all set against a backdrop of extreme violence that has spread to the country's most remote areas and always encouraged by Khartoum. The war against secessionist rebel groups in the southern region actually began on 1 January 1956, the day of independence. It lasted five decades and claimed two



Mohamed Abu Othman/EEF

Sudan's history is characterised by war and instability. Here, a Sudanese man displays his flag after the October coup in 2021.

A COUNTRY PUNISHED BY HISTORY

- **Area:** 1.8 million square kilometres
- **Population:** 45 million people (24 inhabitants/km²)
- **Religion:** Sunni Muslims 70%, Animists 20% and Christians 5%
- **Mother tongue:** Arabic 49.4%, Dinka 11.5%, Nubian languages 8.1%, Beja 6.4% and Nuer 4.9%
- **Armed Forces:** 200,000 troops
- **Rapid Support Forces (paramilitary):** between 100,000 and 150,000 troops
- **Economy:** Sudan ranks 102nd in terms of GDP. Its public debt in 2021 was €55.152 billion (187.9% of its GDP) and is the second most indebted country in the world

CONFLICT LEADERS

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan

A graduate student of Sudan's Military Academy (1991), al-Burhan fought in the Darfur conflict and the South Sudan secessionist war. He served as regional commander in Darfur, inspector general of the army and, in 2018, al-Bashir appointed him commander of the Army's Land Forces. In 2019, in the midst of social unrest, he was promoted to lieutenant general and appointed head of the Sudanese Armed Forces. Finally, after ordering al-Bashir's arrest and reaching out to social leaders, he was appointed chairman of Sudan's Sovereign Council (transitional civilian-military government). In October 2021, together with Hemedti, he led the military coup that put an end to the civilian-military transition process. Since then, he has been Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council.

General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti)

In 2003, Hemedti joined the Sudanese Arab *Janjaweed* militia in Darfur, where he rose through the ranks to become the region's chief oppressor of black tribes. Despite this, the International Criminal Court has not indicted him for genocide. In 2013, he formed the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, and to ensure a counterweight to the Sudanese Armed Forces, al-Bashir gave him complete autonomy. He also gave him authority over the gold mines in Darfur, making him one of the richest people in Sudan. During the 2019 social revolution, Hemedti joined al-Burhan in deposing al-Bashir and supported the democratic transition process. After the 2021 coup, al-Burhan appointed him deputy chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council.

million lives before culminating with the foundation of South Sudan in 2011. At the beginning of the 21st century, under the iron dictatorship of General al-Bashir since 1989, an all-out war was being waged in Sudan. In addition to the conflict in the south, there were violent revolts in Port Sudan and Kordofan, while the Darfur region was being devastated by a genocide personally ordered and led by al-Bashir, as ruled by the International Criminal Court in 2010.

At the time, nothing seemed to predict the fall of the Sudanese regime, which also tried to legitimise itself through rigged elections in 2010. However, against all odds, a peaceful social revolution in 2019—well organised by various professional associations and known as the Bread Revolution—managed to overthrow the iron-fisted Sudanese security apparatus that had ordered the dictator's arrest. This ushered in a period of relative hope and expectation inside and outside the country, in which a civilian-military government agreed by the parties took responsibility for leading the Sudanese people towards

democracy. However, a double military uprising led by Sudan's two most powerful generals put an end to the tumultuous political transition in October 2021.

On the one hand, al-Burhan, who was already at the helm of the Sovereign Council, and on the other, Hemedti, the feared paramilitary leader in charge of the Arab *Janjaweed* militia during the 2003 Darfur massacre and one of the wealthiest men in the country. Both leaders, forcibly instituted as Sudan's highest authorities, vowed to maintain the transition process until the repeatedly postponed April 2023 elections

and to unite their forces—the Sudanese army and the RSF, which joined al-Bashir's coercive apparatus in 2015—into a single national institution. Soon after, the complex and unfinished integration of the RSF into the national army became the main source of confrontation, demonstrating that neither party was willing to allow the democratisation of Sudan without preserving the power and control of resources provided by a tyrannical and corrupt military-led system financed by the country's vast wealth, mainly its gold mines and, until the independence of Southern Sudan, its oil wells.

In mid-April, Khartoum became the epicentre of a fierce confrontation that has spread to the rest of the country

RIVALRY AND WAR

On 15 April 2023, Khartoum awoke to the turmoil brought on by weeks of constant shelling and violent clashes between the two forces. The Sudanese capital became the epicentre of a conflict that is already spreading to much of the country, threatening regional stability and ruling out any chance of democratisation in Sudan, as civilian politicians go into hiding to avoid retribution and the population suffers the dramatic consequences of war. According to the United Nations, the death toll so far is close to a thousand, although estimates are much higher. One million people have been internally displaced by the violence, and more than 300,000 Sudanese have been forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries: a humanitarian crisis that no national or international organisation can cope with due to the dangerous nature of the conflict, unless hostilities cease or humanitarian corridors are guaranteed.

After several weeks of fighting, the conflict has entered a phase of attrition

as it has become clear that neither side, with vastly different military capabilities and tactics, has been able to impose its will and achieve victory. The Sudanese army, which numbers around 200,000 troops, has battle tanks, fighter jets and long-range artillery to defend its positions. However, this superiority has not been enough to overcome the Rapid Support Forces (between 100,000 and 150,000 paramilitaries), which are lighter and more mobile and control many of the capital's neighbourhoods, where, like their Janjaweed predecessors, they loot and rape the locals, as well as the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns of Bahri and Omdurman, who are also victims of violence and bombing. A population that, without protection, is trying to escape the intense and constant crossfire that has persisted despite the temporary ceasefires agreed by the warring parties since the beginning of the conflict.

Today, Khartoum is a lawless, desolate and war-torn city where food and basic

resources are scarce, power cuts are constant and hundreds of bodies lie in the streets, posing a risk of infection. In addition, only 26 of the few hospitals in the capital, which are now providing a very precarious service, are able to treat the thousands of people injured by street fighting and shelling due to a lack of medical supplies, oxygen and equipment. Faced with this situation, and thanks to international pressure, the warring parties reached an agreement on 17 May that would allow humanitarian aid to be delivered, electricity to be restored, security forces to be withdrawn from hospitals, and the dead to be collected for dignified burial.

And although the epicentre of the fighting remains in the capital, the conflict is already spreading to several Sudanese states, while the eastern region of Darfur, bordering Chad, has become the second main focus of the clashes between the two factions. This is an area already devastated since 2003 by the extreme violence of the *Janjaweed* militias, which, transformed into the RSF in 2013, have resumed looting and persecution of the black tribes. Hundreds of people have already been killed and thousands of Darfuris are crossing the Chadian border, as they once did, to escape the brutal violence and food shortages.

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

In Sudan, many believe that the extent of the conflict will depend on external support for the two warring parties, as neither shows any interest in ending the fighting. At the beginning of the crisis, analysts reported that Russia's *Wagner* mercenary group was providing air support and weapons to the RSF, although they do not currently view them as a decisive force in the battle. Egypt, al-Burhan's main ally in the transition and a major player in Sudanese politics, has chosen not to interfere and has called for a permanent ceasefire. However, Hemedti has accused Egypt of deploying troops and fighter jets to support al-Burhan, a charge that al-Sisi's government has denied. Meanwhile, Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army, has refuted claims that he is backing Hemedti's paramilitaries. Against this backdrop, China, Sudan's



STRIFE

A girl carries her sister at a refugee camp near the Egyptian border.

major trading partner and main financier since the 1990s, is reluctant to get involved in the peace efforts, but will cooperate with a new government to maintain stability and its substantial investment in Sudanese infrastructure, particularly oil. Finally, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates also play a crucial role in the situation in Sudan. In 2019, both countries participated in the formation of a transitional government aligned with their interests. However, since the coup in 2021 and up until the outbreak of the conflict, they have positioned themselves with al-Burhan and Hemedti, respectively.

At the continental level, the African Union (AU) has strongly condemned the war in Sudan, which has been suspended from the organisation's activities since the 2021 coup. At its special session in Sudan on 20 April 2023, the AU called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, urged the warring parties to establish humanitarian corridors, resume political dialogue with a view to establishing an inclusive civilian-led government, and strongly rejected all forms of external interference, despite the fact that the AU's actual contribution to resolving the conflict is very limited. "The ongoing conflict", stressed the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, "presents a real risk of regional conflagration and internationalisation akin to the situation in Libya in 2011. There is, therefore, a compelling need for the international community to speak with one voice and in coordination with the African Union".

Outside Africa, the UN is leading international efforts to achieve a lasting ceasefire to prevent this war from becoming a wider regional crisis and, most importantly, to alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people and ensure their access to humanitarian aid. In the same vein, the European Union has demonstrated its commitment to meeting the urgent needs of the Sudanese people by providing for the transport of essential supplies to Port Sudan and by earmarking special funds for humanitarian aid to Sudan. It has also facilitated the evacuation of citizens of the European Union and third countries by activating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

TURBULENT FUTURE

Although the initial ceasefire agreements were brokered by South Sudan on behalf of



Kyodo/EEF

Conflicts in Khartoum have turned the capital into chaos where people try to escape the crossfire without any protection.

and at the request of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Saudi city of Jeddah has served as the official venue for talks between the two rival factions in Sudan since 9 May 2023. Saudi Arabia, with the strong backing of the United States and the direct involvement of the Arab League, has become the main mediator in resolving the conflict. The fighting is far from over and there has been little progress on the ground. However, all hopes are now pinned on the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, which was signed by representatives of the SAF and RSF in Jeddah on 20 May and was due to enter into force on 22 May. Although it was initially signed for a period of seven days and extended, on the ground neither side has ceased attacks. Following the signing of this agreement, the US State Department issued a public statement expressing

confidence that subsequent talks would address the steps necessary to reach a lasting peace agreement, which "must be led by Sudanese society, with the support of the regional and international community, in a political process to resume democratic transition and form a civilian government".

All in all, the international community should step up its efforts, with the United Nations and Africa playing a more prominent role ("African solutions to African problems"), to ensure a lasting peace, guarantee a legitimate government and restore a roadmap that, through a political process led by Sudanese society, will enable the establishment of the long-awaited democracy in Sudan, the first victim of this conflict. It is now urgent to prevent the total collapse of this African giant and, as a first priority, to put an end to the enormous suffering of a defenceless population that has had enough of so much violence. In the light of the present negotiations, however, it should be borne in mind that a sham settlement of the conflict that leaves military power in Khartoum will have extremely serious consequences, not only for the country but also for the entire region. Indeed, those who have led their people into a fratricidal war can hardly be the architects of a secure and prosperous future for Sudan.

**The UN estimates
that nearly a
thousand people
have died and more
than a million have
been displaced**

Colonel Jesús Díez Alcalde (Army)
Head of the National Security Analysis Unit
Co-author of the book "Sudan's Conflicts"
(Ministry of Defence, 2008)

Cyber defence: a key element in the war in Ukraine

AT first glance, the war in Ukraine may appear reminiscent of the trench and artillery battles that plagued Europe in the previous century. However, this perception could not be further from the truth. What we are witnessing is the most technologically advanced warfare in human history. The reason behind this is the successful use of a new area of operations: cyberspace.

