

# REVISTA <sup>ESPAÑOLA</sup> DE DEFENSA

**Expeditionary Strike Group Dédalo**

## PRESENCE AT SEA



### **EUROCORPS**

General Aroldo Lázaro  
takes charge

### **ANNIVERSARY**

40 years of Spain  
in the EU







REVISTA <sup>ESPAÑOLA</sup> DE DEFENSA

# HABLAMOS de Defensa

37 años de información de calidad

## Presence and security at sea

**I**N a global context marked by escalating geopolitical tensions and increasingly complex maritime activities, the Expeditionary Strike Group Dédalo has demonstrated in 2025 why it is one of the Spanish Navy's most versatile and valuable tools for strengthening international maritime security. Over the course of three deployments — two in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and one transoceanic to the east coast of the United States— the Dédalo projected presence, operational capability and defence diplomacy, thus contributing directly to the stability of the maritime areas connecting Europe and America.

The Dédalo's amphibious and air structure, consisting of units from the Fleet Amphibious and Force Projection Group, fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft, and marines, provided the Operations Command with a fully expeditionary instrument. From late January to autumn 2025, the Dédalo's ships and crews sailed thousands of miles, joining forces with NATO Allies and cooperating with maritime forces from 26 countries. These deployments have reaffirmed Spain's capability to operate in distant scenarios and for extended periods of time.

Of particular relevance was its participation in UNITAS 25, the world's longest-running international maritime exercise, in which the Spanish group assumed command of the multinational

amphibious force and led the complex planning and execution of the ship-to-shore movement of more than 300 marines and 30 vehicles. This milestone showed the level of interoperability between our units and the US Navy and US Marine Corps, as well as the growing trust that other nations have in the Spanish Navy as a reliable and competent partner.

The Dédalo's contribution to maritime security has been threefold. First, preventing illicit activity and strengthening the protection of maritime lines of communication through maritime surveillance and control operations. Second, enhancing interoperability with traditional partners and with American navies with which Spain does not usually operate, thus expanding the cooperation network in hemispheric security. And finally, showcasing Spain's commitment to global stability through defence diplomacy activities, including historical tributes, institutional gatherings and participation in cultural events.

All this has been possible thanks to the effort of the more than 1,000 sailors and marines who took part in the deployments, professionals who often work in demanding conditions and leave their families on shore to fulfil an essential mission: to defend Spain's interests from the sea.

**RED**





#### Managing Editor:

María José Muñoz Estévez.

**Editor in Chief:** Víctor Hernández Martínez.

**Heads of section.** *International:* Rosa Ruiz Fernández. *Art Director:* Rafael Navarro.

*Opinion:* Santiago Fernández del Vado.

*Culture:* Esther P. Martínez. *Photography:*

Pepe Díaz. **Sections.** *National:* Elena

Tarilonte. *Armed Forces:* José Luis Expósito

Montero. *Photography and Archive:*

Hélène Gicquel Pasquier. *Layout:* Eduardo

Fernández Salvador. **Featured in this**

**edition:** Natividad Carpintero Santamaría,

Javier Irazoqui González y Francisco José

Marcos Martín. **Translators:** Fuensanta

Zaballa Gómez (chief) and Gráinne Mary

Gahan.



**Published by:** Spanish Ministry of Defence.

**Editing:** C/ San Nicolás, 11. 28013 Madrid.

**Phone Numbers:** 91 516 04 31/19 (management), 91 516 04 17/91 516 04 21 (editing).

Fax: 91 516 04 18.

Email: respdefe@mde.es

Website: defensa.gob.es

**Administration, distribution and subscriptions:**

Subdirección General de Publicaciones y Patrimonio

Cultural: C/ Camino de Ingenieros, 6. 28047-Madrid.

Phone: 91 364 74 21. Fax: 91 364 74 07.

Email: suscripciones@oc.mde.es

Website: publicaciones.defensa.gob.es

Catalogue of Publications, General State

Administration: cpag.mpr.gob.es

**Photomechanics and printing:**

Spanish Ministry of Defence.

NIPO 083-21-179-8 (Print edition)

ISSN 2695-6284 (Print edition)

NIPO 083-21-180-0 (Online pdf edition)

ISSN 2695-6292 (Online pdf edition)

Legal Deposit M 40176-2019

**Editorial Board:** María José Muñoz Estévez (chairperson), Mercedes Gómez Mena, Gonzalo Villar Rodríguez, Antonio Javier Guerrero Mochón, Ignacio Miguel Warleta Alcina, Francisco José Ipsier Delgado, Juan Francisco Martínez Merello Díaz de Miranda, José Luis Chaves Bermejo, Juan Bautista Payá Martínez y Enrique Cuenca-Romero Jiménez.

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**Cover photo:** Spanish Navy.

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ARMED FORCES

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# PRESENCE AT SEA

The Spanish maritime group during its second deployment this year in Mediterranean waters.





## The 'Dédalo' Expeditionary Strike Group demonstrates Spain's naval power and its commitment to NATO deterrence and defence



**F**OR the third time in 2025, the Spanish Navy deployed the 'Dédalo' Expeditionary Strike Group, which operated in Atlantic waters from 28 August to 24 October 2025, with the purpose of underscoring our commitment to international maritime security, reinforcing interoperability with Allied navies and contributing to collective deterrence and defence. Led by Rear Admiral Antonio González-Tánago, commander of the Fleet's Amphibious and Force Projection Group, this battlegroup was made up of amphibious assault ship LPD *Galicia* (L-51), and frigates F-102 *Almirante Juan de Borbón* and F-86 *Canarias*. During the Atlantic passage and return, the 'Dédalo 25-3' was supported by a combat supply ship (CSS), the *Cantabria* being the CSS utilised for the first part of the voyage.

This was the third and final deployment of the 'Dédalo' Expeditionary Group in 2025. The first one took place from 30 January to 14 March 2025, marking a milestone with its participation in Steadfast Dart 25, NATO's main exercise this year. The second one took place from 17 June to 9 July 2025 in Atlantic and Mediterranean waters. In the third deployment, the Dédalo reached the east coast of the United States to take part in exercise UNITAS, one of the longest-running multinational maritime exercises.

### ALLIED EXERCISES

During the second phase, the units of the battlegroup carried out various operations in highly complex scenarios, both within the framework of the Alliance and jointly with the Spanish Army and Air and Space Force, and in bilateral activities with France and Portugal.

This second phase involved 1,800 members of the Navy, all from LHD *Juan Carlos I* —the flagship of the 'Dédalo'—, which transported fighter jets and helicopters; F-103 *Blas de Lezo*, with improved anti-aircraft defence capabilities; LSS *Cantabria*; a reinforced landing battalion; and an airborne unit. Some of the exercises involved the participation of S-81 *Isaac Peral* submarine, amphibious assault ships *Gali-*

*cia* and *Castilla*, and F-110 *Santa María*. In terms of materiel and equipment, the participation of the Harrier AV8B+ aircraft, the SH60B, SH60F and H135 helicopters, the Marine Corps vehicles and the landing craft of the Naval Beach Group were particularly noteworthy.

On 26 and 27 June 2025, the battlegroup joined the Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO), based in Oeiras (Portugal), to carry out joint operational activities Neptune Strike 25 in the Tyrrhenian Sea. During these activities, the ships comprising the 'Dédalo' carried out long-range live-fire strikes from the central Mediterranean on training areas in Croatia, Slovakia and Romania. In this context, the flight missions of the ship-board fighter jets that took off from LHD *Juan Carlos I* were supported on shore by multinational joint terminal attack controllers (JTACs) in the three aforementioned countries.

JTACs are qualified to direct the actions of military aircraft involved in close air support and other offensive air operations from a forward defence post. In the case of Slovakia and Romania, the JTACs were Spanish military personnel from the NATO missions deployed in both countries. Furthermore, since these exercises also exploited the airspace of several countries, a crucial part of these missions was in-flight refuelling using multipurpose tanker aircraft provided by the air forces.

"The transfer of authority from our task force —emphasises Rear Admiral González-Tánago— highlights Spain's ongoing commitment to NATO's deterrence and assurance measures". He also believes that "our forces' increased capabilities are a result of the recent successful process of improvement and adaptation to new global security challenges", and emphasises that "combined and joint multi-domain operations with Allies promote interoperability and mutual trust".

During this activity and while crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, personnel and equipment from the Army's 4<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment (RACTA IV) aboard F-103 *Blas de Lezo* were integrated into the 'Dédalo', providing its surveillance and control sensors. Thanks

**Three deployments were scheduled for 2025, lasting a total of five months**



to this contribution, the maritime task force was able to monitor the passage through the strait and thus ensure its security in this navigation area.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

The 'Dédalo' Expeditionary Strike Group carried out various activities with other units of the Spanish Armed Forces, including the training of pilots of the Army's AB212 helicopters from the 4<sup>th</sup> BHELMA Battalion —integrated in the Canary Islands command—, which landed on the flight deck of LHD *Juan Carlos I*. These helicopters had recently been transferred from the Navy to the Army.

Furthermore, the 'Dédalo' carried out operational activities with F-18 aircraft from the 46<sup>th</sup> Wing, based at Gando, in Las Palmas (Canary Islands). This coordination involved various tactical actions between the Air and Space Force fighter jets and the AV8B+ Harriers, as well as the participation of a SAR Super Puma heli-



A soldier from the Spanish Marine Brigade signals an LCM-1E landing craft from the Naval Beach Group carrying two tactical vehicles.

copter, also based at Gando air base. As part of the joint actions with the Air and Space Force, the AV8B+ aircraft carried out a mission over land, executing long-range air interdiction flights to engage protected targets without being detected.

In addition to operating with a Portuguese maritime patrol aircraft, the 'Dédalo' collaborated with French destroyer *Chevalier Paul* in surface warfare exercises, aerial combat, replenishment at sea and external assistance to CSS *Cantabria* by crewmembers of the French ship.

### LAND PROJECTION

In this edition, the *Dédalo* deployed its capability to project the maritime force from sea to shore, with the Marine Corps units playing a very prominent role. In the Balearic Islands, they carried out an amphibious raid with a landing to take up positions ashore, and, in early July, amphibious, air, naval and land operations were conducted in the Atlantic for three days.

During those days, the 'Dédalo' Landing Force carried out a joint forcible entry exercise with an amphibious force in a high-intensity environment, subsequently confronting an opposing force that was in a defensive position and using drones. The amphibious operation involved the projection of a landing force via surface and air vectors. The primary objective was to secure a beachhead to capture critical infrastructure, enable the landing of larger forces, and ultimately ensure the acquisition of targets at greater depth.

Spanish and US marines conduct amphibious operations on Onslow Beach, Camp Lejeune, during exercise Unitas.





## ARMED FORCES



Spanish ships are being deployed in highly complex scenarios to reinforce Spain's naval presence abroad and support collective allied deterrence.



The S-81 *Isaac Peral* submarine, which participated in certain exercises during the *Dédalo*'s second annual deployment, sails on the surface. On the right, Three Harrier fighter jets on the flight deck of the *Juan Carlos I*. In the background, the city of Ceuta.





This operation, carried out from the *Galicia* and the *Juan Carlos I*, involved marines, ship manoeuvring personnel, vehicle drivers, assault shipping, landing craft and command posts, as well as the Headquarters that coordinated the actions. It was used to fine-tune the Landing Force for offensive action.

On 8 July 2025, the day before the 'Dédalo' returned to Rota naval base, this force performed a landing demonstration on La Malagueta beach, Malaga, in front of numerous spectators. In the presence of the *Juan Carlos I* and the *Galicia*, two Harriers took off in a simulated hostage rescue scenario in which two Spanish aid workers had been kidnapped by a paramilitary group.

Members of the Naval Beach Group then arrived at La Malagueta on board SH60F and H135 helicopters, along with the craft responsible for transporting land vehicles.

Prior to deployment, 'Dédalo' units participated in Sinkex 25, an exercise in which live ammunition was used to neutralise and sink a decommissioned ship. This type of exercise allows the Spanish Navy to test the operational effectiveness of its weapon systems, coordinate joint fire between ships, aircraft and other platforms, and train crews in an environment realistically simulating a naval combat situation.

#### UNITAS 25

The 'Dédalo 25-3' Expeditionary Strike Group departed from Norfolk Naval Base in Virginia, USA, and travelled across the Atlantic Ocean for seventeen days before reaching Spain on 24 October 2025. The maritime units that made up the group — amphibious assault ship *Galicia* and frigates *Canarias* and *Almirante Juan de Borbón* — sailed together for most of the journey, until the last few days, when they separated to enter different ports. The first two ships docked at Rota naval station, whereas the third did so at Ferrol naval base. The 1,100 sailors and marines who embarked on 28 August 2025 for the third and final phase of this year's deployment of the 'Dédalo' had previously spent two months working hard at sea. This de-

**1,100 Spanish sailors and marines trained alongside military personnel from 25 different countries**

ployment allowed them to train side by side with units from 26 different countries in Unitas, the world's oldest international maritime exercise, organised by the US Navy and the US Marine Corps.

During these months, the 'Dédalo' crossed the Atlantic twice, reaching the east coast of the United States, demonstrating its capability to "project an expeditionary force far from our country for an extended period of time", says the commander of this third activation of the Expeditionary Strike Group, Rear Admiral Antonio González-Tánago. "This capability —he adds— offers the Spanish administration a wide range of options for military response and defence diplomacy".

A few days after arriving in Rota, the head of the 'Dédalo 25-3', aboard the *Galicia*, was "very satisfied" with how the deployment had been carried out. It had three objectives, he explained. "First, to promote interoperability with friendly and Allied countries. Second, to cooperate in the deterrence and defence of the Atlantic Alliance and that of our own country. And third, to contribute to more secure seas through maritime and air surveillance".

In addition to the aforementioned maritime units and their crews, the deployment included a Marine Corps reinforced landing battalion, two operational security teams from the Spanish Navy's Shield Force, as



## ARMED FORCES

Formation of a multinational surface action group in Atlantic waters during exercise Unitas. On the right, Spanish marines train at Camp Lejeune.



Jorge Borjas/USMC



Franco Levis/USMC



EMAD

Spanish marines wait on the deck of the *Galicia* ready to board an SH-60F helicopter.



Eduardo Delatorre/USMC

Demonstration of US logistics drones. On the left, an LCM-1E prepares to go ashore.



### The 'Dédalo' Expeditionary Combat Group combines naval power, air projection and land-landing capabilities

well as SH-60F troop transport helicopters and SH-60B anti-submarine and surface warfare helicopters. The ships did not need to make an intermediate stopover in the Atlantic because the combat supply ship *Cantabria* supported them logistically on their way back to Spain. It carried out three fuellings at sea (FAS), supplying more than 1.2 million litres of diesel, and also conducted communications and replenishments at sea (RAS).

#### INTERNATIONAL EXERCISE

One of the objectives of this third deployment of the 'Dédalo' was to reach the US

coast and participate in the 66th edition of exercise *Unitas* alongside 25 other countries, most of them American. However, before reaching the area of operations, the 'Dédalo' carried out an intensive training programme on the high seas, involving air-naval operations, and escort and maritime interdiction exercises, among others. It also refuelled at sea with replenishment vessel *USNS Leroy Grumman*.

Once on the US coast, the marines first landed at Camp Lejeune training area in Jacksonville, North Carolina, where they worked bilaterally with the US Marine Corps and multilaterally with the oth-

er American countries. They carried out various amphibious operations, ranging from live fire and urban combat activities to close air support.

While the marines remained at Camp Lejeune, the Spanish ships headed for Naval Station Mayport (Florida), where they carried out fraternisation activities with all the countries participating in *Unitas*. Back at sea, the ships sailed for fifteen days. Each of the frigates joined a group, and Rear Admiral González-Tánago, aboard the *Galicia*, assumed command of the amphibious force, which included the Guatemalan ship *Quetzal*, the Mexican



Hunter-Kuester/USMC

A US marine holds a safety briefing prior to urban combat training.



EWAD

Spanish marines disembark from a US Osprey aircraft at Camp Lejeune.



EWAD

Mortar firing exercise on a mobile platform, one of the drills carried out by the US Marine Corps.





Combat supply ship *Cantabria* refuels frigates *Canarias* and *Almirante Juan de Borbón* on their return journey.

Navy ship *Papaloapan*, and USS *Arlington*. Once in the area of operations, Spanish and American marines re-embarked to conduct a landing operation from the sea with a tactical objective.

The 'Dédalo' Group led the planning and execution of the ship-to-shore movement involving more than 300 marines and 30 vehicles. The action started from the Galicia, which projected its LCM-1E class amphibious mechanised landing craft and SH-60F helicopters; from USS *Arlington*, with its air cushion vehicles and Osprey aircraft; and from the *Papaloapan*.

"It has been a great opportunity to show the capabilities of the Spanish Navy to numerous countries that we are not used to working with", said the commander of the 'Dédalo'. "Although, we often work with the United States and the Alliance, dealing with other American navies is not that easy. However, we are united by extraordinary bonds of friendship and history, which have helped us to establish a very special relationship of affection that we have all enjoyed immensely", he added. In his opinion, sharing a common language makes their job easier. "Furthermore, the procedures, tactics and techniques used by sailors around the world are very similar", he continued.

The exercise ended with a ceremony aboard aircraft carrier USS *Harry S. Truman*, presided over by the commander of the US Fourth Fleet, Rear Admiral Carlos Sardiello, who emphasised that *Unitas* "is a legacy of naval camaraderie that we have built, thanks to the maritime forces of partner nations coming from distant places". He also highlighted the significance of this exercise, particularly this year, as it is the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US Navy.

Representing Spain was Fleet Admiral José Enrique Delgado Roig, who met aboard the *Galicia* with the commanders of the international group and the deputy commander of the NATO Joint Force Command Norfolk, Admiral James Morley.

## DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

During their deployment in the United States, crew members of the 'Dédalo 25-3' paid tribute to leading seamen José Charlín Bouza and José García López, and to Marine private Jaime Doltre Folgueres, all of whom died in the naval battle of Santiago de Cuba in 1898 and are buried at Portsmouth Naval Hospital. "It was a very touching event — said the Group commander— as they are part of the Spanish military men who have given their lives for Spain in many parts of the world".

The homage ceremony was part of the defence diplomacy or strategic communication activities organised in this kind of deployment, which include high-level relations with local authorities, receptions for ambassadors and participation in cultural events.

Admiral González-Tánago highlighted the efforts and dedication of the sailors throughout this deployment. "We have amazing ships, however ships are nothing without their crews who work tirelessly, sometimes in very harsh weather, leaving their families behind on shore". "Without these families —he concluded— without their support from afar, it would be very difficult to do our job, to defend Spain from the sea".

**Elena Tarilonte**

**Santiago F. del Vado**

**Photos: Spanish Navy**



Rear Admiral Antonio González-Tánago with the deputy commander of the NATO Joint Force Command Norfolk, Admiral James Morley.



General Lázaro receives the Eurocorps' banner from Admiral López Calderón (CHOD).







The Minister of Defence and the Chief of Defence Staff attend the handover ceremony.



# A SPANIARD AT THE HELM OF EUROCORPS

Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro takes charge of the multinational unit, ready to act under EU and NATO command

**T**HE European Army Corps, or Eurocorps, held its Change of Command ceremony on 18 September 2025 at the famous Place du Château, located on the banks of the Rhine in the heart of the French city of Strasbourg, close to the German border. A Spaniard, Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro, has taken command of this military force for the next two years. With its eleven member countries,

the force is a symbol of Europe and its common defence, and is at the forefront of geopolitical and strategic changes.

During the ceremony, General Lázaro received the Eurocorps banner from the Spanish Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD), Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón, which had previously been handed over to him by Polish General Piotr Blazeusz, thus symbolically ending his term in command of the multinational unit.

The CHOD travelled to Strasbourg with Defence Minister Margarita Robles, who represented our country at the ceremony. "In these difficult and unstable times, European unity is more important than ever", said Lieutenant General Lázaro, while thanking Minister Robles for his appointment.

The new Eurocorps commander praised the efforts made by his predecessor and the great job he had done over the



years in promoting peace, common protection and security. "I will continue to work along these lines of cooperation", Lázaro said. "I wish to reaffirm my commitment to maintaining the standard of excellence of Eurocorps, a military force that also serves as a diplomatic tool", he emphasised.

This is the fourth time that a Spanish general has taken command of this multinational headquarters, where over a thousand troops, 120 of whom are Spanish, are stationed.

### AT THE HEART OF EUROPE

Eurocorps was founded after careful consideration of the devastating consequences for Europe of the two world wars of the past century, in which France and Germany played leading roles. In 1963, French President General De Gaulle and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer signed the Élysée Treaty, which mentioned defence cooperation for the first time. Later, in 1989, France and Germany created a joint unit, the Franco-German Brigade, made up of units from the armies of the two countries.

As a follow-on from this initiative, in 1992, during the Franco-German summit held in La Rochelle, Presidents François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl agreed to establish an Army Corps headquarters in



Eurocorps soldiers bearing the flags of the six framework nations (Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg and Poland).

## More than 120 Spaniards are stationed at the headquarters of this military force founded in 1992

Strasbourg. Immediately afterwards, they invited other countries to participate in the project, with Belgium joining in 1993, Spain in 1994, Luxembourg in 1996 and, more recently, Poland in 2022.

Today, besides the six framework nations there are five associated nations: Austria, Greece, Turkey, Romania and Italy.

### HIGH READINESS

Despite certain distinctive features, Eurocorps is a unit that is substantially similar to other high-readiness headquarters within the NATO force structure. The first unique characteristic is a balanced contribution of resources by the framework nations (Spain is the third largest contributor after France and Germany). The second one is its duality, as it is at the service of both NATO (at SACEUR's disposal since 1993 as part of the force structure) and the European Union.

This unit has participated in peacekeeping and crisis management missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan and EU training missions in Africa, operations that have consolidated its experience in multinational deployments and its ability to coordinate international forces.

Following the adoption of Vision 2026+ by the framework nations, Eurocorps' primary role is to form a joint headquarters focused on land-based crisis response operations, with multi-domain operational capabilities. It is capable of performing Initial Entry Force operations and also commanding up to 65,000 ground troops.



Polish General Piotr Blazeusz and General Lázaro, along with the Chief of Defence Staff, at the change of command ceremony held at the Place du Château.





## A SUCCESSFUL MILITARY CAREER

Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro (born in 1962 in Sidi Ifni, a former Spanish territory in North Africa) has taken command of Eurocorps after three and a half years serving as Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), where he led some 10,000 blue helmets from 48 different countries. He was awarded the Grand Cross of Military Merit with blue ribbon last July during a ceremony in which Defence Minister Margarita Robles acknowledged the importance of his work “in particularly difficult circumstances” due to the clashes between the Israeli Army and Hezbollah.

Among other posts and assignments in his 39-year military career, he has served at the Headquarters of the Euro Rapid Operational Force (Florence), the NATO High Readiness Land Headquarters (Valencia), as commanding officer of the 10th Mechanised Brigade ‘Guzmán el Bueno’ and commander of the Mechanised Infantry Regiment ‘La Reina’ (Córdoba).

In addition to his three deployments in Lebanon, where he also led the Eastern Sector, General Lázaro participated on three other occasions in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina under the United Nations (UNPROFOR), NATO (SFOR) and the European Union (EUFOR), respectively.

He was promoted to Major General in 2020 and appointed Army Director for Personnel Support and Social Welfare. His academic background includes courses at the General Staff College, both in Spain and NATO; the Civil-Military Cooperation course; courses on Gender Advisor in Opera-



tions; Recovery and Stabilisation Strategies; and Strategic Leadership in the Global Security Environment; and has participated as a speaker and student in numerous seminars and forums.

He speaks English, French and Italian, and has been awarded various national and international military decorations.

### Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro has taken command of Eurocorps after three and a half years leading the UN mission in Lebanon

#### THE COMMON COMMITTEE

Given the nature of Eurocorps, it is jointly managed by the framework nations and any important decisions are taken by consensus.

The Common Committee is the highest decision-making body for all major matters related to Eurocorps, notably if the latter is made available for an operation. The Eurocorps commander receives his orders directly from the Common Committee, which is made up of the Chiefs of Defence Staff and the Political Directors of

each nation's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Eurocorps is structured according to the standard NATO model. Its Headquarters has the necessary expertise to prepare and conduct land operations in a complex environment. It is made up of three subdivisions, each of them commanded by a general. These subdivisions are made up of all branches needed for operations, ranging from human resources to civil-military cooperation, including planning and conducting operations, intelligence, logistics, and fund management.

In peacetime, the Eurocorps Commander has one main subordinate unit at his disposal, the Multinational Support Brigade, made up of military personnel from the various framework nations. They keep their national uniforms and status; however, they all wear the same dark blue beret and the Eurocorps badge.

Spain contributes by filling the posts advertised in the Official Gazette of the Spanish Ministry of Defence.

**Victor Hernández**  
Photos: MDE



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## SPAIN'S 40 YEARS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

# FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTRE OF EUROPE

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Felipe González and Fernando Morán sign Spain's Act of Accession to the European Union at the Royal Palace of Madrid on 12 June 1985.

**T**HE 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession of Spain and Portugal to the then European Communities on 1 January 1986 is no ordinary anniversary. This celebration invites us to look back on the best forty years of Spain's history, marked by unprecedented economic prosperity and political stability, substantially attributable to our admission into the European club. We are witnessing

a milestone that, we must not forget, was only possible thanks to the restoration of democracy in our country, the consensus of all political forces and the shared desire of Spanish society.

### MAJOR MILESTONES

Spain became a member of the European Communities following the signing of the Act of Accession on 12 June 1985 in the iconic Hall of Columns of the Royal Pa-

lace in Madrid, which has also witnessed other significant events in our nation's history, such as the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and His Majesty King Juan Carlos I's abdication in 2014. The signing was attended by the then Prime Minister, Felipe González, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fernando Morán. Also present were the Secretary of State for Relations with the European Communities, Manuel Marín, and the Ambassador Permanent





Javier Solana greets members of EUFOR in Chad in 2008.



Soldiers in operation Althea in Bosnia, the EU's first military mission.

Representative to the European Communities, Gabriel Ferrán.

Portugal's Act of Accession was signed in Lisbon on the same day. Both countries thus joined the European club at the same time, bringing the number of members to twelve and demonstrating the Community's support for the democratic transition processes that had begun a few years earlier in southern Europe with Greece's entry in 1981 (the second enlargement after the accession of Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 1973).

Brussels faced a major challenge when Greece, Spain, and Portugal joined the European club. These three Mediterranean nations had recently attained democracy, had a significant agricultural sector, and lower levels of economic and social development than the EC as a whole.

Spain's accession involved eight years of complex political negotiations and the participation of three governments (those of Adolfo Suárez, Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo and Felipe González). Above all, it featured economic talks to allow our country to join the customs union and the single market. This process had begun at least two decades earlier with the official request for membership submitted in 1962 by the then Francoist Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fernando María Castiella, which proposed "an association capable of achieving Spain's full integration in due course, after completing the necessary stages to enable the Spanish economy to align itself with the conditions of the Single Market".

However, the democratic requirement thwarted Spanish aspirations, a mere acknowledgement of receipt being issued in

response. Economic negotiations followed, culminating in the signing of a Preferential Agreement on 29 June 1970, which involved a mutual reduction in tariffs that was later broadened by the signing of a protocol in 1973. In 1977, Spain's transition to democracy created a new scenario that would allow for the formalisation of a new membership application under Adolfo Suárez's government. Brussels responded favourably this time, and formal accession talks began in February 1979.

At the same time, Spain confirmed its commitment to European values by ratifying the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). It also joined the Council of Europe, where it signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Additionally, Spain signed the European Social Charter and acknowledged the competence of the European Commission of Human Rights to handle complaints from individuals.

**Spain is a  
loyal partner,  
committed to EU  
missions, and a  
strong advocate  
of the Europe of  
Defence**

After joining the European club, Spain became, overnight, the fifth-largest country in the community in terms of GDP and population (behind Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy) with its nearly 40 million inhabitants, and the second-largest in terms of surface area (second only to France). One of Spain's contributions to Brussels was the Spanish language, with universal reach and special relevance in Ibero-America, thus extending Spain's historical influence in that region to its new partners.