For millennia, wars were only waged in the physical world and were bloody and brutal, yet readily observable. However, the war in Ukraine, though equally brutal, remains largely hidden from the view of most people. In Ukraine, the conflict unfolds simultaneously in both the physical and cyberspace domains, and while we get just a glimpse of the larger picture, real people are suffering and dying as a result of what is happening in cyberspace.

Throughout history, technological superiority has provided a crucial edge in conflicts. However, in our current digital era, superiority in cyberspace has emerged as a decisive factor, particularly with the advent of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT), which will transform both the "battle space" and the ways in which to fight: artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles and weaponry, cloud computing, sensorisation, etc. While the latter is still some years away, the reality of today's cyberspace bears a certain resemblance to it.

Possessing top-tier weapon systems is of little use in itself if we lack crucial knowledge about the enemy's location, capabilities and intentions to be able to use this information effectively. Similarly, the best intelligence in the world, even when provided by allies, serves no purpose if it cannot be deployed in a timely manner to where it



**Rear Admiral
Javier Roca**
Deputy Commander
of the Joint
Cyberspace
Command

is needed. The significant contrast in accuracy, speed and efficiency between Russian and Ukrainian artillery usage is just one example of this fact. Arguably, cyberspace underpins a large part of military capabilities and, therefore, as a prerequisite for military success, freedom of action to operate in and through cyberspace is necessary.

In Ukraine, we have witnessed an unprecedented surge in destructive cyber-attacks targeting computer networks and critical infrastructure, representing the largest scale of such attacks ever recorded. However, the use of cyberspace in the context of warfare has transcended traditional cyber-attacks on Communications and Information Systems (CIS). The remarkable efforts to maintain connectivity throughout the country, including the Internet and mobile telephone services, the adept use of social media platforms such as Telegram and Twitter, and the innovative development of mobile applications (apps) and web tools (bots) to support military operations and enhance the resilience of the population, have become pivotal elements to defend Ukraine and an example for future wars. Low-orbit satellites like StarLink, the implementation of national roaming, the battle for mobile phone networks and the use of applications such as Diia, AirAlarm, Bachu, ePPO, @eVorog_bot and many others are already part of military history.

***The conflict is taking place
simultaneously in the physical
and cyberspace domains***



Rafa Navarro / Photo: Hélène Gicquel

Ukraine foresaw the criticality of secure and reliable access to cyberspace, recognising that its absence would have resulted in rapid defeat within mere weeks. Consequently, the country had diligently prepared itself in recent years. A testament to this preparedness is the ambitious digital transformation undertaken by President Zelenskyy's new government since 2019, aimed at bolstering the nation and its Armed Forces. This transformation has fostered a culture of innovation and software development, as created at its Centre for Innovation and Development of Defence Technologies in the Ministry of Defence. From this centre emerged the Delta application, dubbed the "Google Maps" of warfare, which offers previously unimaginable possibilities on the battlefield. GIS Arta, referred to as the "artillery Uber" is another example of Ukraine's innovative capacity, where enabling near-real-time merging and sharing of information to organise, optimise and prioritise artillery strikes is proving to be a decisive factor on the frontline.

Moreover, the cyberspace of interest, encompassing networks, systems and services, can be defended to a large extent from any location, and Ukraine is receiving extraordinary help from friendly nations as well as prominent Western technology companies (Space-X, Microsoft, Google, Maxar, Clearview AI, etc.), which bring exceptional capabilities, whether economic, technological or in terms of social influence. Civil-military, public-private and international collaboration is essential to operate within the domain of cyberspace.

Ukraine's focus on maintaining connectivity within the country and developing IT tools tailored for digital warfare on the front line has granted the nation four advantages: maintaining morale and communication with its population and armed forces, sustaining the will to win and faith in victory; multiplying the effectiveness of its own forces, especially in intelligence gathering and dissemination;

obstructing enemy action, especially its Command and Control, by forcing the Russians to use open radio frequencies and civilian phones, which can be intercepted; and, finally, managing to attract the attention of the international community and gain its support and solidarity. In record time they were able to create a brand that is now synonymous with freedom, democracy and the struggle for independence. That brand is called "Ukraine" and the West loves it.

Ukraine's resilience in the face of one of the world's most formidable cyber powers has showcased the possibility of effective defence. The key lies in possessing a well-trained and prepared Command Unit and Cyberspace Operations Force capable of operating in the cyberspace domain, while maintaining coordination with the rest of the kinetic operations in the other physical domains.

The current events in Ukraine lead to a significant conclusion: in the imminent future, as operations unfold in a multi-domain environment characterised by interconnectedness, establishing control over cyberspace under a unified command will be indispensable to operate effectively in all other domains. Whoever achieves dominance in cyberspace and restricts the adversary's freedom of action within this domain will emerge victorious in the battle.

Regrettably, in our current reality, perpetual competition, confrontation, and sometimes conflict have become a part of our lives, whether we like it or not. In Ukraine we have seen just how fragile peace and security are and how constant investment and dedication are needed to maintain them. Ukraine has shown that investing in cyber defence was a wise move. Cyber defence is not expensive; what truly carries a hefty price, sometimes even a decisive one, is the failure to implement it and the subsequent regret that it is already "too late".

OVERVIEW



Tribute in Bosnia-Herzegovina

It has been 30 years since the Spanish mission got underway in that country

THE Spanish Square in Mostar served as the backdrop for the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Spanish mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as a tribute to the 23 soldiers who lost their lives during the mission. The event was attended by the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón; the Commander of the Operations Command, Francisco Braco; the Spanish Ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Teresa Lizaranzu; and the Mayor of Mostar, Mario Kordic.

The Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD) emphasised that ever since the first soldiers of the *Málaga* task force set foot in the country, “a strong bond has been forged between our Armed Forces and the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a bond that has endured and grown stronger over the past 30 years”. The admiral highlighted that over this period, more than 46,000

Spanish military personnel have participated in successive missions under the flags of the UN, NATO and the European Union, “demonstrating Spain’s unwavering commitment to security, peace and harmony”. This commitment, he added, “remains steadfast today”, as evidenced by the ongoing engagement of two Army officers stationed at Operation *Althea* headquarters in Sarajevo, providing support to the Bosnian authorities in maintaining a secure and stable environment.

The Spanish ambassador, meanwhile, expressed her appreciation for the ongoing warmth demonstrated by the population towards Spain and its military. She underscored that as a result of our country’s commendable role in the operation, “a truly exceptional bond of solidarity and commitment” has been forged.

EU Military Committee

Chairman visits Spain

On 24 March 2023, the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee, Austrian General Robert Brieger, paid a visit to Spain. The purpose of his visit was to hold a working meeting with the Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD), Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón. During their discussions, they touched upon various topics, including Spain’s contribution



to European Union missions. Later, at the Centre for National Defence Studies, he gave a lecture titled “EU response to global security and defence challenges” to the students of the Armed Forces General Staff Officer Course.

He also travelled to Operation *Atalanta* headquarters in Rota, Cádiz. While there, he attended a briefing on the current maritime security situation in the Western Indian Ocean. He also visited the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), a facility providing round-the-clock monitoring for safe navigation in the area of operations seven days a week.

Upon his return to Madrid, General Robert Brieger toured the facilities of the EU Satellite Centre, located at Torrejón air base. There he was briefed on the centre’s mission and its role in providing operational support, and had the opportunity to visit the operations room.

Artemis Accords

Spain signs agreement with NASA

ON 31 May 2023, Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles met at the Ministry's headquarters with Bill Nelson, Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), who was on a visit to Spain. The day before, Nelson met with Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez at Moncloa Palace, where Spain signed the *Artemis Accords*. This agreement will allow for the establishment of a sustained presence on the surface of the Moon, paving the way for the first manned expeditions to Mars.

Robles and Nelson hailed the signing of this agreement as a testament to the outstanding collaboration between Spain and the United States across various domains, including space. They emphasised the shared commitment of



Marco Romero/MIDE

both nations to continue collaborating on crucial matters like climate change and the pursuit of space exploration in a safe, peaceful and transparent manner.

The rich history of Spanish collaboration with NASA traces its roots back to the 1960s, in the early days of the space age with the *Mercury* project and the *Apollo* programme. This partnership remains steadfast to this day, exemplified by the full operability of the Deep Space Communications Complex, located at INTA's facilities in Robledo de Chavela, Madrid, as well as the Institute's own Space Station in Maspalomas, Gran Canaria. The NASA administrator also paid a visit to the new Spanish Space Agency, headquartered in Seville.



Ejército del Aire y del Espacio

Training in Greece

Aircraft from the 46th Wing take part in *Iniochos*

MULTINATIONAL exercise *Iniochos* saw the participation of five *F-18* fighters from the 46th Wing from Gando air base in Gran Canaria, the Air Deployment Support Squadron (EADA) from Zaragoza, and a total of 66 Spanish airmen. Held in Greece between 24 April and 5 May 2023 at Andravida air base, the exercise brought together assets from the United States, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Cyprus, Slovenia and Greece, in addition to those provided by Spain.

The 12-day exercise brought together a wide range of forces and

assets from each of these nations, including fighter jets, bombers, and teams for personnel recovery, suppression of enemy air defences, command and control, as well as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, within an integrated framework of air, land, naval, and electronic threats.

The exercise area, coupled with the air, land and naval assets, provided an environment for pilots from the 46th Wing to engage in advanced air-to-air and air-to-ground training, both day and night.

Cyber defence exercise

Over 3,000 specialists participate in *Locked Shields 23*

EXERCISE *Locked Shields 23*, organised in Tallinn, Estonia, by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE), took place from 18 to 20 April 2023. Civilian and military specialists underwent training to respond to attacks on the critical infrastructure and telecommunications systems of a fictitious allied nation. *Locked Shields* is the most complex, realistic and demanding exercise in the world. It is designed to engage practically all essential services of a country: energy, economy, communications, security, health, transport, and more. Over 3,000 experts from 38 different countries participated in this year's event, hailing from the public, commercial, business, and academic sectors. The majority of these specialists formed 24 rapid response teams, referred to as blue teams. Each team tackled over 7,000 programmed attacks globally, operating remotely from their respective home countries.



Pepe Díaz

Cooperation with the United States

Two more US Navy destroyers at Rota

THE Government of Spain has authorised the stationing of two additional US Navy ships, along with their respective crews, at Rota naval base. These ships are equipped with the AEGIS combat system. The agreement was signed on 8 May 2023 at the Ministry of Defence by Defence Minister Margarita Robles and the US Ambassador to Spain, Julissa Reynoso, on behalf of their respective governments.

According to the agreement, both ships will be "subject to the same conditions" as the four already deployed in Rota. The objectives of the agreement are to "make a substantial contribution to regional stability and common security across Africa, Europe and the Middle East" and

to "further contribute to NATO's ballistic missile defence system".

This authorisation "does not alter the missions or the composition of forces already authorised". It falls within the framework of the Defence Cooperation Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the United States of America, originally established on 1 December 1988. Furthermore, it aligns with the cooperation outlined in the Second Protocol of Amendment to this Agreement, dated 10 October 2012.