Since 1986, Spain has proved to be a loyal partner and has taken the lead in numerous debates and processes pertaining to enlargement, treaty reform, and the implementation of common policies. Our country has played a very active role in the Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon treaty reforms, while also playing a prominent role in the implementation of the common agricultural policy, cohesion policy and regional policy, to name but a few.

Similarly, in addition to a large group of parliamentarians and senior officials, we must not overlook the contributions to European integration made by prominent Spanish politicians such as Abel Matutes, Manuel Marín, Marcelino Oreja, Pedro Solbes, Loyola de Palacio and the three former Spanish Presidents of the European Parliament: Enrique Barón; José María Gil-Robles; and Josep Borrell. The latter, like Javier Solana, has also been High Representative for Foreign Policy of the European Union, while another Spaniard, Gil Carlos Rodríguez Iglesias, has been President of the European Court of Justice.



# SPAIN'S 40 YEARS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## AN ECONOMIC SUCCESS STORY

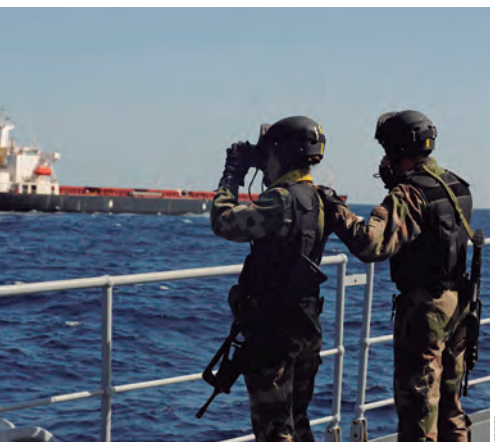
This success story is widely acknowledged by our citizens. According to the most recent European Parliament Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2025, 76% of respondents in Spain believed that our country had benefited from being part of the European Union (above the European average of 74%), and cited economic growth as the main benefit of being a member of the European club. Seventy-two per cent of respondents in our country also said they were in favour of the EU playing a more

as a developing country, indeed the World Bank had given it a loan as such in 1977.

Since then, Spain's GDP has increased sixfold, from €243.38 billion in 1985 to €1.59 trillion in 2024. GDP per capita expressed in terms of purchasing power parity has more than doubled. Life expectancy has risen from 76.4 years in 1985 to 84 years in 2024, the highest in the European Union. The unemployment rate has been halved. As a reference, the foreign sector has seen a fivefold increase in exports and a threefold increase in foreign direct invest-

other funds, such as the European Social Fund and the NextGenerationEU temporary recovery instrument, among others. In these 40 years, as full members of the European Union, we have received more than €458 billion (figures as of November 2024), greatly contributing to our shared prosperity.

In short, by joining the European club, Spain has become part of an institutional project that is unparalleled in human history. This, coupled with the fact that the EU is the world's largest trading bloc and



From left to right, Spanish soldiers in EUNAVFOR operation Atalanta; European Eurofighters; operation EUTM-Somalia; Borrell in exercise MI

prominent role in global and security crises, six points above the EU average.

This broad support for the European project among Spaniards can be interpreted not only as a reflection of the renewed confidence of Europeans in general in EU institutions within a complex and uncertain geopolitical context, as demonstrated by the most recent surveys, but also as due recognition of Brussels' decisive contribution to Spain's stability and prosperity in recent decades.

In fact, Spain's entry into the European Communities provided our country with the most important economic boost since the 1959 Stabilisation Plan and marked both the beginning of a process of convergence with the more developed Europe and its full recognition as a developed country.

It should be noted that in 1985 Spain was still a closed, rather backward nation with high unemployment and inflation rates. It had only recently stopped being regarded

as a developing country, indeed the World Bank had given it a loan as such in 1977.

Whichever indicator we look at, whether it be the internationalisation of the economy, the employment-to-population ratio, the unemployment rate, convergence with European economies, etc., it is evident how drastically our nation has changed.

The EU Structural and Cohesion Funds have been crucial for economic convergence, and Spain has not only benefited greatly from them but also taken the lead in their design and implementation. The Cohesion Funds and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) have been key to the development of rural areas and less advanced regions in our country and have helped to protect our cultural heritage.

Even though Spain is not currently eligible for the Cohesion Fund, under the 2021-2027 financial framework our country has access to €23.39 billion from the ERDF, in addition to the resources from

has some of the most advanced legislation in areas such as the environment and trade, has shaped one of the most stable, prosperous and secure areas in the world.

## COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

Spain's accession to the European Communities not only marked a turning point in our nation's economic and social development; it has also been a watershed in our international projection, largely thanks to what is now known as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), of which the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is a key component.

Furthermore, the progressive construction of the European Union's foreign policy through treaty reforms cannot be understood without taking into account the role played by Spain and the legacy of the two Spaniards who have held its highest institutional position, that of High Representative of the Union for Foreign



Affairs and Security Policy, namely Javier Solana (1999-2009) and Josep Borrell (2019-2024).

During the first few years, Spain focused on consolidating its position as a loyal and active member. From 1999 onwards, our country began to take on a more prominent role, leading it to participate in the EU's first crisis management missions in the Balkans, including police missions such as EUPOL and military missions like EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Spain also promoted the Mediterranean

commitment. Spain's accession to the Atlantic Alliance provided a significant modernising boost to our armed forces, in particular after joining the military structure in 1997, which was later completed by its EU membership.

As far as the European Union is concerned, in 2025 Spain has been present in all the military missions to project stability conducted by the EU on the African continent, with deployments in the Central African Republic (EUTM-RCA), Somalia (EUTM-Somalia) and Mozambique

Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine).

In terms of strategic defence autonomy, since its inception, Spain has participated in the group of countries that make up the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which aims to jointly plan and invest in the collaborative development of military capabilities and improve operational readiness. Spain is also a key player in the projects financed by the European Defence Fund, attesting to our thriving industries.



European Union



Hélène Gicquel



European Council

LREX 23 in Cádiz; an A400M transport aircraft; and Pedro Sánchez with Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a European Council meeting in 2024.

dimension with the Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean, as well as the Ibero-American dimension.

Spain's privileged geographical position as a bridge between Europe, America and Africa, our deep-seated multilateralism, and our extensive experience in the fight against the scourge of terrorism have all benefited our European partners and have enabled us to collaborate actively in areas of utmost interest to our country, such as the fight against jihadist terrorism and security in the Mediterranean and the Sahel; to participate in missions in Mali and Niger and in important EU civilian and military missions; and to defend a more autonomous EU in security and defence.

Although not the subject matter of this article, all of this could not be understood without Spain's 1982 NATO membership and its pledge to remain after the referendum, which will also celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2026, thus marking 40 years of our country's Euro-Atlantic com-

(EUMAM), as well as in operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta to combat piracy in the Indian Ocean. Also worth noting on the European continent is Spain's participation in operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU Military

Our country has  
been a bridge  
between America  
and Africa and  
has played a  
key role in the  
security of the  
Mediterranean  
and the Sahel

## CONCLUSIONS

As already mentioned, forty years in Europe is no ordinary anniversary. As we celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our return to Europe, we also celebrate the return of democracy to our country —without which our accession to the European Communities would have been impossible—, and the best forty years of our shared history.

What will the next four decades hold? At a time of great geopolitical uncertainty, it seems clear that Spain will continue to be a loyal and active partner in Europe. Membership in the EU has not only been a wise political decision, but also the re-affirmation of a shared identity, of a community of values based on cooperation and solidarity that has allowed Spain to project its voice beyond our borders.

**Javier Irazoqui González**

Diplomatic Corps

Coordination Division for Security and Defence Studies (SEGENPOL)



### The UME celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary

The Military Emergency Unit (UME) has intervened in nearly 800 operations

THE first and only unit of the Spanish Armed Forces specialised in emergencies celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 7 October 2025. Established in 2005, since then the Military Emergency Unit has participated in 781 operations. During the ceremony held at Torrejón air base, Madrid, its commander, Lieutenant General Francisco Javier Marcos, summarised its mission as follows: "To contribute to the security and well-being of all citizens by intervening anywhere in the national territory or abroad, together with state institutions and public administrations, in cases of serious risk, catastrophe, calamity or other public needs".

The UME is made up of some 3,500 troops, 8% of whom are women. It is organised into five intervention battalions located in



Madrid, Seville, Valencia, Zaragoza and León to ensure that they can be deployed anywhere in Spain within three hours.

Over the course of these 20 years, the UME has fought numerous forest fires, cleared snow-blocked roads and saved lives during the Covid-19 pandemic and last year's floods in Valencia. It has also participated in 26 missions abroad. In

fact, it was the first military unit in the world to become a certified United Nations Urban Search and Rescue (UN USAR) team in 2011. It is also part of the European Civil Protection Mechanism, a voluntary pool of resources that enables response to disasters both inside and outside the EU, and with which the UME has been deployed to fight forest fires in Greece, Chile and Portugal.

### Eastern Sentry

Spanish aircraft join NATO operation

THE "Vilkas" tactical air detachment (TAD) has been participating in Operation Eastern Sentry since 22 October 2025. Spain contributes two Eurofighter aircraft and one A400M tanker aircraft, which provide support from Šiauliai air base. This is where the aircraft assigned to reinforce the Baltic air policing mission are currently based.

On 12 September 2025, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Alexus G. Grynkeiwich announced the launch of operation Eastern Sentry in response to the violation of Allied airspace by Russian drones two days earlier. Spain is participating in this new operation, in solidarity with our Allies, with TAD "Vilkas" — "wolf" in Lithuanian —, which had already been participating in reinforced air surveillance on NATO's eastern flank and is now also providing air assets to the new operation. It consists of some 200 troops from the Spanish Air and Space Force, as well as eight Eurofighter aircraft from the 11<sup>th</sup> Wing (Morón de la Frontera, Seville) and one A400M tanker aircraft from the 31<sup>st</sup> Wing (Zaragoza), both transferred to NATO.





# Submarine *Isaac Peral*

## Participation in NATO operation Sea Guardian in Mediterranean waters

For the first time, S-81 submarine *Isaac Peral* joined NATO's maritime security operation Sea Guardian in Mediterranean waters. Thus, for over a month, it played a key role in gaining further insight into the maritime environment, supporting the fight against terrorism and developing regional maritime security capabilities within the framework of the Alliance.

The 55 crew members on board the submarine, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Fernando Clavijo Rey-Stolle, were specifically trained for this mission to navigate and operate the equipment in order to perform its operational tasks successfully and safely.

Since 2017, following the launch of operation Sea Guardian in late 2016, Spanish Navy vessels have been participating in the operation, demonstrating Spain's solidarity and commitment to the fight against terrorism, as well as ensuring its contribution to security in the face of threats shared with our allies in the interests of international stability.



EMAD



MDE

## Air evacuation of Gazan children Arrival of two aircraft at Torrejón air base

**T**WO aircraft from the 31<sup>st</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> Wings of the Spanish Air and Space Force landed at Torrejón air base (Madrid) on 27 October 2025 with sick children from Gaza and their families. The children had boarded in Jordan and, upon arrival in Spain, were transferred to different hospitals to receive medical treatment for their various conditions. The medical centres where they are already receiving the necessary care are located in Castilla La Mancha, Asturias, Castilla y León and Catalonia. Almost twenty military personnel from the Aeromedical Evacuation Unit (UMAER) were involved

in this operation, including flight surgeons and nurses, intensive care specialists and healthcare professionals who looked after the safety and health of the children during the flight. The Air Deployment Support Squadron (EADA) also participated in this mission.

The operation was co-organised by the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and Médecins Sans Frontières. Over the course of several days, the aircraft were prepared and pre-configured with everything necessary to care for the children during the flight in accordance with their medical conditions.



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## INTERVIEW

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### GENERAL GUILLERMO GARCÍA FERRER, DIRECTOR OF MANAGEMENT AT NATO'S JOINT FORCE COMMAND BRUNSSUM (JFCBS)

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# “ADAPTABILITY IS KEY”

“Current operations, in scenarios that are often unpredictable, require greater agility from NATO headquarters”

**F**OR the past year, General García Ferrer has been stationed in Brunssum, a Dutch town near the German border, as Director of Management at NATO's Joint Force Command, and during that time he has seen how “incredibly well prepared” our Armed Forces are to face any challenge. “A soldier never stops learning”, says Brigadier General Guillermo García Ferrer, “and in these postings outside our comfort zone, working through other languages and with countries that have different cultures to ours, it is a real privilege to exercise the committed and close leadership that is so typical of us Spaniards”.

Born in Madrid in 1970, with close ties to Murcia and Mallorca, General García Ferrer has been posted in the Balkans, Lebanon and Afghanistan. He says that he has thoroughly enjoyed his assignments with the Paratroopers Brigade, and that having helped to create the UME “from scratch” —a unit that has already celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary— was a real challenge. “My time in the Operations Command helped me to get to know and understand other service branches, and my time as a colonel in Murcia helped me to combine operability with the management of barrack services and interact with the civilian society we serve”, he adds.

**—What does this experience mean to Spanish soldiers stationed at this headquarters?**

—They consider it a privilege both pro-

fessionally and personally. Our colleagues from other nations greatly appreciate the commitment, generosity and friendliness of the Spanish soldiers. I would like to draw attention to the recognition of our culture, as evidenced by the numerous social events that each contingent organises for the entire community, and thanks to which our military personnel and their families integrate into this headquarters almost immediately. Furthermore, the population in the south of the Netherlands, where Brunssum is located, shares many common traits with us, which facilitates such integration.

**—The Joint Force Command Brunssum (JFCBS) is one of the three operational commands in NATO's military structure. What distinguishes it from those in Naples and Norfolk?**

—Our headquarters leads NATO's primary effort on the eastern flank. This is where the threat is perceived to be closest and where deterrence effects are most important. It is a huge responsibility that we take on with full commitment and dedication. We are aware that we cannot let society down and we do our best to be prepared for any scenario.

**—Why is the position of Director of Management becoming so important in the various NATO institutions?**

—Our headquarters' role is to plan and conduct military operations focused on Central and Eastern Europe. This is ca-

ried out through the traditional directorates for operations, planning and support. However, it is crucial to ensure that we can plan and conduct operations regardless of the circumstances, and this is achieved through Enterprise activities, which are basically in charge of implementing organisational changes throughout NATO's structure. This headquarters is taking the most important steps in order to establish this structure, which is crucial not only for change but also for the transformation of the entire unit.

**—What are those Enterprise activities that fall under your responsibility?**

—They are the ones that not only enable us to plan and conduct operations, but also all those central policies aimed at transforming the headquarters. As I mentioned before, this endeavour encompasses all the responsibilities that have a cross-cutting impact on the headquarters.

The list of responsibilities is extremely varied. They range from the implementation of NATO's core transformation processes, such as warfighting, multidomain operational environment, resilience, innovation and digitalisation, to others of minor scale but equal importance: the drafting of general directives, governance, knowledge and information management, infrastructure, security, protocol, base services, morale and welfare, relations with local authorities, formalities with the international school, etc.





**—What is the meaning and scope of the term ‘warfighting’ established in NATO in recent years?**

—This is perhaps one of the most important responsibilities I have to promote. The term ‘warfighting’ encompasses many aspects, from adopting a mindset focused on being prepared for any scenario to implementing resilient systems that ensure the continuity of our critical processes in the event of a physical or cyber attack.

The key to success has been to take a pragmatic approach with multiple options at the ready so that the JFCBS commander can determine the best course of action to deal with any incident or circumstance, even in a preventive way. The key to current operations is not so much the preparation of complex scenarios as the agility and adap-

tability of the entire headquarters to respond to scenarios that are often unpredictable.

**—How important is the word ‘innovation’ at NATO headquarters?**

—We are seeing how new technologies,

**General García Ferrer is responsible for all activities aimed at transforming the Allied headquarters**

especially disruptive ones, are currently progressing. This will not stop, and neither will we. It is very important to connect users (warfighters) with innovative companies and academia so that we can leverage cutting-edge technologies in artificial intelligence, protection and situational awareness. These three areas will really give us an edge in decision-making.

Therefore, we have already organised several events with key NATO players, from companies and academia, with very good results, and we are developing a digital platform that will allow us to facilitate and maintain contact with them so that we can always keep abreast of the latest developments. This is how we make innovation one of our commander's priorities.



### **“The JFCBS headquarters is a first mover in NATO in the implementation of artificial intelligence tools”**

**—The multidomain operational environment is another concept that has gained relevance in the Alliance. How does it affect operations?**

—The real added value of an operational headquarters like ours is to produce effects by conducting multidomain operations. Basically, we are the ones who ensure that the desired effects are obtained in order to achieve the objectives of the military campaign. We carry out this task by converging the actions of subordinate commands associated with both traditional domains of operations (MARCOM, LANDCOM, AIRCOM) and non-traditional domains, such as space and cyberspace. We also make sure that the actions carried out by countries and different sectors of civil society complement and converge with these effects.

A very good example of the complexity of this task is the counter drone protection on the eastern front. It is our responsibility to make sure that the effect of denying

access into our airspace is translated into different actions such as early detection, denial of spectrum access, infrastructure protection or even using force to shoot down a drone. All these measures require multi-level coordination, with JFCBS as the main conductor.

**—Managing transformation is also part of your remit. What is being done in this area?**

—Transformation is one of the main lines of effort of this headquarters and is included in the commander's operational directive. In other words, transformation seeks to change the very nature of this headquarters. Disruptive technologies or multidomain operations cannot be integrated without bringing about profound changes in the way we work. The key to success is knowing how to manage that change so that all the members of our unit feel part of the same project. Therefore, it is important to have good communication

and for everyone to be aware that transformation needs to be addressed urgently. In Brunssum, we hold mass meetings to inform analysts and get feedback on how to improve and speed up the transformation process.

**—What positive developments are being made in the use of cutting-edge digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence?**

—The JFCBS headquarters is a first mover in NATO in the implementation of artificial intelligence tools. Specifically, we are adopting several features of the MAVEN system, which is utilised at numerous Allied nation headquarters. A huge effort has been made to determine which work processes can benefit from this system by using existing databases. For instance, tasks, such as the targeting process, that used to take hours or even days to complete can now be carried out in minutes. This represents a significant advantage in decision-making, as this process will become faster and more accurate.

**—One of your tasks is to manage support with the framework nation in operations under JFCBS command. How does this work in the case of the Spanish-led NATO Multinational Brigade in Slovakia?**

—One of the reasons why Spain opted for the position I am now holding is because it has about 2,000 troops deployed on the eastern flank. I therefore believe that my main responsibility is to protect Spain's interests as the framework nation of the forces stationed in Slovakia. My post allows me to take part in the decision-making process of the JFCBS, and my opinion is heard, not only as Director of Management but also as a national advisor. During my recent visit to the forces deployed in Slovakia, I was able to see first-hand the challenges and needs on the ground.

**Santiago F. del Vado**  
**Photos: EMAD**





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Members of a Forward Reconnaissance Company patrol land in an orderly fashion after navigating with their parachutes deployed for almost 14 kilometres.





Inside the aircraft, the oxygen technician checks the positions occupied by the paratroopers before switching them to the collective supply consoles. Prior to boarding, individual equipment, in particular the descent cylinders, must be inspected to ensure everything is working properly.

# JUMPING AT HIGH ALTITUDE WITH OXYGEN

Paratroopers from Spain and four other nations train in exercise Lone Paratrooper in Valladolid, Spain

**A**S soon as the A400M transport aircraft reaches 10,000 feet, low pressure starts to affect Captain Beltrán and the eight members of the patrol he leads as commander of the Forward Reconnaissance Company (CRAV in Spanish) of the 6th Parachute Brigade (BRIPAC) "Almogávares". In order to climb to 18,000 feet in optimal physiological conditions, members of this small elite unit must undergo

a process of blood "cleansing" for just over 30 minutes. From that altitude, they must jump into the void, deploying their parachutes immediately to glide nearly 14 kilometres behind enemy lines undetected and safe from anti-aircraft defences.

Using masks that cover their faces and connected by hoses to the oxygen supply consoles at their feet, they breathe pure oxygen to combat altitude sickness. This supplementary supply to their lungs also

helps them eliminate, through their breathing, the nitrogen in their tissues, alveoli and blood, thus preventing potential hypoxia during climb or decompression sickness during descent.

Throughout this "denitrogenation" process, jumpers are supported inside the aircraft by a jumpmaster, an oxygen technician and a physiological training technician. The three of them are also free fall paratroopers, but will only jump in case of emergency. The



**CAPTAIN JUAN LUIS DE LA CASA BELTRÁN**  
> **Head of the Forward Reconnaissance Company**

### **“The higher the altitude, the greater the safety”**

**“T**HE higher we jump, the more we can navigate with our parachutes deployed to the insertion point and the safer we are from enemy anti-aircraft defences”. According to the head of the BRIPAC's Forward Reconnaissance Company, high-altitude jumps with oxygen are a technique that allows for the covert insertion of a small group of select troops behind enemy lines without being detected. It is a tactical technique “subject to the altitude and the wind velocity that propels us”. This is why the ground-based calculations used to set the precise coordinates at which the aircraft's pilot must give the green light to begin the jump or the red light to halt it are not always accurate. “We are the first to arrive; we delimit, clear and secure the parachute drop zone for the bulk of the force to enter”.



## **The Jumpmaster and the Oxygen and Physiological Training technicians make up the High-Altitude Airdrop Service**



The jumpmaster (left) is in charge of checking the paratroopers' equipment and gear one by one at the foot of the aircraft ramp and authorising their boarding if everything is in order.

role of these “black monkeys”, so called because members of the BRIPAC's Airdrop Company wear black jumpsuits during operations, is not to infiltrate hostile territory. Their mission is to provide a flight service that allows their fellow crew members to successfully perform high-altitude jumps with oxygen, or HALO-HAHO jumps (the initials stand for high-altitude low-opening and high-altitude high-opening, respectively). “This is a highly technical military parachuting procedure and to practise these jumps is the main goal of exercises Lone Paratrooper, run by the BRIPAC since they began 27 years ago”, says LTC Javier Escrig. He is the head of the BRIPAC's Logistic Support Group and director of this year's edition of exercise Lone Paratrooper, held from 8 to 19 September at Villanubla air base (Valladolid).

These exercises make up the most demanding phase of the combined-joint parachute infiltration training taking place every year in Europe. Its airdrop programme makes it possible to exchange tactical procedures



and experiment with new materials, which is highly appealing to the elite units of the Spanish Armed Forces and State Security Forces, and to many foreign militaries as well.

In addition to members of the BRIPAC's CRAV, this edition was attended by personnel from the Special Operations Command representing the Army, the Navy's Special Warfare Force, the Parachute Engineer Squadron, and the Air and Space Force's and Civil Guard's Military Parachuting Schools, along with military personnel from Brazil, the United States, Italy and Portugal. Altogether, there were 176 paratroopers: 129 Spanish and 50 from abroad.

Within a radius of 27 nautical miles (37 kilometres), they performed nearly 1,500 jumps at different altitudes up to a ceiling of 27,000 feet. To do so, they were distributed in 150 rotations aboard A400M, C-295 and C-212 Aviocar transport aircraft, along with an AS532 Cougar helicopter from the Army Air Corps.

According to LTC Escrig, "Each jumper performed at least one free fall jump a day and another one with oxygen at various times of the day and night, utilising night vision goggles or with restricted visibility".

#### HIGH ALTITUDE PROCEDURES

One of the primary efforts this year was to improve and complement each paratroop-



Paratroopers fly downwind and always land into a headwind.

#### FIRST SERGEANT GUSTAVO JAVIER PÉREZ CENTURION > Oxygen Technician

### "The oxygen supply cannot fail"



**T**HIS is his sixth year in charge of the Free Fall Section of the BRIPAC's Airdrop Company. "This is my job on the ground", says First Sergeant Centurion. "In the air, I am a crew member of the Flight Service, either as a Jumpmaster or a Physiological Training or Oxygen Technician". When assigned to the latter position in a HALO-HAHO jump, this NCO with 20-years' service in the BRIPAC assumes he will be the only passenger standing and moving around for the entire flight. "We have to continuously check the collective and individual equipment, the hoses and the masks". He is also the first to board when the aircraft verification procedures begin, while the flight briefing takes place in the nearby hangar, distributing the oxygen supply consoles inside the aircraft to the jumpers around them. "I am in charge of ensuring the oxygen supply to all personnel after take-off and until landing. The oxygen supply cannot fail".

**According to LTC Escrig,  
"HALO-HAHO jumps are highly  
technical military parachuting  
procedures"**

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## ARMED FORCES

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# A total of 176 military personnel participated in the exercise: 129 from the Spanish Armed Forces and the Civil Guard, and 50 from Brazil, the United States, Italy and Portugal

er's capability to outfit themselves with oxygen equipment inside the aircraft —that is, during the flight rather than prior to take-off—, since it will help them on long-haul flights. “We also insisted on forming mixed patrols made up of small teams of two members, one Spanish and one

foreign, from the Army, Navy or Air and Space Force”, pointed out LTC Escrig.

The latest edition of Lone Paratrooper also aimed to improve tandem capability. “This is a key element in an infiltration operation when bringing someone into the area who is not a qualified paratrooper: medical

staff, diplomats, translators, interpreters, explosive detection dogs (EDDs), etc.”, said First Corporal José Enrique González León, an experienced tandem pilot, as he prepared for the high-altitude jump alongside a civil guard to whom he was already strapped inside the A400M. The exercise also involved practising high-altitude navigation procedures for landing in confined areas, i.e. “small drop zones, as might occur in a real situation”, said Lone Paratrooper director. Each jumper must be skilled in handling parachutes and organising the patrol before landing. In terms of testing new materials, the BRIPAC is attempting to acquire a canopy tracking system that would enable the main parachute canopy to be recovered when the jumper has to release it in the event of an emergency due to malfunction and switch to the reserve parachute.

### MASTER SERGEANT MARÍA ISABEL AMAT ANDRÉS

#### > Physiological Training Technician

## “I take care of the jumpers’ health”

“ALTHOUGH we are not flight surgeons or nurses, as a physiological training technician, my concern is the health of the jumpers until they leave the aircraft”, says Master Sergeant Amat, referring to the expertise she acquired at the Centre of Aerospace Medicine. “During the flight, different situations can arise, from hypoxia to decompression sickness. Our mission is to identify and address any issues as they arise, since making the jump is what really matters. Only when that proves impossible do we land”. Thanks to her many years of experience, Master Sergeant Amat is very familiar with the procedures followed in the airdrop service when using oxygen. Since 2007, she has been part of the BRIPAC, where she combines this activity with being the leader of a Supply Section. “I handle all of the parachute repair supplies and spare parts”.

#### FLIGHT ASSISTANCE

Master Sergeant Arturo Mompín, a black monkey and the Oxygen Section commander of the Airdrop Company, says that, when they climb with oxygen, they need a jumpmaster, an oxygen technician and a physiological training technician on the aircraft. Next to him is First Corporal Luis Fernando del Pozo, who expands on the role of the jumpmaster: “He is in charge of making sure the jump is executed safely, taking into account the altitude at which it is performed”. His work begins at the foot of the aircraft ramp, where he inspects each jumper's equipment. “He checks that the parachute is properly packed, the barometric device is turned on, the tracking device is in place, the oxygen bottle is full, the hose is correctly connected to the mask, the individual breathing system is working as a whole, etc.”, explains Mompín. Once this phase is completed, the oxygen technician comes into play, distributing the paratroopers inside the aircraft, connecting them to the collective supply consoles, and constantly checking to make sure that all personnel will receive pure oxygen.





## MASTER SERGEANT JUAN JOSÉ GONZÁLEZ PINTO

> **Jumpmaster**

### “I’m the one giving the orders on the aircraft”

“**F**OR a decade, I have had all the qualifications required for this type of air-drop”, says Master Sergeant Pinto as he lands after successfully completing his job as jumpmaster on a high-altitude flight. “Along with the pilot, I am in charge of the aircraft and decide whether or not to continue the operation in the event of a problem with the oxygen supply or hypoxia symptoms in any of the jumpers”. Before boarding, he must inspect, at the foot of the ramp, the equipment carried by each paratrooper.

“During the climb, I check the times and alerts to the jumpers until we reach the altitude set for them to jump”, says this NCO, the right-hand man of the captain of the Air-drop Company.