Although there has been an increase in the number of destroyers stationed in Rota, the deployment of US personnel remains in accordance with the total authorised limit of 4,250 military personnel and 1,000 civilians.



Aaron Lau/US Navy

King visits Satellite Centre

The EU agency celebrates its 30th anniversary

TO commemorate the 30th anniversary of the European Union Satellite Centre (SatCen), King Felipe VI paid a visit to its facilities situated at Torrejón air base, Madrid. Accompanied by Defence Minister Margarita Robles and Centre director Sorin Dumitru, King Felipe toured the various facilities responsible for providing geospatial intelligence products



Gazeta Aeronautica/José Luis Larzú

and services to the European Union within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and supporting the decision-making process primarily through the analysis of data obtained from earth observation satellites.

This EU agency fields requests from a range of users, including the European External Action Service, the Council of the European Union, Member States, the European Commission, the United Nations, the OSCE and NATO.

Change of command at CAOC Torrejón

Lieutenant General Sanchez de Lara, the new commander

ON 29 March 2023, Torrejón air base in Madrid hosted the change of command ceremony of the Combined Air Operations Centre Torrejón (CAOCT). Spanish Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD), Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón, and the commander of Allied Air Command Europe (COM AIRCOM), General James B. Hecker (USAF) presided over the ceremony.

The event was attended, among other authorities, by the Chiefs of Staff of allied countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, etc.), heads of NATO Command Structure Centres (HQ AIRCOM, CAOC Udem), representatives of the Aeronautical Council of the Spanish Air and Space Force, ambassadors, advisors and military attachés from NATO countries represented in the CAOCT (Germany, France, Croatia, Hungary, etc.).

Lieutenant General Fernando de la Cruz handed over command to Lieutenant General Juan Pablo Sánchez de Lara. During his speech, General de la Cruz expressed his gratitude for the "loyalty and performance exhibited by all the personnel under his command at CAOCT over the past three years". General Sanchez de Lara, meanwhile, stated, "Both my own availability and that of the team I am now a part of will further bolster the trust vested in us, guaranteeing the peace, security and safety of Allied airspace 24/7".

General Sánchez de Lara boasts over 3,500 flight hours in fighter jets, with a significant portion of that time dedicated to serving as an instructor



AIRCOM

and test pilot. Throughout his military career, he has held several significant posts. These include serving as Director of the Air Force Academy, Head of the Planning Division of the Air Force General Staff and Head of the Canary Islands Air Command, among others.

The primary mission of CAOC Torrejón is to plan, direct, coordinate, supervise, analyse and report on air defence operations in Southern Europe. This responsibility is borne following the directives of the NATO Air Component Command to which it reports, leveraging the peacetime resources allocated to the Alliance by member nations.



Major General Vivas, commander of the *Castillejos* Division, and Brigadier General Herrero, commander of the BRIPAC, at the command post of the multinational brigade in San Gregorio.

AIRBORNE RESPONSE

Castillejos Military Division leads US Army Europe-Africa exercise *Swift Response 23*

IN a tactical flight from the north of Aragon, a combined formation of 24 helicopters of the Spanish Army Airmobile Force (FAMET) and the US Army crosses the horizon at dawn. Flanked by six *Tiger* attack helicopters, 450 service members fly towards Ablitas airfield, in Navarra, aboard four *Chinook* and four *NH90* transport helicopters, one Command Post *Super Puma* and another configured for medical air evacuation, all

of them Spanish. They are accompanied by four American *Chinooks* and four *Black Hawks*. A rapid air assault will start in a few minutes under the command of this task group, which also includes French and Italian troops. Their mission is to retake a strategic stronghold of an allied country that has been captured by an insurgent cell seeking to rebuild a training area for militia members and paramilitary forces. It is part of the strategy of a neighbouring

country that has been amassing forces at the border for months with the intention to invade.

The heliborne landing is witnessed by a special guest, His Majesty the King. Accompanied by the Chief of Staff of the Spanish Army (JEME), General Amador Enseñat, Felipe VI attends the final stage of exercise *Swift Response 23* of the United States Army Europe-Africa (USA-REUR-AF), from a nearby observation

post near the airfield. For the first time since its inception ten years ago, the exercise was conducted by a non-US Division. "This training challenge, while perhaps not the most significant, is certainly the most difficult for the Spanish Army this year", explained Major General José Manuel Vivas, Commander of the *Castillejos* Division, to the King and the JEME.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

It is 18 May 2023, and over 100 kilometres away from Ablitas, the action is being monitored from the exercise's multinational command post, situated at the *Sancho Ramírez* barracks in Huesca, the *Castillejos* Division HQ. For just over two weeks, General Vivas and 160 Spanish, US, French, Italian and Polish service members from his General Staff have been planning and leading the Joint Forcible Entry Operations that will take place almost simultaneously in three different theatres: Spain, Estonia and Greece, with three brigades led by Spain, the United States and Romania, respectively.

Throughout most of May, over 6,000 soldiers from twelve allied nations have been engaged in these airborne and air assault operations. This has necessitated "an effort to synchronise the personnel and the air and ground assets across these three major units, separated by more than 3,000 kilometres, as well as to coordinate the management of the airspace of each area of action", emphasised General Vivas.

The brigade operating in Estonia comprised over 1,300 service members from four countries, while in Greece, another brigade consisted of nearly 1,700 from three different nationalities. Between 5 and 20 May 2023, the Spanish-led contingent was deployed to two locations: the San Gregorio National Training Centre in Zaragoza and Ablitas airfield in the south of Navarra. Formed by members of the 1st Battalion *Roger de Flor*, which is part of the 4th Regiment *Nápoles* of the 6th Parachutist Brigade *Almogávares* (BRIPAC), this multinational contingent was supplemented with troops from the United States 173rd Airborne Brigade, parachutists from France, Italy and Portugal and special operation forces from Hungary, completing a force of 2,800 service members. Personnel from the FAMET, the Logistics Brigade and other Army units also took part.

Nearly 6,000 service members distributed in three multinational brigades were deployed in Spain, Estonia and Greece



Members of the 1st Parachutist Battalion *Roger de Flor* deploy on foot (above) and board a CH-47 Chinook helicopter of the Spanish Army Airmobile Force at the National Training Centre in Zaragoza (below).



Rodney Roldan/US Army

"Swift Response is the first of the three phases of exercise *Defender Europe*, together with *Immediate Response* and *Saber Guardian*", explains Lieutenant Colonel Martínez Valero, a project officer stationed at the *Castillejos* Division HQ. Deterrent and defensive in nature, *Defender Europe* is framed within a NATO Article 5 scenario, focusing on collective defence. It is directed by USAREUR-AF and designed to train allied forces to respond to a crisis on European soil that may require a high-intensity effort.

According to the simulation scenario this year, a coalition of countries known as OCCASSUS is engaged in coordinated destabilisation actions within various NATO member nations. The objective is to lay the groundwork to justify an invasion. Instability is evident at the borders, where their armies are amassing forces and conducting exercises in allied te-

There were 240 helicopter sorties and 100 by fixed-wing aircraft

rritory, and where infiltrated agitators are provoking disturbances and riots.

Based on this tactical purpose, the *Castillejos* Division spearheaded the most demanding phase of exercise *Defender Europe: Swift Response*, which "focuses primarily on parachutist drops, followed by defensive actions utilising transport and attack helicopters", explains Lieutenant Colonel Martínez Valero.

At the San Gregorio National Training Centre, multinational Brigade *Almogávares* concentrated its primary efforts on reta-

king an airport and a train station seized by insurgent troops, restoring stability to a dozen cities plagued by persistent unrest and securing a wide area that would enable the subsequent deployment of a significantly larger force.

PARATROOPER DROPS

"The joint forcible entry operation commenced with the infiltration of a forward reconnaissance company-size unit comprising 80 Spanish, Italian and Hungarian service members", explains the public information officer of Brigade *Almogávares*, Lieutenant Colonel Luis Mora Ruiz. At night, they jumped in three rotations, following a glide path spanning several kilometres in order to land covertly into hostile territory. Their mission involved supplying the command with enemy intelligence and securing the drop zone for the parachutists, who would arrive hours later, at dawn. BRIPAC members



US and Spanish Army officers at the *Castillejos* Division command post operations centre in Huesca.



John Todd/US Army



The Spanish multinational contingent included parachutists from the US 173rd Airborne Brigade (above), from the 6th Parachutist Brigade *Almogávares* (below) and from Portugal, collaborating in joint deterrence and defence operations for nearly two weeks.

reached their target using the HAHO (High Altitude-High Opening) technique, jumping at an altitude of over 18,000 feet, necessitating the use of supplemental oxygen.

This first advanced echelon was followed by the assault echelon, led by the airborne battlegroups, and a subsequent reinforcement task force that included logistical, engineering, and field artillery assets (six 105mm Light Guns). The purpose of these reinforcements was to ensure sustained operational support. The first had been designed to drop 1,400 paratroopers distributed in three battalions: one Spanish, one American and one

French. The BRIPAC was further reinforced with an Italian company-size unit and a Hungarian special operations platoon.

The jump, planned for an altitude of 400 metres with manual opening, was ultimately called off due to unfavourable weather conditions. “The ground wind speed was 20 knots, exceeding the established safety limit of 13 knots for parachutists to land safely”, explains Major Rebeca Galán, the BRIPAC’s Chief of Personnel. After nearly an hour’s flight, the transport aircraft returned to Zaragoza air base, where the airborne units disembarked. Subsequently, they would be deplo-

yed by land to San Gregorio to undertake their mission tasks.

The weather conditions did not improve the following day so as to drop the follow-up echelon. The jump was successfully carried out, however, at Casa de Uceda, in Guadalajara, at the BRIPAC’s home training area. During the exercise, A400M aircraft of the 31st Wing executed a formation air drop for the first time.

Once on the ground with all their logistical, engineering and fire support assets, the various battlegroups conducted deterrence actions “aimed at containing the escalation of the conflict”, explains

This is the first time that a non-US Division has planned and conducted the initial phase of exercise *Defender Europe*

ARMED FORCES

Lieutenant Colonel Martínez Valero. After reorganising, they also conducted air assault missions with helicopters, including the capture of Ablitas airfield, witnessed by the King on 18 May.

The landing unfolded in two waves. "The surface forces deployed first, followed by support weaponry, anti-tank defences and the remaining personnel who could not be transported by helicopter on the first flight", says Lieutenant Colonel Juan José Pereda, head of the assault unit and commanding officer of the 1st Parachutist

HELICOPTERS AND AIRCRAFT

The operation witnessed by the King in Ablitas was one of the more than 240 sorties flown by 24 FAMET and US Army helicopters, all of them organised by the Air Combat Command from Torrejón, Madrid. The exercise's aviation activity also included more than 100 sorties flown by 19 fixed-wing aircraft. In total, two A400M and one C295 transport aircraft, two Eurofighters and two F-18 fighters participated in the operation, as well as one MQ9 Predator B RPAS from Spain. Likewise,

ment Support Squadron (EADA) and the Parachute Sapper Squadron (EZAPAC).