While the aircraft reaches the altitude planned for the jump, Master Sergeant María Isabel Amat remains seated in the middle of the aircraft. As a physiological training technician, she checks each jumper's blood oxygen saturation with a pulse oximeter and observes whether any of them move or raise their hands, which could be a sign of a problem. “I check whether their fingernails are purple, if they are asleep or have a blank look on their faces, etc., things that would not occur in normal physiological conditions”, she explains.

“In the event of a failure in the collective or individual oxygen supply, or due to adverse weather conditions, the airdrop would have to be aborted. This is a very difficult decision and, therefore, we must be absolutely sure”, says Master Sergeant Andrés Rego, head of the Logistics Support Branch, another experienced black monkey with 21 years' service in the BRI-PAC. “Safety comes first, whether dropping the CRAV or any other parachute unit”, he emphasises.

**J. L. Exposito**  
**Photos: Pepe Díaz**

**Throughout the exercise, nearly 1,500 jumps were performed at different altitudes, with a ceiling of 27,000 feet**



At the foot of the runway, members of the Oxygen Section of the Airdrop Company prepare the oxygen supply of the consoles and also the hoses to which the paratroopers will connect inside an A400M.

Over the past eight decades, and despite its ups and downs, the UN has always been driven by its desire to protect future generations from the scourge of war

### 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CHARTER

# The United Nations: Backbone of global multilateralism

**Colonel Francisco José Marcos Martín**

Geopolitical Analysis Branch

Coordination Division for Security and Defence Studies

General Secretariat for Defence Policy (SEGENPOL)

**T**HE notion that humanity ought to have an international organization to assist in resolving problems and contributing to peace is not new. Although the League of Nations is arguably the most well-known forerunner of the United Nations, humanity's wish to be ruled by a supranational organization that would foster peace and harmony among peoples is much older. Already in the 16th century, states were described by Francisco de Vitoria as "parts" of the universal human community, which was somehow organised as a single political community. In his Treaty of Perpetual Peace, Kant, for his part, suggested a league of equal and sovereign nations —a sort of "federation of free states"—. Inspired by President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, all of these goals were first realised in 1919 when the League of Nations was established under the Treaty of Versailles "to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security". The fourteenth point called for the creation of a "general association of nations", intended to safeguard the political independence and territorial integrity of all states. However, this international initiative failed for several reasons: first, the American Senate did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles; Germany and Italy left the League of Nations in the 1930s; and it failed to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War. The League was eventually dissolved in 1946.

The idea of a united nations, a term coined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, took shape in parallel with the crisis of the League of Nations and on the eve of the Second World War. As early as August 1941, Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill advocated in the Atlantic Charter for "the establishment of a wide-

er and permanent system of general security". Six months later, in January 1942, twenty-six nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, China and the USSR, signed the Declaration by United Nations, which contained a number of principles enshrined in the Atlantic Charter. The idea developed over the course of several summits, conferences, and committees before making its way to the Yalta Conference in February 1945, when the Western armies were planning to cross the Rhine and the Soviets were 100 kilometres away from Berlin. At Yalta, Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill agreed to establish an international organization to maintain peace and security with the Allies. Finally, the US hosted the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in April 1945, bringing together representatives from 51 countries, with 850 delegates who drafted the San Francisco Charter or UN Charter. The charter, signed in June of that year by the delegates and subsequently ratified by the signatory countries, came into effect on 24 October 1945, creating a new international organization, the United Nations, with the purpose of consolidating international peace and security and avoiding the scourge of war.

**For three months, representatives from 51 countries met to found an organization aimed at consolidating peace and security**





The first session of the General Assembly was held on 10 January 1946 at the Central Hall in Westminster (London) with the participation of 51 nations, while its first resolution, issued two weeks later, dealt with the “Establishment of a Commission to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy”. The historic Security Council held its first session in London on 17 January 1946, at which it approved its own Rules of Procedure.

#### MANY LIGHTS AND SOME SHADOWS

Like any organization, over the course of its 80-year history, the UN has gone through all kinds of situations and moments, including successes and failures, highs and lows, supporters and detractors, memorable episodes and events to forget, all of which fall within the organization's desire to protect future generations from the scourge of war.

Numerous accomplishments and acknowledgements deserve special attention. The most obvious one is that given that more member states have joined since its establishment, the United Nations might have become the world's only truly universal global organization. After the 51 nations that joined in 1946, Afghanistan, Iceland, Siam, and Sweden started the membership process the following year. Spain joined in 1955 and South Sudan became the last member in 2011, bringing the total number of members to 193.

One of the earliest success stories was the organization's assistance with the decolonisation processes, which made it possible for new members to join. The historic UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries

and Peoples of 1960, also known as the Declaration on Decolonisation, established the right of all peoples to self-determination and called for the end of colonialism. Eighty former colonies gained their independence as a result of this process, while there are still seventeen non-self-governing territories, including Western Sahara and Gibraltar.

The United Nations has worked tirelessly in its quest to reaffirm the fundamental rights and dignity of all human beings. In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris—in a nod to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen adopted at the height of the French Revolution—and was expanded in 1959 by the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. In this regard, the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its activities to protect children deserve to be acknowledged. Another long-term goal has been to improve the living conditions of women, with particular emphasis on the first World Conference on Women held in Mexico in 1975 and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979; a tireless task that continues to be a top priority despite the difficulties.

The United Nations has actively worked to promote development with the ultimate goal of improving the standard of living and health of the world's population by encouraging projects aimed at reducing poverty, alleviating crises, preserving the environment and promoting good governance. In this case, the work of organizations and tools such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the





Pepe Diaz

World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP) must be recognised. The eradication of smallpox in 1980 was commemorated as a great success, as in fact this was a joint effort for which the World Health Organization (WHO) should be congratulated.

The United Nations set the Millennium Development Goals, which were revised in 2015 with the Sustainable Development Goals, seeking to encourage social, economic and environmental progress. The promotion of democracy and the fight against all forms of injustice have been an essential part of the United Nations agenda. In this regard, there have also been accomplishments, such as the 1994 elections in South Africa, marking the end of a long and costly process against apartheid in that country.

Additionally, UN military and peacekeeping operations and missions have acquired respect and recognition as a means of promoting stability in conflict-affected and war-torn areas. Since the first peacekeeping operation was established in the Suez Canal in 1956, thousands of blue helmets have been deployed all over the world.

It is important to draw attention to environmental protection and to the challenges posed by climate change. The 1987 Montreal Protocol, which restricted the use of substances that could destroy the ozone layer, and the 2015 Paris Agreement, which included measures to reduce carbon emissions, are two notable examples. Today, the UN climate change conferences, known as COPs, seek to over-

see the agreements that have been reached. The most recent COP was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2024 (CO29).

All these successes have been recognised by the numerous awards and accolades received by the United Nations and its agencies. As early as 1954, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) won the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its efforts to create a better and more peaceful world. Other UN agencies that have received this honour include UNICEF, the International Labour Organization, UNHCR once more in 1981, and the UN itself in 2001. The blue helmets won the award in 1988 for their work in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, and they also received the Prince of Asturias Award for International Cooperation in 1993 for their humanitarian work in the former Yugoslavia.

However, there have also been dark moments and situations that leave bitter memories. The genocides in Rwanda and Darfur, the 1995 Srebrenica genocide, the wars in Libya and Syria, and Sudan's forgotten war are examples of the many challenges and constraints the United Nations must confront. Allegations of human rights crimes by UN soldiers are also painful episodes that occasionally tarnish the good work of the blue helmets.

These allegations have a lot to do with the veto mechanism in place in the Security Council since its founding. This veto prevents measures that go against the wishes of the Council's five permanent members from being taken. Examples of the Council's paralysis



include its inaction in Syria, its inability to take action against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, or against Israel for its excesses in Gaza. A paralysis that could lead the UN to become a questioned and outdated actor with increasingly marginal weight. It is therefore not surprising that initiatives proposing a review of the Security Council's organization and functioning are starting to emerge.

### SPAIN, COMMITTED TO MULTILATERALISM

Spain, as a peace-loving nation, has relied on effective multilateralism by promoting robust organizations such as the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations, of which it is a member and a committed and respected partner and ally.

However, Spain's journey in the United Nations had a somewhat complicated beginning. The organization, founded under the auspices of the victorious powers of the Second World War, adopted Resolution 39 (I) in February 1946. This resolution condemned Franco's regime for giving "substantial aid to the enemy powers", and recommended the exclusion of Franco's government from the international organizations established by the United Nations and the immediate withdrawal of the ambassadors accredited in Madrid.

Spanish diplomacy then mobilised to achieve membership, a feat that would take nearly a decade to accomplish. A first success was Resolution 386 (V) of 1950, which declared the lifting of the international sanctions imposed on Spain since 1946. Once its accession to UNESCO was approved in February 1952, Spain sent a Permanent Observer to New York in 1955. However, the reluctance of certain countries, such as Mexico, where the Spanish government in exile was based, persisted until Spain was admitted to the United Nations on 15 December 1955, finally resolving the "Spanish question".

Since then, Spain has proven to be a committed partner of the United Nations, dedicated to international peace and stability. Its commitments and achievements in this endeavour have been numerous. One of the most recent has been its contribution to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mission, during an extremely difficult time, when General Aroldo Lázaro, its commander, demonstrated widely acclaimed leadership. However, Spain's participation in UN missions actually began as early as 1988, with observers in Angola, which was a prelude to other deployments in different parts of the world: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, the Central African Republic, Haiti, Central America, Angola, Namibia, etc., and we pay humble tribute here to our blue helmets who died in the line of duty.

Spain's achievements also extend to other areas. Our country has been a member of the Security Council five times, most recently in the 2015-16 term, and is a candidate for the 2031-32 biennium. Additionally, Spain stands out for its comprehensive defence and advancement of human rights, having been elected a member of the

Human Rights Council for the 2025-2027 term. Likewise, Spain is committed to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, in areas such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, climate change and development cooperation. Spain recently hosted the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), held this year in Seville, where the Seville Platform for Action, a financial tool to support development, was approved.

### THE FUTURE: OPTIMISM AND CHALLENGES

The organization faces the future with enthusiasm and optimism to tackle the countless challenges that still need to be resolved. One of these relates to the functioning of the organization and its adaptation to new realities.

The United Nations came into being in a specific context at the end of the Second World War, where there were "victorious powers", "enemy powers" and a bipolar world with two superpowers, the United States and the USSR. The UN was therefore designed by the victorious nations in that particular international context. Today, the world has changed and, thus, the UN should be updated. Otherwise, as happened to the League of Nations in its time, the organization might stagnate and become a geopolitical relic. The most urgent reform might be that of the Security Council.

The Security Council's potential inaction is not new. As early as 1950, in an environment of permanent blockade during the Korean War, the General Assembly adopted the famous Resolution 377 (V), known as Uniting for Peace, which had very limited practical scope. Currently, various proposals have been put forward to update this organization. Thus, it has been naively proposed that the five major powers renounce their right of veto. Another suggestion has been to increase the number of votes required for permanent members to exercise their veto, in which case perhaps two or three more votes would be necessary.

Other more realistic ideas suggest increasing the number of permanent members of the Council to include nations and organizations that are important today: perhaps India, Germany or the European Union. Although reform will not be easy, it is unquestionably the UN's unfinished business. Otherwise, the organization could fall into irrelevance.

In the meantime, the United Nations faces the challenge of continuing to be the primary forum for global multilateralism, the backbone of the system for coordinating and attempting to resolve global issues such as peace and security, development and human rights. According to the famous statement by Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General from 1953 to 1961, "The UN was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell", to which our ever-optimistic Don Quixote would have added: "Even among demons, some are worse than others, and among many bad men there are usually some good ones".

Since 1956,  
thousands of blue  
helmets have  
participated in  
UN peacekeeping  
missions across  
the globe

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LIEUTENANT COLONEL RAFAEL ICHASO FRANCO, HEAD OF THE STINGA DETACHMENT

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# “WE PROTECTED ALLIED AIRSPACE IN ICELAND”

“The detachment’s airmen demonstrated their operational capabilities and trained in adverse and changing weather conditions”

**T**HE Stinga detachment represented a historic milestone for Spain, as it was the first Spanish unit to deploy and operate in Iceland. For nearly four weeks—from 22 July to 16 August 2025—six F-18 aircraft from the 15th Wing in Zaragoza, supported by a crew of over 120 troops from as many as eleven different Spanish Air and Space Force units, were in charge of ensuring the integrity of NATO airspace on the northern flank and, where necessary, reacting swiftly to preserve the security of Allied territory and population.

LTC Rafael Ichaso Franco led the Spanish contingent. He is a highly experienced pilot who has participated in operations in the Balkans and was on his second NATO Air Policing mission in Iceland. He emphasised that the outcome was very positive, largely thanks to the fact that the Stinga detachment (‘sting’ in Icelandic) worked “as a close-knit team, fully focused on accomplishing the mission”.

**—Why did NATO deploy a detachment to Iceland?**

—NATO’s steadfast commitment is to support and protect all member countries, in particular those with very small or no armed forces at all. This is the case of Iceland, where NATO deploys aircraft for limited periods of time—roughly three weeks in this case—to provide air policing

services and thus protect our northern flank, crucial for all Allies.

**—This was the first time a Spanish detachment was deployed in Iceland. What are the reasons behind this commitment?**

—We deployed in a gap that needed to be filled. As a result, the Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) requested the collaboration of all member countries, and Spain took a firm step forward to fill this gap. The AIRCOM Chief of Staff, German General Graefe, visited the detachment with the second in command of the Spanish Air Force’s Air Combat Command, and emphasised his appreciation of Spain’s flexibility and swift response in resolving a NATO issue, which demonstrate its unwavering and proven commitment to collective security.

**For the first time, six F-18s from the 15th Wing and over 120 troops were deployed in the Nordic country**

**—In terms of operational demand, how challenging was this deployment in Iceland for your unit?**

—It was undoubtedly very demanding because we had to provide air policing services on a permanent basis. We ensured this with two F-18 aircraft on constant alert and with our interception controllers from the NATO Control and Reporting Centre (CRC) Loki, located at naval air station Keflavik, as the Icelanders do not have this capability.