As *Swift Response* drew to a close, the subsequent phase of exercise *Defender Europe, Immediate Response*, commenced. During this phase, the United States deployed a division with conventional assets from the American mainland to support the European-based units that had already been mobilised. These units engaged in countering a hypothetical threat in the Balkans and the Adriatic Sea. "*Defender Europe* will continue with the *Saber Guardian* phase in the Black Sea, where forces will conduct defensive actions aimed at repelling aggression", concludes Lieutenant Colonel Joaquín Martínez Valero.

"This marks the first time that a non-American airborne division has led the joint forcible entry operations in exercise *Swift Response*", notes General Vivas. "The responsibility for this task normally falls upon the US Army's 101st or 82nd Airborne Divisions. This year, however, due to their operational commitments, neither of their headquarters was able to plan and execute the exercise and, therefore, the US command, offered the opportunity to NATO countries", adds Brigadier General Antonio Matas, second-in-command of the *Castillejos* Division. "Spain embraced the challenge, and the experience has also served to enhance and consolidate the full readiness of our division and its headquarters", he concludes.



Casa de S.M. el Rey

The King, accompanied by the Chief of the Army, visits a communications centre deployed at the Ablitas airfield, where personnel briefed him on the air assault operation.

Battalion *Roger de Flor*. Once assembled and in position, a portion of the battle-group immediately assaulted the airfield, while others deployed further north, completing an encompassing outer ring. "The majority of the insurgent cell was captured, their documentation and electronic equipment seized, and the infrastructure destroyed", recounts Lieutenant Colonel Pereda, reflecting on this operation, which marked the culmination of exercise *Swift Response*, the most challenging phase of *Defender Europe*.

the US Air Force in Europe contributed six C17 *Globemaster III* and three C130J *Hercules* transport aircraft, plus five A-10C *Thunderbolt II* combat aircraft. Italy supplied one C130J, while NATO provided one AWACS E3A.

In addition to helicopter and tactical airlift formations escorted by fighter jets, dissimilar combat (between fighter jets of different types) and CAS (Close Air Support) operations were also conducted, directed from the ground by Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) from the Air Deploy-

COMPLEX AND DEMANDING

The greatest challenge for the Spanish Armed Forces was to organise a command structure capable of maintaining a continuous 24/7 connection between the divisional command post and units of other nations located thousands of kilometres apart, such as those deployed in Estonia and Greece, or with the higher echelon in Poland, specifically in the city of Poznań, where the US Army's V Corps for Europe and Africa is headquartered and under whose direction the exercise was conducted. "*Swift Response* has posed a significant challenge in terms of telecommunications", says Major

"It has been the most demanding training challenge for the Army this year", highlights General Vivas

**Separated by over
3,000 kilometres,
unit actions were
coordinated from
Huesca**



Steven Lee/US Army



Gabrielle Hildebrand/US Army

Soldiers from the Estonian Army (above) study their deployment on a map in a wooded area of Nurmsi in the Baltic country. Below, US and Greek attack helicopters engage in live-fire action at the Karavia Range Complex in Greece.

Roberto Rico, who is in charge of telecommunications in the *Castillejos* Division and serves as the head of the G6 cell. “We have had to deploy various circuits, both on the ground and via satellite, and maintain operational services such as email, tactical chat, SharePoint, videoconferencing, IT telephony and others”, he says.

“We have made our broadcast network —our communications system— in-

teroperable with those of the nations participating in the exercise”, he explained, “adapted to the guidelines and standards of the US Department of Defence”. To this end, the *Castillejos* Division’s broadcast network was successfully validated by USAREUR and, prior to that, by the Spanish National Security Office and the National Cryptological Centre, which is part of the National Intelligence Centre (CNI).

“Our primary challenge has been to ensure the command and control of exercise *Swift Response*’s joint forcible entry operations, led by Spain”, concludes General Vivas. This serves as a testament to the trust that the United States Army has in the capabilities of our Armed Forces to lead such high-intensity operations in a multinational environment.

J.L. Expósito
Photos: Pepe Díaz



Offshore patrol vessel *Audaz* served as the setting for a variety of training exercises for troops from Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire,

[armed forces]

SPECIAL OPERATIONS on the African coast

Spanish offshore patrol vessel *Audaz* participates in exercise *Flintlock-23* in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

MORE than 1,350 service members from 29 countries formed a Multinational Special Operations Force. This exercise sought to support African countries in improving tactics, techniques and procedures for the fight against terrorist groups in the Sahel region and West Africa. *Flintlock-23*, led every year since 2005 by the US Special Operations Command Africa (US SOCAFRICA), was conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana from 1 to 15 March 2023.

Military personnel of different nationalities and uniforms gathered in a headquarters created ad hoc for this

training exercise to execute the incidents generated by the exercise planning team for the different units deployed.

As far as Spain was concerned, the Joint Special Operations Command (MCOE) was in charge of planning and leading the participation of troops from the Army's Special Operations Command (MOE), the Navy's Special Naval Warfare Force (FGNE), the Air and Space Force's Parachute Sapper Section (EZAPAC) and the Civil Guard's Rapid Action Group (GAR).

Being the first ship to take part in this exercise, offshore patrol vessel *Audaz*, which has been deployed off the coast of West Africa since January,

served as a projection platform from the water. In addition to improving the capacity of the Sahel countries to perform the missions on land of the Special Operations Forces, this edition of *Flintlock* has helped to train coastal countries in the planning and execution of this type of maritime mission, particularly against illicit trafficking.

The *Audaz* served as the setting and support unit for different training activities, such as direct actions against threats; special reconnaissance and surveillance; military assistance; non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO); hostage rescue; and counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism



and other African countries. Right, the crew welcomes the Spanish Ambassador during a port of call in Douala (Cameroon).

operations. All of this was performed in an unusual environment for the crew, with temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius and 90 per cent humidity.

Throughout many of these activities, the Spanish special operations units displayed their high level of training and leadership, acting as mentors in charge of leading the international teams both on land and at sea.

MILITARY COOPERATION

The Commander of the Operations Command (CMOPS), Lieutenant General Francisco Braco Carbó, travelled to the Ghanaian capital, Accra, to visit the Spanish units and get a first-hand insight into the activities they were carrying out. Vice Admiral Alfonso Delgado, head of the Maritime Operational Command, and Brigadier General Ángel Herrezuelo, head of the Joint Special Operations Command, joined him in this visit. They were welcomed by Spanish Ambassador to Ghana, Javier Gutiérrez Blanco-Navarrete, who attended all the visits and meetings with the troops and local authorities.

Offshore patrol vessel *Audaz* had arrived at the port of Tema a few days earlier with the intention of projecting defence diplomacy and strengthening military cooperation ties with Ghana.

Under the command of Lieutenant Commander Marcos de Sousa, the force in this African deployment is made up of 77 people. In addition to the crew, there

is also a Marine Operational Security Team from the Spanish Marine Brigade in San Fernando.

After covering more than 8,000 nautical miles since departing Cartagena last January and operating in both hemispheres, the ship ended its participation in exercise *Obangame Express 23* and left behind the ports of call in Lagos (Nigeria), Pointe Noire (Republic of Congo) and Luanda (Angola).

Military cooperation activities were carried out in Ghana with the Ghanaian Navy during the first few days, including exercises such as boarding, diving, electro-medicine and the use of integrated platform management systems.

They also shared experiences on the use of unmanned systems in maritime operations. The ship, however, had a double mission, as it was going to play a leading role in the training of different special operations teams. Throughout the exercise, the Spanish soldiers on board the *Audaz* had the

opportunity to interact with SOF (Special Operations Forces) troops from Cape Verde, Ghana, Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria.

Altogether, the Spanish vessel received more than 170 service members on board. In port, they carried out SOF training on the ship, including insertions and tactical movements above and below deck with Close Quarter Combat (CQC) practices. While the ship was at sea, direct action with fire support was simulated, as well as an opposed boarding exercise in a counter-terrorism scenario.

RESCUE AT SEA

One week after taking part in exercise *Flintlock* and while conducting maritime surveillance and security operations close to the Niger Delta, the crew of the *Audaz* sighted several dead bodies floating in the water. The rescue effort was coordinated by the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre in Zone D of the Yaoundé Architecture. For more than 36 hours, two Cameroonian navy vessels with the support of the *Audaz* managed to recover a total of 23 bodies.

The Spanish ship then docked in Douala, Cameroon's most populated city, to carry out military cooperation, presence and defence diplomacy activities, as well as logistical operations to supply the ship.

Gema Nieves/Ghana
Photos: EMAD

*The Spanish vessel
contributes to the
maritime security
training of
local forces*

Throughout history, propaganda, lies and discrediting the enemy have been used as weapons of war

Disinformation in operations

Brigadier General Carlos Javier Frías
Director of the Army War College

THROUGHOUT history, one of the most powerful psychological tools employed to influence the decision-making of adversaries has been the use of terror. This strategy, as old as warfare itself, has proven to be an effective force multiplier. With it, a relatively small army can overpower significantly larger populations or subdue formidable enemies with reduced effort. Numerous historical examples substantiate this concept, such as the policies pursued by the Assyrian kings or the rule of Genghis Khan, which were founded on the strategic implementation of terror.

In addition to the enduring use of terror tactics, the advent of social media has introduced a new dimension to influencing public opinion through more nuanced methods. Disinformation operations, categorised based on their target, can broadly be classified into two types: those aimed at shaping public opinion, whether within one's own population or the enemy's, and those targeting military forces, again either friendly or hostile. In general, the former are "strategic" in nature and necessitate close political direction. The latter are normally on a smaller scale and seek to diminish the combat effectiveness of enemy troops.

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR OF 1898

One of the most notable instances is the case of William Randolph Hearst's campaign to push the United States into war against Spain in 1898. Hearst, a prominent newspaper owner in America with close ties to Theodore Roosevelt and a supporter of the Monroe Doctrine, orchestrated a persuasive campaign despite the absence of legitimate reasons to justify U.S. intervention against a

non-threatening Spain. Hearst launched an aggressive campaign to create a hostile atmosphere towards Spain employing biased articles, fake news and, most notably, a daily comic strip published jointly in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and Hearst's *New York Journal*, the two most widely circulated newspapers in the country. It featured a character known as the *Yellow Kid*, a boy dressed in a yellow nightshirt, who was constantly launching "poisoned arrows" at Spain. An interesting peculiarity of this strip was that the ink used for the yellow nightshirt would sometimes rub off, leaving yellow stains on the newspaper pages, thereby coining the term "yellow journalism".

The Spanish-American War of 1898 serves as a striking example with distinct characteristics. Rather than targeting the enemy itself, be it the people or the troops, the objective of the campaign was to garner popular support for the war. It aligned with prevalent trends in American society at the time, such as the Monroe Doctrine, "social Darwinism", and a disdain for the Spanish. Instead of pursuing truth, journalists distorted facts to promote the campaign's objectives. The majority of the "information" disseminated was intentionally false, incomplete and biased.

*In the Yugoslav war, all sides
lied and demonised
the enemy*



Rafa Navarro / Photos: RED and EFE archives

Not surprisingly, the successful campaign's slogan, "*Remember the Maine!*", re-emerged with minor variations to justify America's entry into subsequent wars. For instance, it was echoed during World War I as "*Remember the Lusitania!*", referring to the sinking of the British liner Lusitania by a German U-boat in 1915, resulting in the deaths of 128 American citizens. Similarly, it resurfaced during World War II as "*Remember Pearl Harbour!*", invoking the Japanese attack on the US fleet in 1941. These campaigns were characterised by the complete complicity of journalists in perpetuating disinformation. In essence, the communication channels between the media and the public actively participated in the dissemination of disinformation.

THE CASE OF YUGOSLAVIA

Similarly, an analysis of propaganda during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s reveals the deliberate use of disinformation by the media from all sides involved. Throughout these conflicts, the media knowingly acted as conduits for disseminating distorted narratives. In all of them, the adversaries were demonised: Serbs were called Chetniks by Croats (referring to Serb communist guerrillas who terrorised pro-German Croats in World War II, regularly employing murder and torture), while Croats were branded as Ustachas (pro-Nazi Croat militias, also active in World War II, notorious for regularly employing torture and terror), and Bosnians were simply labelled as "Turks" (evoking the Ottoman domination of the country characterised by a complete lack of mercy towards non-Muslim populations). These designations served to relive particularly bloody episodes of the recent past, fuelling the desire for revenge. Newspapers frequently published egregiously false reports, such as accounts of Serb orphans being killed by Croatian militias, massacres of entire

families, and acts of torture. Meanwhile, they concealed or justified atrocities committed by their own militias. The objective, much like the disinformation campaign of 1898, was not solely to demoralise the enemy but to rally support from the domestic population. These campaigns also exploited existing cultural rivalries among the Yugoslav national groups and the memories of past mutual atrocities, contributing to the dehumanisation of the enemy. The dissemination of falsehoods was not accidental but a deliberate act, with the media again playing an essential role as necessary accomplices in the campaign.

VIETNAM

Years earlier, the Vietnam War had introduced some new developments. This war was covered by thousands of journalists who were granted substantial freedom by the US government to report on the actions of US troops, both for and against. It is worth mentioning the case of Eddie Adams' famous photograph capturing the moment when South Vietnamese General Loan executes a handcuffed prisoner, an image that went on to win a Pulitzer Prize. However, Adams always regretted that photo. It was part of a series that depicted the prisoner having shortly before murdered a South Vietnamese officer, his wife, six children (including a goddaughter of General Loan) and his elderly mother. The photograph resulted in General Loan's fall from grace, a surge in support for the Viet-Cong and a major discrediting of US political action. In reality, a single image captures only a fragment of the truth, a carefully selected fragment. It is easy to imagine the effect on public opinion that a photograph of the murdered family would have had instead of the one that was published. It was not Adams

ANALYSIS

who selected this photograph, rather his publishers. And, as in the case of disinformation campaigns, it was a photograph that served a particular political agenda.

DESERT STORM

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the US-led coalition responded with a military operation aimed at liberating Kuwait from Iraqi forces. The initial phase of this operation involved an extensive aerial bombardment campaign that targeted Iraq's air force and weakened its ground forces.

During this campaign, the United States employed an information/disinformation strategy, leveraging the capabilities of B-52 heavy bombers. The essence of this approach involved dropping leaflets over Iraqi defensive positions, notifying them that a formation of B-52 bombers, each capable of carrying 63 250-kg bombs, would strike the designated positions at a specific time the following day. The Iraqi fighters were presented with a choice: surrender or abandon the position. As anticipated, the following day, the targeted positions were subjected to a veritable deluge of bombs, leaving the Iraqis utterly powerless. This tactic was replicated multiple times along the frontlines throughout the operation. The day before the Allied ground offensive was set to commence, American planes dropped the leaflets across the entire length of the intended attack sector. However, 24 hours later, instead of B-52 bombers, it was ground troops who advanced that day... only to find the Iraqi trenches deserted. Fear of bombing had compelled Iraqi soldiers to flee.

In this particular instance, the primary objective of the campaign was to target the morale of Iraqi troops, rather than shaping public opinion. It is worth noting the unique role played by combat media in this context, as they served as a supporting element to the information campaign, contrary to the common misconception that the reverse was true.

GOSSI MASSACRE

In contrast, the fabrication of a false yet plausible scenario is significantly more complex. The most recent case revealed occurred in April 2022, in Gossi, Mali, when the French army relinquished one of its forward bases to the Malian army, supported by Wagner's mercenaries. Faced with profound disagreement with France, the Malian government sought to implicate the French in the execution of Malian civilians. To lend credibility to this accusation, Wagner's mercenaries murdered a group of people and buried them near the former French base. An individual purporting to be a former Malian soldier called Dia Diarra took to Twitter, asserting that he had witnessed the massacre and disclosing the burial site. The scene was indeed "credible". There were real corpses bearing signs of torture, casualties of ammunition of the type used by the French army, buried at a distance from the former French base, making it impossible to discount the involvement of the garrison. And there were alleged witnesses... However, a French drone had captured footage of Wagner's mercenaries transporting the lifeless bodies to the burial site, after the departure of the French soldiers, and Dia Diarra was proven to be a fictitious profile.



THE WAR IN UKRAINE

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is marked by extensive use of the media, with a clear predominance in the West of information/disinformation from Ukrainian sources. In reality, this stems primarily from the Ukrainian authorities' control over the channel. Today, the internet stands as the primary means of communication. And in Ukraine, internet access is predominantly facilitated through mobile phones.

For reasons of necessity, both sides in the war have relied on mobile phones for communications. As a result, this network has managed to maintain a relatively functional state throughout the duration of the conflict. In areas where terrestrial mobile network coverage was lacking, the generous contribution of StarLink terminals by Elon Musk has ensured that Ukraine remains almost constantly connected to the internet.

However, the mobile phone network is Ukrainian, meaning that the Ukrainian government controls who can access the internet and when. Consequently, the Ukrainian government exercises control over the dissemination of images and videos from Ukraine through the internet. In contrast, the Russians need to record the images and physically transport them to locations where they have independent access to the internet. This has allowed Ukrainian information/disinformation to be much more abundant and more agile compared to Russia. The military ramifications of Ukrainian dominance over the mobile phone network are much more profound.



Rafa Navarro / Photos: Pepe Diaz and RED archive

DEEP FAKES

The internet clearly provides a vast array of possibilities and among them, the realm of deep fakes stands out as a particularly potent domain for disinformation. Deep fakes refer to the digital fabrication of videos, images, voices, or texts that are difficult to distinguish from genuine content. Indeed, technology offers the possibility of creating videos of people making speeches they have never delivered, carrying out actions they have never performed, or giving statements they have never made. It is easy to imagine the effect of a video depicting a political or religious leader performing morally unworthy actions or “confessing” to views that are completely contrary to those they publicly espouse.

Similarly, there are already applications on the internet that enable computers to simulate the voices of famous individuals, allowing fabricated texts to be read in their distinct tones (though with somewhat less impact compared to videos), images of non-existent individuals, complicating the task of verifying the authenticity of digital profiles, or generating millions of texts on a given topic, so that the interesting information on that topic is buried amidst a deluge of inconsequential content.

Currently, the creation of deep fakes remains a complex process that requires expensive equipment, actors to train the Artificial

Intelligence (AI) that produces the videos, thousands of hours of video or audio recordings that enable the AI to convincingly imitate the desired character... It is not within everyone's reach. For now.

CONTROL OF THE TRUTH

In light of the various examples discussed, it is evident that there are multiple methods for manipulating information. In certain instances, authorities exerted direct control over the media (as seen in the former Yugoslavia), while in others, indirect control was exercised (as observed in the United States). In both cases, the media were used as tools to support the respective war efforts. By contrast, when journalists are not complicit in disinformation campaigns, belligerent parties actively seek their cooperation by attempting to sway them into publishing news that aligns with their cause. Consequently, war correspondents often benefit from a degree of protection. At the same time, journalists have the ability to pursue the truth independently, as they are not bound by government-imposed narratives.

In order to sway journalists in their favour, belligerent parties have two main strategies at their disposal: presenting selective truths that serve their interests (known as the half-truth effect) or creating credible, yet favourable situations based on falsehoods. The Vietnam War serves as an example of the effective use of half-truths, where it is not necessary to lie outright to disinform — simply manipulating which part of the truth is presented can achieve the desired effect—. However, this case also highlights the significantly greater impact of visual imagery compared to written text, as images hold a presumption of being factual. Conversely, the failure of Wagner in Gossi is not surprising. Constructing a plausible but false scenario is challenging, and the risk of being exposed is considerable.

The Ukrainian case once again underscores the critical importance of controlling the communication channel as a part of information warfare. Prior to the internet era, traditional media outlets were the primary means for conducting disinformation campaigns. The emergence of the internet initially gave the impression that anyone with a mobile phone could initiate or contribute to such campaigns. However, the Ukrainian situation serves as a reminder that the internet is not an ethereal entity but rather a network composed of physical infrastructure and interconnected devices, ultimately subject to the control of authorities or companies. While the decentralised nature

of the internet provides a certain level of resistance to control, it is not impervious to manipulation. Whoever controls the physical infrastructure in a given area effectively controls the primary channel for disseminating disinformation campaigns.

Finally, based on experience, it is inevitable that the ability to create deep fakes will become accessible on mobile phones. When that happens, it will be almost impossible to differentiate between true and false information, and we will enter the realm of a new and uncertain world.

*A plausible
situation was
created in Mali
to falsely
blame the
French army*



From left to right, Julián García Vargas at FEINDEF's opening ceremony; the Defence Minister visiting the Oesia Group stand; mock-up of the Spanish

INTERNATIONAL SHOWCASE FOR SPAIN'S INDUSTRY

With over 500 exhibitors and 25,000 visitors, FEINDEF 23 consolidates its position as one of the most significant events in the defence and security sector

DURING the opening day of the International Defence and Security Exhibition, FEINDEF Foundation President Julián García Vargas highlighted that the exhibition had brought together over 500 exhibitors, primarily representing Spain's industry, while also featuring prominent firms from 24 other countries. "This third edition will consolidate itself as an international event and will become part of the circuit of major global events in the sector".

The affirmation made by this former Defence Minister was proven right by the presence of over 25,000 professionals from around the world who attended the event on 17, 18 and 19 May 2023 at Madrid's international trade fair centre (IFEMA).

"FEINDEF 23 has reached maturity", stated Amparo Valcarve, the Secretary of State for Defence (SEDEF), referring to the exhibition's evident external impact and its aspiration to be on a par with France's Eurosatory and the UK's Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI).

**FEINDEF receives
the institutional
backing of the
Ministry of
Defence**

The number of visitors at the show has doubled compared to the inaugural edition in 2019. Since its inception, this exhibition, held biannually, has aimed to afford Spain "the opportunity to explore the latest advancements in military technology and promote cutting-edge research projects with potential applications in the civilian sector as well", emphasised Julián García Vargas regarding the exhibition's purpose as "a meeting point for key industry players, both foreign and domestic". This year's edition witnessed a 150% surge in the number of exhibitors compared to the inaugural edition, and an increase of 200 exhibitors compared to the second edition held in 2021. The majority of the large, small and medium-sized enterprises present at FEINDEF 23 were Spanish, while



Air and Space Force's MQ9 Predator B; and mock-up of the prototype for a remotely operated submarine developed by Navantia, SAES and Perseo.