We also had four other aircraft in reserve, which allowed us to enhance deterrence and maintain crew training during our deployments, essential for us. All in all, this mission provided us with a unique scenario. In Iceland, we provided security for Allied airspace, as well as training on shore and water in adverse and changing weather conditions.

**—What does this mission represent for Spain, for the 15th Wing, and for the airmen in the detachment?**

—First of all, Spain’s commitment to NATO has been demonstrated once again, as Spain has not only deployed in Iceland but is also present in many other NATO countries, mainly on the eastern flank, as well as in Iraq. The Spanish Air and Space Force had to redouble its efforts for this mission due to the fact that we were deployed simultaneously in Lithuania with the





EMAD

11th Wing in the Vilkas detachment. On the other hand, for the 15th Wing, as well as for the rest of the units that went to Iceland, it was a huge challenge and a great responsibility. Despite the limited time we had to organise and prepare, our collective efforts yielded the expected results, and the final outcome was very positive.

I would also like to emphasise that all of us forming part of the Stinga detachment are particularly proud of our mission in Iceland. We come from different units distributed all over Spain, and this entailed certain difficulties, especially when it came to planning and coordinating the mission, as most of the meetings were via email or VTC.

However, thanks to the professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm of my airmen, it was very easy to work as a cohesive team fully focused on accomplishing the mission.

**—In this first Spanish deployment on Icelandic soil, what was the relationship with the host nation like?**

—We were made to feel extremely welcome from the start, also because Icelanders are very familiar with Spain and virtually everyone we spoke to had visited our country at some point. They helped us with whatever we needed, although it is true that we did a lot to earn their appreciation. In fact, we shared a paella every Friday with the Icelandic military personnel and other nationalities stationed at this air base, and, as we already know, sharing paellas fosters great bonds of friendship. A member of the Icelandic Coast Guard told us that, in just four weeks, we had created more of a team spirit than all the previous detachments in several years.

On the other hand, they also remarked on our seriousness and professionalism at work, both in the air and on the ground and acknowledged that they learned from our working methods, including during emergency drills.

**—What did you take away with you from this Icelandic mission?**

—I am sure that, with time, I will be even more aware of the honour and responsibility of having been the head of this detachment. Right now, I can only express my gratitude to the Air and Space Force for entrusting me with this responsibility, as well as for the support they constantly provided to us from Spain, both the Spanish Air and Space Force and the Operations Command. This ongoing support was essential, and we are all grateful for it.

On a more personal level, this mission was a huge challenge and extremely intense because as we were just beginning the QRA (Quick Reaction Alert) service we were already planning the withdrawal. However, it was also an excellent opportunity to test the operational readiness and preparedness of the 15th Wing, which proved to be up to the task. However, after a second summer in a row away from my family, I was eager to get back to them. Ultimately, it is not only the effort on the part of the soldiers who deploy, but also the sacrifice made by our families, and we are deeply grateful to them for their love and support.

EMAD

# TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST IN EUROPE

Delegates from 24 OSCE countries visit Gando air base  
and the 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade 'Canarias'



During the visit of the OSCE delegates to the 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade 'Canarias', they were briefed on the new VCZ Castor armoured engineering vehicles,

**D**ELEGATES from 24 participating States of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) visited Gando air base and the 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade 'Canarias' in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, where they were able to gain first-hand insight into the operational capabilities and performance of these units' cutting-edge weapon systems. This event, held from 10 to 14 November 2025 and framed within the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence and Security Building Measures in Europe, was also attended by a representative of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre.

Every five years, the participating States of this organisation are required to host an event of this kind, where each nation opens the doors of an air base with a combat unit and an army military installation to showcase some of the weapon systems and materiel that have recently been acquired for its armed forces. The

VCZ Castor armoured engineering vehicle was featured on this occasion. The last event in Spain was held in Zaragoza in 2021, a year later than originally scheduled due to the pandemic.

"Everything is focused on promoting transparency and trust among the countries that have signed the Document", said Colonel Carlos Armada, head of the Spanish Verification Unit (UVE), who was in charge of organising and coordinating this triple event and accompanying the group of international representatives who attended. "Our understanding is that by visiting an air base and a military unit, observing the activities carried out there, being given the chance to speak directly with the troops and commanders about their daily activities and sorties, and seeing the weapon systems available, visitors can get an overall picture of the unit's working capacity and mission".

This was the first visit to Gando air base under the Vienna Document. "It took

a lot more effort due to the difficulty of getting to Gran Canaria, but we felt it was important to go there because this archipelago is part of Spain and NATO".

"In fact, the delegates were delighted with the visit," Colonel Armada said. It was planned down to the last detail and the OSCE delegates were able to see everything. "And the soldiers' attitude was fantastic, demonstrating a high degree of discipline, military capability and training, which proved our capacity to carry out the missions assigned to us. This visit was a great opportunity for the delegates to get to know our Armed Forces", he continued.

The event included activities that went beyond what was established in the Vienna Document, such as the deployment of a company-size task group. "This is not something that is typically done, and the foreign delegates really liked it. We first showed them a model and explained how the movements were going to be carried



out —leapfrogging, coordination lines, breaching—, and then they saw them in action on the ground. This gave them an excellent idea of what an infantry brigade is like,” explained Colonel Armada.

The delegates also visited Las Palmas naval base. “While the Marine Corps is included in the Vienna Document, the Spanish Navy, in terms of the fleet, is not. Even so, they welcomed us and showed us the museum, a landing assault ship and the diving unit,” the head of the UVE explained.

persons, those in charge of stating at the end of each day, on behalf of everyone, whether the visit complied with the provisions of the Vienna Document. The head of the Croatian delegation, Ms. Svjetiana Simicic (a civilian), and Portuguese Colonel Jorge Manuel Fernandes Correia, were chosen for this task. “After all, this is a kind of evaluation and they assured us every day that everything was fine. They praised us a lot, and some delegates directly told us that they were very satisfied with the hospitality and, of course, with

those installations, home to the 46th Wing. Currently, this wing consists of the 46th Group, responsible for the archipelago’s air defence, and the 82nd Group, whose primary mission is the search and rescue of aircraft involved in accidents within its area of responsibility.

The OSCE representatives met the flight squadrons and attended a static exhibition featuring F-18s and CN235 ‘Vigma’ maritime surveillance aircraft, as well as Super Puma helicopters, and watched the take-off of fighter jets and a search



Nieves Torrecillas



Juan Manuel Quintana

the unit’s unmanned aerial vehicles and its capabilities in the fight against IEDs, and attended a demonstration of the military working dogs.

## TWO UNITS FROM THE CANARY ISLANDS

These visits, known as DV11 Events, were attended by delegates from Albania, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Upon their arrival they attended an inaugural lecture on the Spanish Armed Forces, delivered by the head of the Strategy Division, Vice Admiral Saturnino Suñez, on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff. The Deputy Director General for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Carlos Aragón, also participated in this session. “The involvement of our military leaders in this triple event should be highlighted”, said the head of the UVE.

After the official opening, the foreign delegates met to choose their spokes-

the professional side of things”, said Colonel Armada.

The first visit was to Gando air base, which began with a lecture by the head of the Canary Islands Air Command, Major General Javier Vidal, on the missions and capabilities of the Spanish Air and Space Force. After that, the base commander, Colonel Bayardo Abós, briefed them on what they were going to see at

**The activities of the event held in the Canary Islands fall within the parameters of the Vienna Document 2011**

and rescue demonstration from helicopters. They also got the chance to talk to the officers, NCOs and enlisted personnel, including those from the service support and logistics units, and to see the primary types of weaponry and equipment in use, as well as their simulators.

The following day, the delegates visited the 16th Brigade ‘Canarias’. One of the main activities there was the presentation of the VCZ Castor armoured engineering vehicles, incorporated into the Spanish Armed Forces throughout the past year and 100% Spanish in design and manufacture.

This infantry brigade displayed its capabilities in the fight against improvised explosive devices and its unmanned aerial vehicles. It conducted a demonstration of its military working dogs, showcased the capabilities and assets of the Air Defence Unit of the 94th Air Defence Artillery Regiment, and performed a precision fire exercise.

## ARMED FORCES



Nieves Torrecillas

The delegates attended a demonstration of the Super Puma helicopters of the 802<sup>th</sup> Squadron, which carry out search and rescue (SAR) missions.

This brigade has been deployed in a variety of locations, including the Sahara, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Mali, Lebanon, and Iraq. It has taken part in operations on national territory, including Operation Balmis and Mission Baluarte during the pandemic, fire prevention, evacuation and shelter operations for those affected by the volcano eruption on the island of La Palma, and assistance to the flood victims in Valencia.

Once again, the delegates spoke extensively with the personnel stationed there, asking them freely about anything concerning the unit.

Before visiting the brigade's installations, the head of the Canary Islands Command, Lieutenant General Julio Salom, briefed the OSCE representatives on the Spanish Army, while Colonel Alberto Cherino, the brigade's acting commander, gave them an overview on the situation, history, evolution, structure, operational organisation, missions, capabilities, assets and armament of the brigade.

After their visits to the two units, the foreign delegates, along with members of the UVE, drafted a final report with the results of the evaluations for subsequent submission to the OSCE and NATO.

### ORGANISATION

A triple event like the one in Gran Canaria requires months of preparation. The units

to be included are chosen by the UVE, making sure that OSCE representatives have not visited them before. "In order to satisfy the delegates, we try to ensure that they are cutting-edge units", pointed out Colonel Armada. "To this end, UVE personnel visited the designated units in advance to check that they met the requirements of the Vienna Document and to coordinate the visit with them so that

there would be staff available and no major exercises scheduled on the days that we went there with the delegates. In short, to make sure they would be operational", he added.

When planning a DV11 event, the verification units make sure it does not coincide with another event with similar characteristics in another country and that they are at least one week apart. Several activities of this type are carried out throughout the year and, in fact, during the month of November, in addition to the one held in the Canary Islands, similar events took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Denmark.

"I think the work we are doing is very important", said Ragnhild Valle Hustad of the Norwegian Verification Unit. "It is especially important now, with the war in Ukraine, that OSCE countries continue to carry out activities that promote cooperation and show their units with complete transparency. This is what Spain has done". Portuguese Colonel Jorge Manuel Fernandes Correia shared this view and added that, after visiting Gando air base and the installations of the 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade 'Canarias', "it is evident that it is very well equipped". "The event has been a success and the delegates have acknowledged it as such", concluded Colonel Carlos Armada with satisfaction.

**Elena Tarilonte**



Nieves Torrecillas

At Gando air base, the delegates were able to see the flight squadrons of the 46<sup>th</sup> Wing and their assets. The image shows a static exhibition of one of the unit's F-18 fighter jets.



# Arms control: more necessary than ever



**Colonel Carlos Armada**  
Head of the Spanish Verification Unit

**T**HE fall of the Berlin Wall marked the recent origin of arms control in Europe. At that time, countries felt the need to create something that would allow them to control and reduce the conventional weapons accumulated in central Europe during the Cold War. There were a great deal of them, and they were very dangerous. That was when the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty came into being. These agreements were there for a reason and were valid at the time. In fact, Europe has enjoyed 30 years of peace and trust, and the planned 30% arms reduction was accomplished.

Over the years, some Warsaw Pact countries joined NATO, resulting in an imbalance of power. Russia, for its part, maintained its military forces in some former Warsaw Pact countries, thus undermining the basis of trust. As a result, the CFE Treaty entered into crisis, first with the suspension by Russia of the treaty in 2007, followed by its formal withdrawal in 2023, the year after it invaded Ukraine. This led to the suspension of the treaty by most of the other signatory countries. Two major countries even withdrew from the Open Skies Treaty: the United States in 2020 and Russia in 2021. Although this has obviously weakened the treaty, it is still in force.

With the invasion of Ukraine, all that trust has been called into question, and we are now seeing the resurgence of those blocs that had once disappeared. All countries feel the need to strengthen their armed forces, NATO members have increased their defence budgets, and both Ukraine and Russia are trying to scale up their armed forces to cope with the war.

At this point, arms control is more necessary than ever. If such control made sense in the 1990s due to the proliferation of weapons, the current climate of insecurity and mistrust render a forum for dialogue indispensable in order to curb the situation.

Once the conflict in Ukraine is over, peace agreements will most likely be signed at the political level, which should include measures to monitor compliance with what has been negotiated. Subsequently, inspections and arms control in the countries directly involved will surely resume. It should be noted that these activities (Vienna Document, Open Skies, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Dayton Agreement, etc.) have not ceased in other countries.

We in the Verification Units are aware that, although arms control never stops, we must adapt to new scenarios. That is why we are already getting ready. We try to learn about the new weapon systems that will have to be included in the catalogues to be inspected; we are being trained in the use of drones, which are excellent vehicles for carrying a camera, verification, reconnaissance or whatever else is necessary. Languages, primarily Russian and English, are a priority in our training.

At the UVE, we are also willing to provide technical guidance to those responsible for rewriting the new treaties that will arise based on the current ones. We have enough experience to know which measures work and which should be eliminated. We can definitely assist in turning these treaties into a useful tool.

We want Spain to lead the group of nations submitting proposals for future Treaties. For example, we are aware that the procedure set out by the CFE Treaty was most appropriate and legally binding, but we want to move forward. Given the current state of affairs in Europe after the war in Ukraine, increasing the necessary controls of weapons, military units and ammunition depots will be crucial. There has been a great deal of movement of arms worldwide, and hence it is vital to identify and classify the weapon systems currently present in the OSCE area. We need to go beyond routine verifications, we need to be capable of advising on physical security and controls of small arms, light weapons and ammunition in munition depots. All this can be done once the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has ended and the necessary security conditions have been established. And, of course, there must be a political mandate to do so.

The idea shared by all the Verification Units in Europe is to be prepared to help Ukraine reorganise and secure its ammunition depots and, as far as possible, assist with the control of light weapons.

This field of work is leading the UVE to become more specialised. We are also leaving the door open to providing advice on the demilitarisation of ammunition, i.e. rendering dangerous ammunition inactive before it is destroyed. This is a complicated field, albeit necessary, especially for the security of the civilian population. There are professionals in our Armed Forces who know how to do this and we could work alongside them. In any case, the UVE is already providing advice to some countries, including Ukraine, Jordan and Moldova, and we have extended this offer to other Latin American and Maghreb nations. In particular, we are helping to improve the physical security of ammunition depots and munition handling.