26% hailed from other countries: 17 from the United States, 12 from Germany, 10 from France, 5 from the United Kingdom and 4 from Italy. The stands showcasing their state-of-the-art technological solutions were presented in two halls spanning 40,000 square metres, marking an increase of 12,000 square metres compared to 2021. Exhibitors were also visited by some one hundred delegations from 52 countries and representatives from 16 agencies associated with the United Nations, the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTION

"Investing in defence and security is an investment in peace, progress, values and democracy", said Defence Minister Margarita Robles during her address at the event's opening ceremony. She highlighted the 26% increase in the defence budget and her Ministry's goal of reaching 2% of the GDP by 2029. Amparo Valcarce highlighted the budgetary effort by emphasising its impact on the national defence industry, elevating it to the status of "state policy". "This aims to foster an industrial fabric that drives economic growth, job creation and, ultimately, the well-being of our society". In this context, she

underscored that the sector "contributed over €17 billion to Spain's GDP in 2021, accounting for 1.4 per cent of the total, in addition to generating 50,000 direct jobs". These companies are further distinguished "by their substantial capacity as a driving force in various sectors, generating high-quality, highly skilled employment and making significant investments in R&D&I, which translates into 13% of the GDP".

In addition to the stands of the business segment, the event featured those of the Ministries of Defence; the Interior; Industry, Trade and Tourism; and Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, as supporters of the security and defence programmes. Other participating entities included the General Defence Staff; the Army;

the Navy; the Air and Space Force; the Military Emergency Unit; and the National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA), all of which, "as end users of the means presented, are the exhibition's core stakeholders", the SEDEF indicated.

Following the opening ceremony, Margarita Robles proceeded to halls 8 and 10 of IFEMA, where she visited a number of these institutional stands, as well as those of companies such as Airbus, Grupo 20, Indra, ITP Aero, Navantia, Palantir, Santa Bárbara and Thales-Grupo Oesia, among others. The minister showed a keen interest in the development of the projects that her Department collaborates on with the city councils of Córdoba and Jaén —the Technological Centre for Development and Experimentation and the Army's Logistics Base, respectively— which had dedicated spaces at the exhibition.

Prior to leaving IFEMA, the Defence Minister met with her Gabonese counterpart, Félicité Ongouri. The delegation from Gabon, which holds growing significance in the maritime security field in the Gulf of Guinea region, was one of the four delegations led by their respective heads of defence that attended the exhibition. The others were Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Dominican Republic.



Proposal by Spanish companies Expal, Escribano and GMV and Israeli company Elbit for the High Mobility Rocket Launcher System programme.



The Ministry of Defence had a spacious area on two floors to welcome visitors and showcase its action plans.

EXPERIENCE AND RECOGNITION

During her speech, the SEDEF emphasised that the Spanish industry in the sector “enjoys extensive experience and international recognition”, reiterating “Spain’s steadfast commitment to special modernisation programmes”. Regarding the land sector, she mentioned the 8x8 Dragon Wheeled Combat Vehicle (VCR), which was showcased in its advanced artillery and infantry observer versions at the exhibition. This vehicle is developed by the Tess Defence consortium, consisting of Escribano Mechanical and Engineering, Indra, General Dynamics European Land Systems-Santa Bárbara Sistemas (GDELS-SBS) and Sapa Placencia. The SEDEF also highlighted Expal’s *Eimos* 120 mm on-board mortar programme, designed for the Army and Navy. The launch of this programme was announced by the Secretary of State for Defence on the final day of the exhibition.

As for the land sector, Spanish companies Expal, Escribano and GMV, along with Israeli company Elbit, showcased —mounted on an 8x8 truck— the Spanish industry’s joint

proposal for the Army’s High Mobility Rocket Launcher System (SILAM), addressing the absence of artillery capability that arose a decade ago when the *Teruel* system was decommissioned. GDELS-SBS, meanwhile, unveiled two new developments at FEINDEF: the LT105 light tank and the recovery vehicle. These two variants, “made in Spain” as a design authority, are based on the *Ascod* armoured tracked vehicle, which is the export version of the VCI *Pizarro*.

Also based on the *Ascod*, the company showcased the first serial unit of the *Castor* Sapper Combat Vehicle, which will soon enter into service. Additionally, it displayed a conceptual first version of the multipurpose platform for the future Tracked Combat Support Vehicle (CSV), which will replace the M-113 Armoured Tracked Transport (ATT). This CSV programme was also presented by the SEDEF and the Army Chief of Staff, General Amador Enseñat.

Another of the upcoming programmes planned by the Ministry of Defence for this year is the acquisition of *Spike* LR2 anti-tank missiles. The manufacturing of

these missiles in Spain is spearheaded by Pap Tecnos, with the collaboration of Escribano, Expal, Tecnobit, FMG (Granada Ammunition Factory) and Rafale. This initiative aims to replace the TOW missiles between 2023 and 2026.

As regards training systems, Indra showcased the new *Pizarro* simulator at the exhibition. Additionally, at the stand of the Oesia Group, which comprised Tecnobit, Cipher, UAV Navigation and Inster, the Army Chief of Staff was able to see first-hand, under the watchful eye of the Defence Minister, the capabilities offered by the Field Artillery Simulator (SIMACA) from the JTAC pilot station.

The exhibition also showcased the next-generation communications equipment on a High Mobility Tactical Vehicle (HMTV), a platform developed by Galician company URO. This corporation presented the new Special Operations model at the event, which is currently designated for export, featuring distinct modifications compared to the version already employed by the Spanish Special Operations Command (MOE).

The number of exhibitors has increased by 150% compared to the inaugural edition

NAVAL AND AIR SECTOR

As a prime example of a “cutting-edge, global Spanish company”, Amparo Valcarce specifically underscored Navantia’s leadership in special programmes for modernising the F-100 class frigates and the future F-110, as well as the S-80 submarines. These programmes showcased capabilities that stood out among the products presented at FEINDEF. The company also presented the Navantis simulator and an unmanned submarine prototype, designed in collaboration with Spanish companies SAES and Perseo.

As for the air sector, the Secretary of State highlighted programmes such as the *Euromale* drone, the *Eurofighter* aircraft, the *Tiger* MkIII attack helicopter and the NGWS/FCAS and said that these programmes reflect the strong commitment of Spain, Europe and some of our partners. Regarding the above-mentioned project for the future combat air system, Valcarce emphasised “the technological expertise contributed by Spanish industry to international programmes, owing to its export capabilities and global outlook”. In particular, she singled out Indra as the national coordinator for the FCAS programme. She also mentioned Airbus, ITP Aero and SATNUS, a consortium consisting of GMV, Sener, Tecnobit and the Oesia Group, which leads the remote operator pillar of the future European fighter aircraft.

During FEINDEF, industrial corporation Airbus presented scale models of its new platforms for the Armed Forces: the C-295 MSA (Maritime Surveillance Aircraft), the C95 MPA (Maritime Patrol Aircraft) and the C-295 ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare); the A-400M transport aircraft; the next-generation *Eurofighter* aircraft; the naval version of the NH-90 helicopter; and the Sirtap remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) for intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance missions. In the field of drones and fulfilling the same roles (some already operational and others undergoing testing by the Armed Forces), products from companies such as Aeronautic, Aertec, Avincis, GMV and Aurea Avionics, SCR and Sistem, among others, were also on display.

Also present were space companies with cutting-edge initiatives in the areas of Earth observation and satellite communications. Among them was Hisdesat, which presented its Paz and *Spainsat* NG satellites at the exhibition.

DISCUSSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

The Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD), Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón, said, in his presentation entitled “Challenges of the defence industry in the current context”, that the world is witnessing “a new geopolitical reality that is fuelling a new arms race”. This

All” shed light on the significant contributions of women to security and defence and examined gender equality within the Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies.

Among the speakers and exhibitors, Innova for Def&Sec found its place, “emerging as the seedbed of the defence and security entrepreneurial ecosystem, with a commitment to supporting young talent”, said Julián García Vargas during the opening day of the event. Aligned with this vision, Navantia presented *Monodon*, its open innovation cell created “to foster and expedite the integration of disruptive



The scheduled conferences and roundtable discussions featured around thirty expert meetings, including the session entitled “Disruptive technologies for the defence of the future” (pictured).

lecture opened a series of conferences and roundtable discussions scheduled by the event organisers, serving as a platform for bringing together civilian and military professionals and experts. During these sessions, participants had the opportunity to engage in discussions and analyse topics such as defence industrial strategy, disruptive technologies and the sector’s technological solutions in addressing the operational requirements of the Armed Forces across the land, naval, air, space and cyber domains. Furthermore, a forum inaugurated by the SEDEF entitled “Talent for

technologies such as photonics, quantum computing and soft robotics, which we are actively exploring”, said CEO Ricardo Domínguez.

For all these reasons, Amparo Valcarce stated, “Spain stands as an appealing investment destination, where we provide solutions that cater not only to the operational needs of our Armed Forces but also those of our partners and allies”. FEINDEF is now its best showcase, both at home and abroad.

J.L. Expósito
Photos: Pepe Díaz

BOOSTING THE FCAS

Spain, France and Germany announce signing of contract for European future combat air system in Madrid

ON 28 April 2023, the defence ministers of Spain, France and Germany announced the signing of the contract for the Future Combat Air System (NGWS/FCAS) programme, a further leap forward for this emblematic European cooperation project, at an event held at the headquarters of the Spanish Air and Space Force in Madrid.

During the programme presentation event, the Spanish Minister of Defence, Margarita Robles, concurred with her counterparts from France, Sébastien Lecornu, and Germany, Boris Pistorius, that this is a strategic European project of enormous value, unity and commitment, not only in terms of military capabilities,

but also in the industrial, technological and socio-economic sphere.