Through this effort, Spain places its uniform and its flag at the service of international aid on the ground. This is an important part of closing the circle of political will, military organisation and technical capacity that is implemented on the ground. This circle closes with the UVE, and we are willing to take on the arms and ammunition control missions assigned to us and verify the treaties in force.

Something new is on the horizon and we need to be prepared to contribute to the establishment of a security framework in Europe that will ensure at least another 30 years of peace.



SpaceX

The satellite successfully lifts off from Cape Canaveral aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

# SPAINSAT NG II CROSSES SPACE

Together with its twin satellite, launched last January, the SpainSat NG II will provide secure communications to the Spanish Armed Forces, the European Union and NATO

**T**HREE, two, one... ignition! The launch took place at 3:30 UTC (5:30 a.m. in mainland Spain) on 24 October 2025 at Space Launch Complex 40 (SLC-40), at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. The countdown gave way to an intense glow that lit up the night, while the Falcon 9 rocket began its ascent amid thick smoke.

After 34 minutes and at an altitude of about 4,000 kilometres, the SpainSat NG II detached from the rocket and began its solo journey. The second new-generation secure communications satellite built in

Spain had overcome the most critical and risky moments of a space mission: liftoff and the first seconds of ascent.

Ahead of it lay a five-month journey until it would start to operate like its twin satellite, which was launched on 30 January 2025 and has been operational since last August. This constellation thus completes the SpainSat New Generation programme, considered the most ambitious space project in Spain's history. Once operational, it will cover two-thirds of the planet from the United States and South America to the Middle East, Africa, Europe and Singapore, ensuring secure communications for the

Armed Forces and Allied nations for more than 15 years.

An official delegation travelled from Spain to Cape Canaveral with representatives from the Spanish Ministries of Defence, Industry, Science, Innovation and Universities; the Spanish Space Agency; the Armed Forces; Hisdesat — the satellite's owner and operator —; and several Spanish aerospace companies that have contributed significantly to the satellite's development and construction — more than 45% of its industrial load —.

The second SpainSat NG was shipped to Florida in September after being assembled,



## INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

integrated, and validated at Airbus Defence and Space facilities —the programme's main contractor— in Toulouse (France). The Secretary of State for Defence (SEDEF), Amparo Valcarce, visited the facilities on 4 July 2025 to gain first-hand insight into the satellite's final tests. In her own words, "the space race means to Spain, above all, progress in peace, security, prosperity and well-being, since the services provided by satellite systems reinforce strategic autonomy and are indispensable for our daily lives, thus making the space sector a first-rate socio-economic asset".

Valcarce stressed that this programme, far beyond its military use, will also have "civilian applications, such as the protection of critical installations and infrastructures, national security and emergencies". Similarly, as explained by the SEDEF, the programme, with an investment on the part of the Spanish Ministry of Defence of nearly €1.4 billion, also has economic and commercial objectives, has clearly contributed to job creation, and has involved the participation of over 150 space industry companies, all led by Airbus Defence and Space and Thales Alenia Space.

Approximately seven metres high, 2.7 metres wide and weighing six tonnes, the SpainSat NG-II spacecraft features cutting-edge dual military and civilian technology, including an innovative X-band active receive and transmit antenna system. It provides the equivalent functionality of 16 traditional antennas thanks to its navigation systems and its electronic configuration, the latter allowing coverage to be adjusted in real time and with extreme precision. In addition, the active antenna system can eliminate and geolocate jamming attempts with high accuracy and is reinforced to protect against possible nuclear electromagnetic pulses in orbit.

The SpainSat NGs will jointly serve the Spanish Armed Forces, the Atlantic Alliance and third countries that have expressed interest in using their capabilities. They will also form part of the European Commission's Government Satellite Communications (GOVSATCOM) programme.

Once they are fully operational —in February 2026, according to Hisdesat's schedule—, the two satellites will have successfully replaced the current SpainSats —in orbit since 2006— and the Xtar-EUR —launched in 2005—, which will then be



Airbus

An artist's rendering of the two SpainSat NG satellites in orbit.

transferred to the graveyard orbit, where satellites are sent when they reach the end of their useful life, to free up space and avoid collisions with other space platforms.

The Ministry of Defence's communications were formally transferred from the Xtar-EUR to the SpainSat NG I on 11 September 2025. The first communications transferred were those of the Air and Space Force de-

tachment in Djibouti, as well as those of frigate Navarra, which was sailing in the Indian Ocean as part of operation Atalanta.

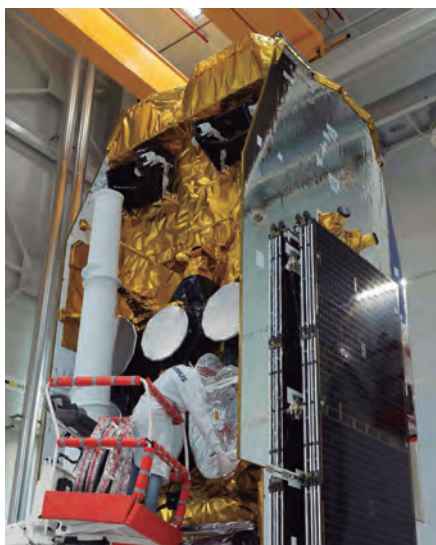
The SpainSat NG I is located in a geosynchronous orbit at 30°W, while the NG II is located at 29°E, thus ensuring 70% coverage of the Earth.

Technicians at the Airbus control centre in Toulouse will continue to monitor the second satellite until it reaches its final orbit next spring. Hisdesat's Satellite Control and Operation Centre, located in Hoyo de Manzanares, 37 kilometres away from Madrid, where hundreds of people gathered to witness the satellite's launch on 24 October 2025, will then take over.

This centre was inaugurated at the end of November 2024 and has been in charge of the NG I ever since its entry into service. It has a similar alternative centre located on the island of Gran Canaria, specifically at the Maspalomas Space Station facilities of the National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA).

While the NG II is heading towards its final destination, the satellite operator is already considering the possibility of building the SpainSat NG III to provide secure communications across virtually the entire planet.

**Victor Hernández**



Airbus

The NG II undergoes its final tests in the white room of Airbus before its transfer to Florida.

Critical infrastructures are now essential to security and, even more so, a target for attacks meant to undermine trust and stability

# Geopolitics of energy resources for defence

**Dr. Natividad Carpintero Santamaría**

Professor, Research Fellow, Polytechnic University of Madrid  
Secretary General of EuroDefense-Spain

**C**RITICAL infrastructures are basically essential services provided by a state through interconnected facilities for the defence, energy, transport, health, finance, water, space, administration, information technologies, chemical, food and research sectors, whose power supply must be secured as it is the basis for ensuring a country's social and economic stability. Critical infrastructures have no viable alternatives and the interruption of one can affect the others. Energy security makes it possible to predict a future that guarantees that a prospective power outage will not seriously endanger a country or even threaten its sovereignty. Energy is a vital, strategic and fundamental element for the growth and security of society and for the well-being of the population.

Given the asymmetrical global distribution of energy resources, their strong geostrategic component, competing interests, and today's high demand for energy supply, controlling and guaranteeing these resources becomes a top priority. More recently, on 28 April 2025, the major blackout experienced by Spain, Portugal, Andorra and parts of southern France led the Spanish government to declare a state of emergency in several autonomous regions.

The security of energy supply is a dynamic concept based on four general principles, the 4 As: availability, affordability, accessibility and acceptability. These principles are more relevant than ever in the 21st century because of the unprecedented need for energy, which has become one of the top priorities for global security, from both an integrated and multifaceted standpoint, due to the variety of factors involved: geopolitics (instability, conflicts or risks of conflict), natural hazards, cyberattacks, strategic terrorism and economic interests linked to organised crime.

### THE GEOPOLITICAL FACTOR

Most countries in the world are dependent on external energy sources. The European Union has no common energy policy, and

**Energy security makes it possible to predict a future that guarantees that a prospective power outage will not seriously endanger a country**





therefore, each member country has unique features based on its own endogenous energy sources: coal, nuclear, hydroelectric, gas, etc. Oil is still the most important energy source for EU countries, while gas is the second most necessary source. The current state of the energy market has led to a scenario where it is vital not only to strengthen today's energy sources, but also to enhance the search for, exploration and exploitation of alternative energy sources.

No oil or gas export/import system can be considered completely secure: technical failures, natural disasters, wars, terrorism and theft are an intrinsic part of them. Oil supply is linked to an asymmetrical geographical distribution of reserves, price fluctuations, political instability in exporting countries, cyberattacks and economic embargoes, all of which are key factors when considering the great geopolitical importance surrounding this market. On top of this are the transportation routes, which are extremely scarce, complex, and dangerous. Most of them are concentrated in geographical bottlenecks, often leading them to become a direct casus belli. If we bear in mind that critical infrastructures are essential services provided by a state through facilities, systems and networks to ensure social and economic stability, security and defence, and industrial development, it is easy to view the Middle East

and the Persian Gulf as a massive critical infrastructure in the thick of a struggle for hegemony over their control. More than 30% of the crude oil exported to Western economies and more than 30% of the crude oil that powers Asian economies is transported through the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Conflicts in the Middle East are currently escalating at an unprecedented rate, as there has never been more instability than in 2025. The existential conflict between Iran and Israel, the uncertainty in Syria and Lebanon, the unstable balance in Jordan throughout the entire conflict, Israel's war against Gaza, the war in Yemen, and the presence of terrorist groups have led to an increase in logistics centres and military coalition bases. This represents a major geopolitical conflict that causes continuous fluctuations in crude oil prices and could have irreversible effects on international peace.

#### **NATO'S ENERGY SECURITY**

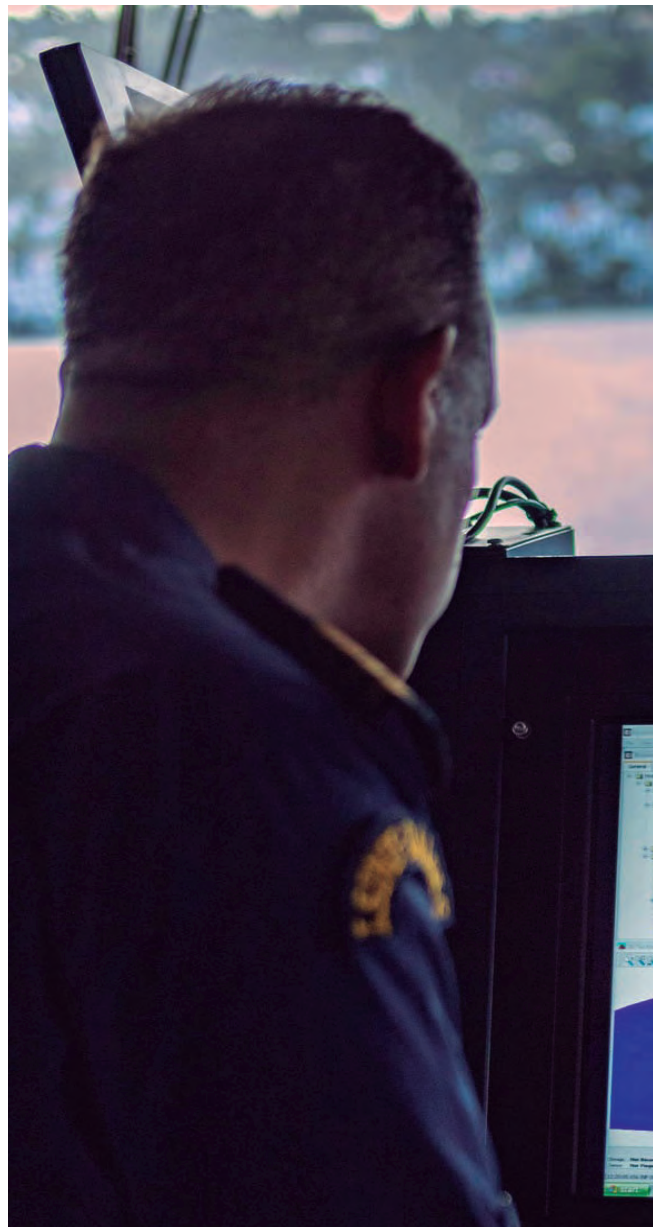
NATO's structures and procedures in the energy domain are both tactically and operationally focused and primarily fuel-based. The spectrum of DOTMLPFI (Doctrine, Organisation, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Interoperability) seeks to identify the analytical tools required to address the whole of NATO's needs.

The Petroleum Planning Committee was established in 1952 to be as best prepared as possible in the event of an oil shortage and to ensure its continuous supply for civil and military purposes in times of crisis and war. In 1956, after the Sinai War —a very brief but extremely important war—, the Alliance strengthened the functions of this committee. The conflict originated with the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company by Egyptian President Gamal Nasser on 26 July 1956. The company was French and British-owned and its usufruct was in the hands of European shareholders. On 29 October 1956, Israeli forces occupied the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, two territories that had been under Egyptian control and administration since the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The Sinai Peninsula was subsequently returned to Egypt. However, it continues to be a militarised area and a constant source of geopolitical conflict, inasmuch as the Canal is one of the key routes for international maritime transport and is paramount for the supply of oil and other commercial goods to Europe.

Several accidents have occurred in its waters thus far. One of them took place on 23 March 2021, when the massive container ship *Ever Given*, which was sailing from Asia to Rotterdam, struck the right bank of the Suez Canal, running aground and remaining stranded for six days, blocking the passage of other merchant ships and oil tankers. This resulted in millions of dollars in cargo losses and considerable delays in the supply of goods at a time when the period of the post-COVID-19 pandemic was beginning and the supply of commodities was particularly urgent.