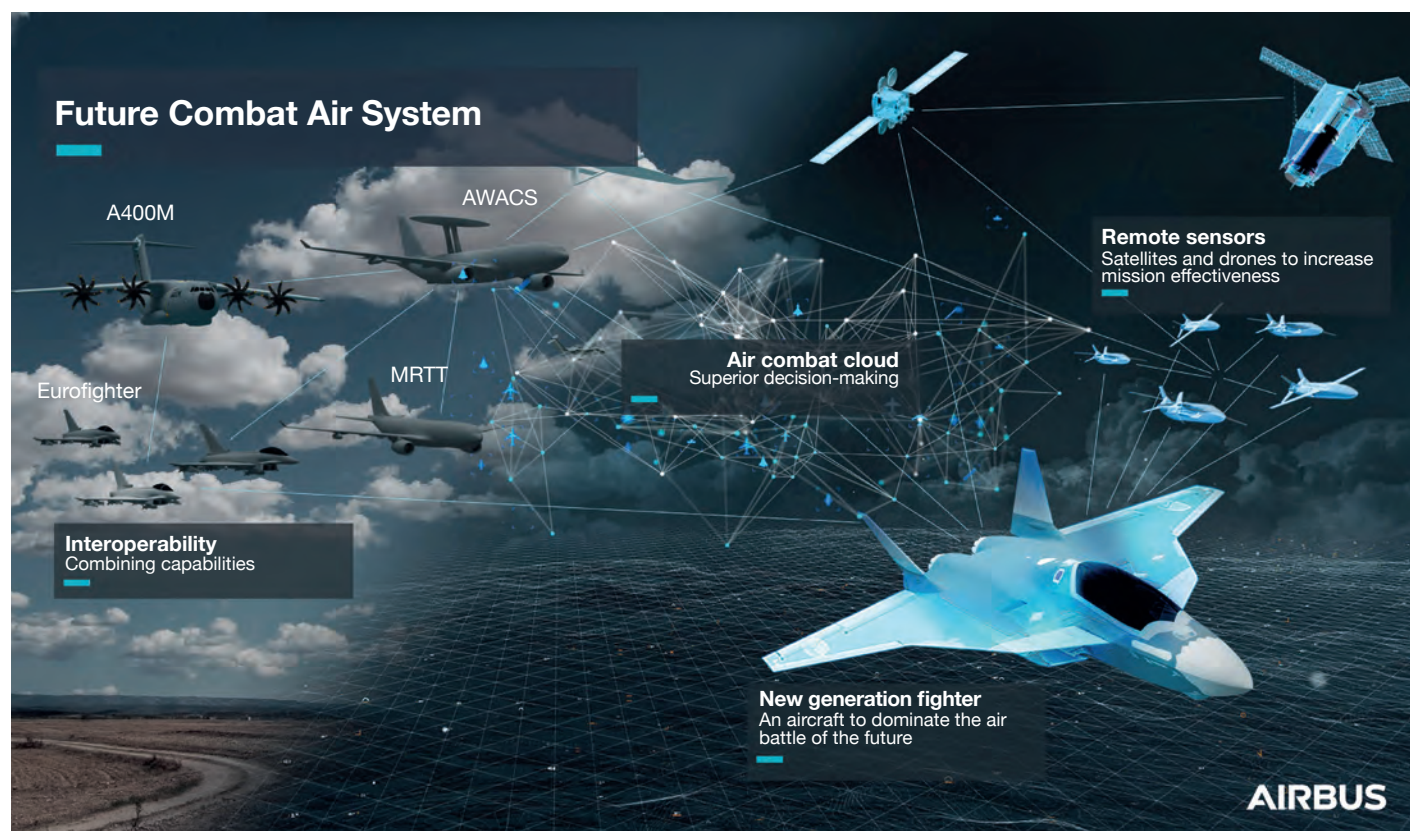
The event embodied the common commitment of the three countries and their industries to move forward together on the project, following the signing last December of the contract for the programme's Research, Technology and Demonstration activities.

"The public presentation of this project highlights the fact that all three countries believe strongly in the defence industry and, therefore, in the security of their citizens", said Robles. "It is an exciting and essential project for our Air and Space Forces and for our industries, which, working in coordination, will create jobs, talent, new industrial fabric and technology", the

minister added, thanking the teams from the three countries working on the project.

"The Spanish government has committed a budget of 2.5 billion euros, which underscores the importance we attach to the project. We will continue to push forward, slowly but surely", said Robles. "This Europe of Defence is essential and fundamental in a world full of risks. Everyone understands that we need to invest in defence to guarantee our rights", she stressed.

The German defence minister, meanwhile, emphasised the importance of collaboration between European partners and allies, pointing out that "we can do a lot on our own, but most things work better if we do them together. That is the maxim for





Marco Romero/MDA

The Minister of Defence together with her German and French counterparts and senior officials at the Air and Space Force.

the coming years: More joint projects, more joint responsibility", said Pistorius.

Likewise, the French minister described the signing between Germany, Spain and France as "an important step in preparing the air combat system of the future". "This cooperation is first and foremost the expression of a common military need. Our three air forces will be able to rely on interoperability. I welcome Spain's role in this common venture, and we know that we have a Spanish defence industry of the highest quality", said Lecornu.

During the morning session, the French and German defence ministers were welcomed by Robles and the Air and Space Force Chief of Staff, Air General Javier Salto, at the Air and Space Force HQ. Following the trilateral meeting, the Secretary of State for Defence, María Amparo Valcarce, expressed her enthusiasm, stating that "the developments achieved through this project will not only position us at the technological forefront of the defence sector but will also intersect with other industries seeking dual solutions that enable our citizens to reap the benefits of these technological advances".

Valcarce pointed out that the industrial strategy that has been designed is "deeply infused with values and commitments to sustainability". She detailed that the FCAS programme will include a next-generation fighter as well as a new engine, a drone system, a combat cloud, sensors, low

observability technology and a simulation laboratory. It will be a "system of systems" where fighter aircraft, drones and the cloud will be connected to each other and to other systems, including ground vehicles and ships, in a digital environment facilitated by artificial intelligence, Big Data and Edge Computing technologies.

DEMOS

The contract launching the next phase of the NGWS/FCAS programme was awarded on 15 December 2022 to the programme's three prime contractors: Dassault Aviation in France, Airbus Defense and Space GmbH in Germany, and Indra in Spain.

This is the contract for Phase 1B, valued at some 8 billion euros through 2028. Its purpose is to prepare and conduct demonstrations of the different systems, and it will enable the validation

of concepts and technologies for the start of their development. In an initial phase, this contract covers some 36 months of activities and exceeds 3 billion euros.

The first flight demonstrations are planned for the end of this decade and the system is expected to enter into service in 2040.

Each of the three countries contributes 33 per cent of the funding, and their industries receive an equivalent percentage of the work-share. Indra, the programme coordinator for Spain, will lead the Sensors pillar, with the French firm Thales and the German consortium FCMS as main partners, while Airbus Defence and Space Spain will internationally lead the ELOT (Enhanced Low Observability Technologies) pillar.

At the national level, Airbus DS Spain leads the participation in the future fighter aircraft; ITP Aero, the fighter engine; Indra, the combat cloud; and SATNUS (a consortium formed by the Spanish companies GMV, Sener and Tecnobit), the Remote Carriers pillar and the manned-unmanned teaming (MUT).

The FCAS contract will create more than 1,000 highly qualified jobs in Spain, some 400 at Indra, which will receive contracts worth around 600 million euros and will have a centre dedicated exclusively to this programme.

Victor Hernández

**More than 1,000
highly-skilled
jobs will
be created
in Spain**



Queen Letizia looks at a model on display in the exhibition accompanied by the Minister of Defence, the Undersecretary of Defence and the Air and Space Force Chief of Staff. On the right, a simulation of the medical evacuation of a patient in a C-295 aircraft of the 35th Wing.

THE FIRST SPANISH MEDICAL FLIGHT

Celebrating the centenary of medical air evacuation, a specialty that continues to save many lives

MEDICAL air evacuation, which continues to save many lives every year and reduces the risk of sequelae for those who are ill or injured far from national territory, recently commemorated its 100th anniversary. On 1 November 1922, a medical surgical team travelled aboard three *De Havilland DH4* aircraft to rescue the wounded in North Africa, a former Spanish protectorate where a fierce battle was being fought. The centenary was brought to a close on 20 April 2023 at Cuatro Vientos air base, in a ceremony presided over by Queen Leti-

zia, who was accompanied by Defence Minister Margarita Robles; the Undersecretary of Defence, Adoración Mateos; and the Chief of Staff of the Air and Space Force, Air General Javier Salto.

The ceremony began with a presentation on the history and capabilities of Spain's medical air transport, followed by a visit to an exhibition of maps and models from the time when these medical evacuations first started. It concluded with a simulation involving an *NH90* helicopter from the 803rd SAR (Search and Rescue) Squadron of the 48th Wing and a C-295 aircraft of the 35th Wing that had already

been configured for medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and equipped with an isolation chamber, all of which were coordinated by the Aeromedical Evacuation Unit (UMAER).

The UMAER, established in 2004 as a continuation of the previous Air Evacuation Unit (UAER), and the Air Search and Rescue, which dates back to 1955, are the heirs of the first missions tasked with rescuing and transferring the sick and wounded.

They also collaborate in several international missions, including those involving armed conflicts and disasters of all kinds.

Medical Lieutenant Colonels Francisco Cantalejo and Pilar Salvador, both from the UMAER, reviewed the evolution of the unit since its creation and the main challenges it has faced. They referred to the transfer of the priests Miguel Ángel Pajares and Manuel García and the nun Juliana Bohi, who were all repatriated in 2014 after being infected with Ebola in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These transfers were particularly challenging because of the highly contagious nature of the disease. They also mentioned the interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic; the evacuation of Afghan citizens; the current transfers of wounded people and cancer patients from Ukraine; and that of a child from Mali, taken in by the Spanish troops in that country to receive treatment in Zaragoza.

The simulation replicated picking up an infectious patient in a difficult-to-access area of operations, giving him first aid, and then the SAR transferring him to *Role 1* (Echelon 1 medical care) for an evaluation and start of treatment. The staff there determine that he most probably has haemorrhagic fever and needs to be transferred to a hospital capable of treating these severely ill patients with a high death rate, so he must be flown by the UMAER to Spain in a fixed-wing aircraft. The attendees also had the opportunity to visit a medicalised aircraft.

These search and rescue missions have a crew consisting of two pilots, a cargo supervisor, a nurse officer and two rescuers. In this regard, teamwork between air crews and those flying evacuation helicopters, such as the *NH90*, is key to the mission's success, just like planning and the distribution of tasks are essential for a quick and error-free execution of the mission.

The ceremony, which took place in the penultimate week of April, was rounded off with an exhibition commemorating 100 years of medical air transport in Spain and a series of lectures at the Aerospace Warfare Centre, both of which were hosted at the Air and Space Force Headquarters.

Five types of aircraft are currently available for air evacuation: the *A400M*, *A310*, *Falcon 900* and *C-295* aircraft, and the *Super Puma* helicopter. Throughout its history, the UMAER has flown some 350 missions; in 2022, it carried out 25 military and civilian rescue operations, transporting 155 people.

Santiago F. del Vado



Archivo Histórico del EA

The pioneers

THE event being commemorated on this centenary was the first time our Armed Forces used air transport for medical transport. On the afternoon of 1 November 1922, a column of Spanish soldiers were unexpectedly attacked at Tizzi Azza, in the eastern part of the protectorate. There were 366 wounded who were transferred to the nearby Dar Drius camp. The shortage of medical staff prompted the General Staff, led by General Ricardo Burguete, to order the scramble of two *DH4s* from this camp to transport a surgical team. The planes arrived at Nador airfield (Melilla) at 10:00 p.m. and a third aircraft was immediately prepared to carry the surgical team, along with all its equipment. Medical commander Victor Manuel Nogueras led the medical team that was alerted, namely medical team number 2 from Melilla.

Dr. Nogueras flew on the first plane with medical captain Manuel Crespo, an anaesthetist; health assistant Quintiliano Navarro flew on the second aircraft; and it was decided that nurse Elvira López Mourín would fly on the third one. However, someone realised at that point that the military regulations in force at the time prohibited women from flying on war aircraft and, therefore, prevented her from doing so. She insisted several times until, stressing the urgent need to attend to the wounded and offering her services as a volunteer, she managed to convince her commanders to allow her to fly on this mission. Captains Pedro García Orcasitas and Rafael Llorente Solá and Lieutenant Abelardo Moreno Miró piloted the aircraft.

This flight was the impetus for the creation of a medical air evacuation unit, as just ten days after it took place, a ministerial order was published for the purchase of two medical air transport aircraft. These were two *Breguet XIVs*, biplanes made of wood, canvas and metal, powered by a 300 hp *Renault* engine with a speed of 170 kilometres and a range of 650 kilometres. They could carry two patients lying down next to a health care professional in a comfortable enclosed compartment equipped with heating, lighting, a first-aid kit and oxygen.

On 23 May 1923, the *Breguets* were integrated into Nador airfield. The first air transfer of a wounded person was on 8 June 1923: Lieutenant Ordinales was transferred between Dar Drius and Nador in a 30-minute flight, a transfer that normally took two days and was carried out by horse-drawn carriages. Nador was the centre of air operations, from which flights were made not only to Dar Drius but also to the Herraiz aerodrome and the cities of Tetuan and Larache.

Sixty-four air evacuations were recorded between that time and 1927, the year in which the war ended, adding to the original *Breguets* two *Junkers F13*, which had been purchased in August 1925 for the rapid medical evacuation of the seriously wounded in the Al Hoceima landing. Due to their capacity to land on water, these aircraft were able to carry the wounded from the coast near the front-line to Melilla, Ceuta, and the hospital ships anchored nearby.

GENERAL MILITARY ARCHIVE OF SEGOVIA

The Spanish Armed Forces' oldest archival institution celebrates its 125 anniversary

THE General Military Archive of Segovia (AGMS) was established by Royal Decree on 22 June 1898. Now, 125 years later, the institution continues to fulfil its mission: preserving the Spanish Army's historical documents since the mid-18th century, making them accessible to researchers and promoting their dissemination.

All of this is made possible by the efforts of its staff and the current digitisation process that will aid in preserving its heritage, as emphasised by technical director María del Mar González, who states that "each archival document is unique, and its loss is irreplaceable". Moreover, the military institution in Segovia currently has an information management system (Archidoc) that enables it to describe its files and facilitates the retrieval of digitised documents. Over 700,000 pages are now accessible in electronic format.

THE BEGINNINGS

However, on that distant 22 June 1898, the situation was quite different. The War Department stored its information in various locations, including Alcalá de Henares and Aranjuez in Madrid, Guadalajara and Segovia itself.

The continuous growth in the number of documents necessitated the rationalisation of their distribution to enhance accessibility. This led to the establishment of the General Military Archive of Segovia, which, from its inception, found its home in the Alcázar

of Segovia, a fortress that had been under the ownership of the Spanish Army since 1764, serving as the headquarters of the Royal College of Artillery.

The palace began to receive millions of records originating from the Infantry, Cavalry, Engineers and Artillery inspectorates, as well as from the captaincies general, command headquarters and military governments. The documents that were sent there were those that were not of everyday use and consultation by the Central Administration of the War Department but that held enough significance to be preserved.



Arabic text from the legal dispute (1612) concerning the seizure of the ship *N.S. de La Guardia*, on which Muley Zidan's Library was located.

Moreover, just a few months after it was established, the loss of the last overseas territories (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) led to a huge intake of all the information preserved in those lands.

In 1898, in order to organise and efficiently process the enormous amount of documentation to be deposited in the new AGMS, a regulation was drafted that remained in effect until 1998. During the 19th century, citizens and non-military scholars were not allowed to access the Archive, as clarified by the director of the General Military Archive of Segovia, Lieutenant Colonel Javier Alonso, and Ms. González.

PRESERVING THE LEGACY

However, this regulation "already prioritised the preservation of documents", emphasises Lieutenant Colonel Alonso. In this respect, the technical director highlights, above all, the building chosen: "The Alcázar offers excellent conditions for preserving the documents due to its stable humidity and temperature parameters".

"Today", he adds, "we have sensors that assist us in maintaining the necessary humidity and temperature standards for the archive, but there are typically minimal fluctuations here".

Moreover, the fire that broke out in the palace during the time of the Royal College of Artillery (1862) heightened safety awareness, especially where lighting was concerned. Consequently, "candles were avoided even in the darkest corners of the rooms". To work in those areas, sunlight was redirected

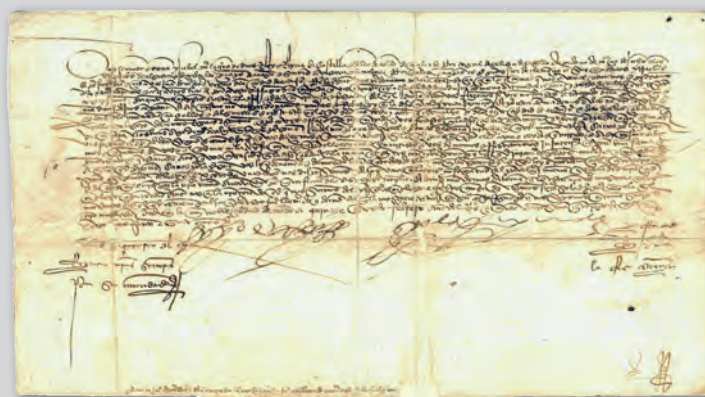
View of the main façade of the Alcázar of Segovia, headquarters of the AGMS.



Example of a document bundle, a traditional storage format that can accommodate papers of different sizes.



It is common to find users in the Researchers' Room (Casa de la Química).



This Letter of Pardon from the Catholic Monarchs to J. Cardenas (1477) is the oldest document in the Archive.

General Military Archive of Segovia

using mirrors. We still keep some of these mirrors as a reminder of those days", explains the AGMS technical director.

For optimal preservation, the documents were organised into bundles, which are collections of papers tightly bound with sturdy covers. On the one hand, "the covers of the bundles are fitted to the size of the bound sheets", and, on the other hand, "in the event of fire, due to their close proximity, it is difficult for oxygen to circulate between them and fuel the flames, thus minimising potential losses", María del Mar González explains.

The bundles also served to organise the documents, as their covers feature codes for storing, searching and locating the information contained within them.

The 1898 regulation followed a classification system based on both alphabetical and numerical order. However, it took into account the limited literacy of the population of the time, giving priority to the sounds of the

letters rather than their spelling, thus transforming it into a phonetic system.

While it served its purpose at the time, this organisational system now has shortcomings, particularly in terms of describing the papers grouped in each bundle, which is essential in contemporary classification standards for any archive. It was replaced by the 1998 regulation, but there are still thousands of bundles left to be reevaluated and converted to the new system. According to data from

The Archive's shelves hold documents covering some 16 kilometres in length, the oldest dating back to 1477

the AGMS, only 15 percent of its documentary heritage "is adequately descriptive", while another 15 percent is deemed to be "merely acceptable" in this regard.

Progress is made in this endeavour every day, but it remains a monumental task due to the vast volume of documentation. Furthermore, this work is carried out alongside attending to in-person and remote inquiries, as well as registering new entries that, on average, reach the archive 25 years after they have been closed.

AN ALMOST INFINITE HERITAGE

The General Military Archive of Segovia houses a total of seventeen repositories in the main building of the Alcázar. It shares this space with a room that highlights the history of this illustrious building, managed by a joint civilian-military board of trustees.

There are an additional four repositories in another building, known as Casa de la Química (Chemistry



The historic shelves of the Alcázar building (left) coexist with the contemporary compact storage units in the new repositories housed in Casa de la Química (right).

House), which was designed by the renowned military engineer Sabatini. This artist is well-known for his work on the design of the Royal Palace in Madrid and for being the architect behind Madrid's iconic Puerta de Alcalá, and much more. Casa de la Química also houses the Researchers' Room, a contemporary and modern space that regularly welcomes users who are interested in accessing the information preserved there.

Casa de la Química, which was transferred to the AGMS for use in 1966, also has a history associated with artillery. It was within these walls that renowned professors, including the Frenchman Louis Proust, taught their chemistry classes to the cadets. It was here that Proust famously formulated the Law of Definite Proportions, a fundamental principle that propelled advancements in the field of chemistry.

Today, the Segovia archive serves as a repository not only for documents, but also for cartography, engravings, illustrations, photographs, and more. In total, its shelves hold information that extends to some 16 kilometres in length. That is the distance of Segovia's famous aqueduct as it carries water from the river Frío in the La Acebeda Mountains to the provincial capital.

The shelves were crafted from durable wood, designed with ample depth to accommodate up to five rows of document units. Some shelves extend up to the ceiling, while others are lower for more convenient access to the documents.

Within this vast collection of information, a notable highlight is the

compilation of over five million military records. These records encompass the service histories of both enlisted personnel up until 1900 and officers up to the present day. In addition to their service history, these records provide details such as personal information, unit affiliation, the military actions in which they participated and more.

Some records are so meticulously kept that they are veritable treasure troves. They can include photographs, maps and a myriad of other items, some "of great testimonial value and others of artistic value", says Ms. González.

The AGMS holds a wealth of information about many renowned figures from Spanish history who served in the military. Its rooms display, for example, a replica of the service record belonging to Nobel Prize recipient Ramón y Cajal, who served as a military physician.

This document is part of the Notable Figures Collection, which has now been fully digitised. The oldest document in this collection is the Letter of Pardon issued by the Catholic Monarchs to

*The oldest and
lesser-known
information is
judicial in nature,
dating from the 16th
century to 1936*

Juan de Cárdenas in 1477. Cárdenas had fought on the side of Alfonso, the younger brother of the future Queen Isabella I, in opposition to King Henry IV of Castile, Isabella's older brother and father of *La Beltraneja* (Joanna of Castile), who also aspired to rule the kingdom. It was a struggle for the Castilian throne that pitted siblings against each other in a fratricidal conflict that culminated in the coronation of Isabella the Catholic.

However, in terms of the collection as a whole, the oldest documents are of a judicial nature, comprising cases and records that were tried under "military jurisdiction" from the 16th century to 1936.

INQUIRIES

Requests from both in-person and remote researchers continue to grow steadily. Last year, there were nearly 7,000 inquiries. In 2023, from January to April alone, there have already been 1,774. A wide range of topics are consulted. The most specific inquiries, primarily from researchers seeking specific sources for their projects, are handled in-person, mainly in the summer. Among the remote inquiries, there is a growing prominence of those related to the Law of Democratic Memory. However, the most numerous requests are those concerning the ancestors of those making the inquiry. There are instances where foreign individuals seek to establish the Spanish nationality of their ancestors as a means to acquire Spanish citizenship themselves. Visits to the researchers' room at the Archive and inquiries require scheduling an appointment in advance by contacting +34 921 462 005 or sending an email to agmsegovia@et.mde.es

Appointments are allocated in the order of requests received, considering the limited capacity of the facility, and may be subject to the availability of documents due to quarantine or other circumstances.

ANNIVERSARY

The roots of the General Military Archive of Segovia were commemorated on 22 June 2023 as it marked its 125th anniversary. The archive was honoured with various recognitions, including from the Royal Academy of History.

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