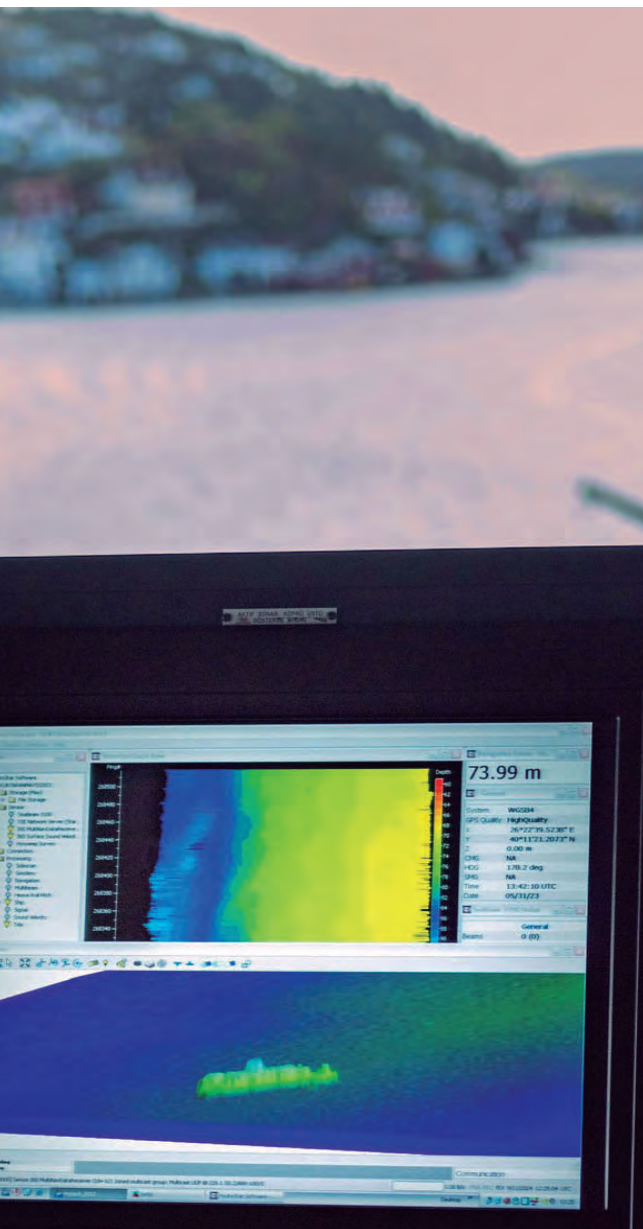
In the event of war, critical energy infrastructures are a potential target for any adversary due to their vital importance. Some sources claim that on 18 September 2025, Ukrainian special operations units used drones to strike the Russian Novoil refinery of Bashneft-Neftekim in the Republic of Bashkortostan, which is the Russian Armed Forces' largest supplier for combat operations. From a strategic point of view, an attack on an oil refinery causes far more damage than an attack on an oil pipeline, which, in principle, would only cause a temporary supply disruption. In the event of an attack on a refinery, the production of its petrochemical plants, petrol, diesel, lubricating oils, kerosene, asphalt for paving, etc., would be suspended, which would lead to multiple attack vectors, such as the interruption of the supply of liquid fuels on the battlefield.

## Attacks on submarine infrastructure have increased exponentially in recent years



With almost 10,000 km of pipelines spread across twelve NATO countries, the Central Europe Pipeline System (CEPS) established by NATO is its most significant logistics system. The CEPS runs through Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, known as the host countries, and also supplies fuel for aircraft at the civil airports of Brussels, Luxembourg, Schiphol and Zurich.





Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, NATO has identified the need to expand its fuel supply logistics infrastructure. It therefore plans to build the Eastern European Pipeline System (EEPS) by 2035, joining the current CEPS and thus strengthening the western flank, as it should be noted that, according to official data, the air force uses 85% of the fuel supply and, in a high-

intensity conflict, tank cars and water supply bowlers would have to be deployed.

### ENERGY DIGITISATION

Threats to maritime security are critical, since the sabotage of submarine fibre optic cables poses a major challenge as these cables carry and transmit virtually 99% of worldwide data over a global network and are crucial to both civil and military energy security because they connect energy infrastructures and support marine renewable energy. Submarine cable services are so critical that they can increase one nation's geopolitical influence over another, as they can be used to exert pressure, including rerouting data traffic to self-serving networks. Critical submarine infrastructures such as gas and oil pipelines are also at risk of attack or direct sabotage.

The most well-known recent event occurred on 26 September 2022, when the Russian Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines, which were run by Gazprom and transported Russian gas to Germany over the Baltic Sea, exploded. It was confirmed that this was a deliberate attack or sabotage.

Attacks on submarine infrastructures have increased exponentially as a result of international piracy, human trafficking and organised crime; however, the proliferation of Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs), capable of navigating without the direct control of a human operator, has also contributed to this insecurity.

### CONCLUSIONS

Considering that the world's interconnected living systems depend so heavily on a secure supply of electricity, energy security, energy resilience, conservation, and energy efficiency need to be reinforced more than ever. On the other hand, increased interconnectivity and access to operational technology also generates countless attack vectors. As the world increasingly benefits from and depends on new Internet technologies, infrastructures become more vulnerable. Final energy demand by 2050 will be dominated by the industrial and transport sectors, with oil, gas and coal playing an important role as energy sources.

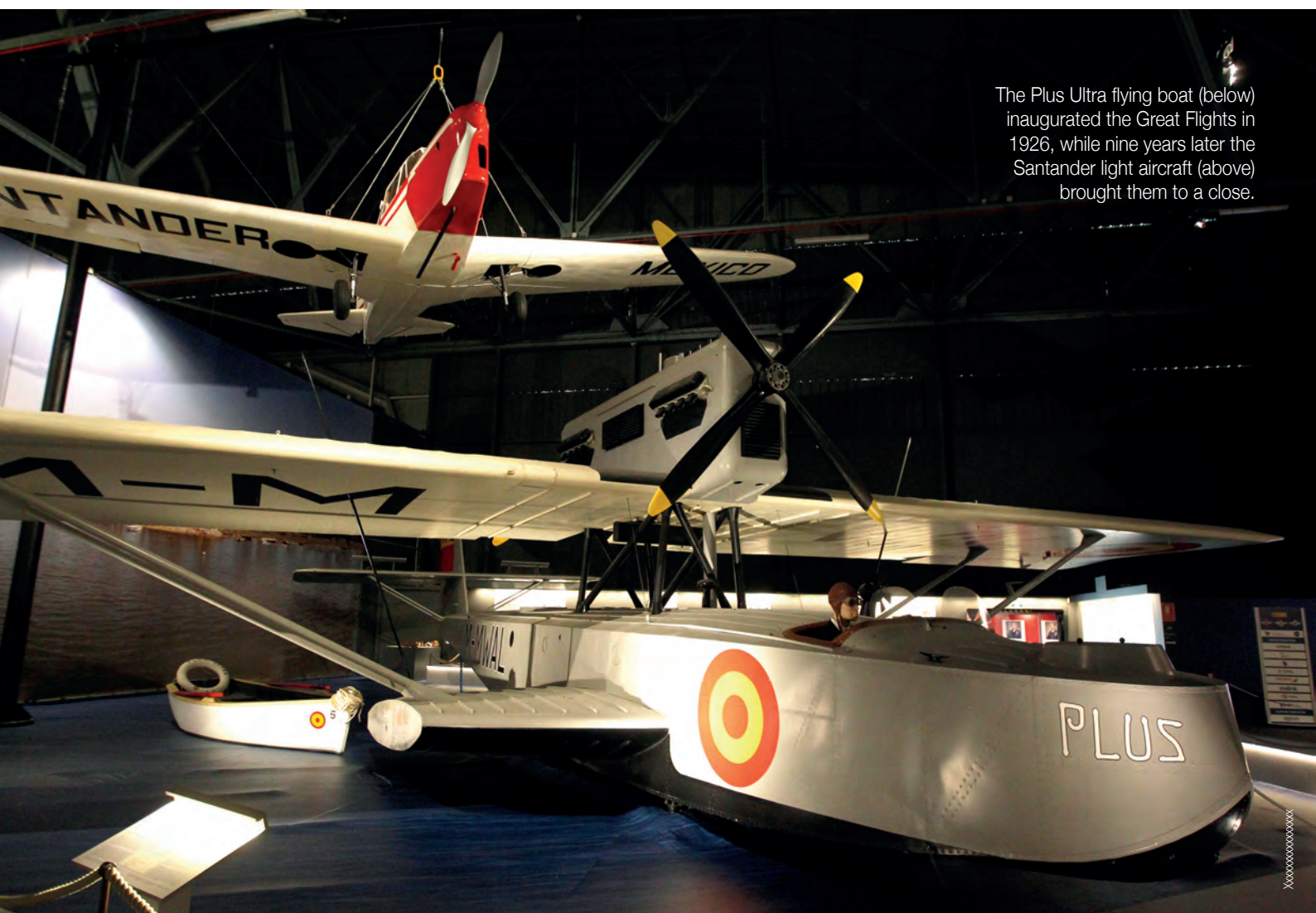
Investment in renewable energies is essential in a highly competitive digital market, in which environmental sustainability plays a key role. Finally, we must not forget that modern battlefields are interconnected, interrelated and highly dependent on the host nations' energy and communications infrastructure.

As a result, the defence against the coercive use of energy and other hybrid tactics should generate the highest level of resilience in order to defend ourselves against numerous potential attack vectors from which an adversary could disrupt the flow of liquid fuels or the availability of energy at critical times.



# PIONEERING FEATS AND RECORDS

Madrid's Air Museum hosts the official presentation  
of the Centenary of the Great Flights of  
Spanish Aviation (1926-1935)



The Plus Ultra flying boat (below)  
inaugurated the Great Flights in  
1926, while nine years later the  
Santander light aircraft (above)  
brought them to a close.





General José Luis Figuero, head of SHYCEA, was in charge of announcing the commemoration of the raids during a ceremony that featured an air show with four historical aircraft: three Bückers and a Comper Swift like the one used in the 1933 flight from Getafe to Manila.

**T**HE commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Great Flights of Spanish Aviation (1926–1935) took off with the same enthusiasm and determination that led pilots, aircrews, logistics, industry, etc., to fly “higher, further, and faster” to show the world the professionalism, resources and capability of Spanish aviation at that time.

The opening ceremony was held on 25 September 2025 at the Museum of Aeronautics and Astronautics in Madrid –also called the Air Museum– located at Cuatro Vientos air base. Major General José Luis Figuero, head of the Spanish Air and Space Force’s Historical and Cultural Service (SHYCEA), introduced the event, expressing his admiration for what had been accomplished and his resolute goal to disseminate these feats.

He pointed out that there were many projects back then, not all of which came to fruition or were successful, and that this type of flight, generally of a sporting nature, had its

heyday internationally after the First World War (1914–1918).

Due to Spain’s involvement in the North African wars of the early decades of the 20th century, Spanish aviation had to wait to take off.

#### MUCH MORE THAN JUST A SPORT

The Spanish raid aircraft following the Al Hoceima landing in 1925 also served other purposes, including gaining international recognition and enhancing relations with the former

overseas territories. Furthermore, the aim was always to demonstrate the professionalism, courage and scientific and technical expertise of those involved in each flight.

“Pilots were the main protagonists, but they were not alone. They actually flew without a radio on some of those aircraft to be able to travel with a mechanic”, said General Figuero.

He also stressed that these challenges enjoyed the support of Spain’s nascent aviation industry, including companies such as aviation pioneer CASA and engine manufacturer Hispano Suiza.

#### NEW ROUTES

These achievements earned the airmen the recognition they sought and the success they deserved, although much has faded with time.

Some of the technological developments in the wake of those flights were equally successful, paving the way for what was to come, like the air routes that are so ubiquitous today. The commemoration, which aims to capture

**Pilots and aircrews showed great courage, and the nascent Spanish aviation industry toiled to help them achieve their goals**



all of this history, is already taking place, and the centenary of the Plus Ultra's pioneer flight —from Palos de la Frontera (Huelva) to Buenos Aires (Argentina)— will be celebrated in January 2026.

An exhibition has already been organised in Huelva which, with just a few changes, will be travelling to other locations related to the commemoration.

Additionally, a committee has been set up to monitor activities and launch new projects, as the Spanish Air and Space Force also wishes to open up this celebration to the various sectors it is associated with, such as aviation, science, history, industry, etc.

Another goal is to visit cities that were important in the routes covered back then, such as Madrid, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Melilla and Seville.

#### CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

An international conference on Great Flights was held from 14 to 16 October 2025 at the famous Real Alcázar in Seville, set in the era of these events and featuring a dozen presentations by military and civilian experts in this field.

The palace also welcomed the commemorative exhibition that made its debut in Palos de la Frontera, albeit with some modifications.

A new venue is scheduled to take place next year in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria to commemorate the Plus Ultra flight, as the flying boat made a stopover there before venturing into the Atlantic sky.

In addition to the exhibition, SHYCEA plans to feature the ASPA Air and Space Force helicopter aerobatic team and host musical evenings and conferences. The possibility of the aforementioned unit, as well as the flying boat piloted by Commander Ramón Franco, travelling to Buenos Aires, is also being considered. Another project that could take shape is a meeting to highlight the technological developments that made great

# «HIGHER, FURT

From 1926 to 1935, Spanish airmen completed a number of flights demonstrated their professionalism as well as the capabilities



#### > PLUS ULTRA Palos de la Frontera - Buenos Aires

January-February 1926

In a Dornier Wal flying boat, the crew, consisting of Commander R. Franco, Captain J. Ruiz de Alda, and Lieutenant J.M. Durán, performed the first major Spanish transatlantic flight and one of the first intercontinental flights in the world.



#### > ELCANO PATROL Madrid - Manila

April-May 1926

From Cuatro Vientos airfield (Madrid), powered by 450 hp Lorraine engines, three Breguet 19 aircraft set course for the Philippines. The one piloted by Captain González-Gallardo reached its destination to strengthen ties with a territory that had once been part of the Spanish overseas empire.



#### > HAYA AND RODRÍGUEZ Seville - Spanish Guinea

December 1931

Aboard a Breguet 19 Gran Raid, the Jesús del Gran Poder, military pilots Rodríguez and Haya took off from Tablada airfield (Seville) bound for the Sahara Desert with the aim of reaching Bata (Spanish Guinea). They covered 4,312 kilometres in 27 hours and 11 minutes.



#### > CIUDAD DE MANILA Getafe - Philippines

March 1933

Rein Loring, a civilian pilot, took off from Getafe airfield (Madrid) in a Comper Swift single-seat aircraft bound for Manila (Philippines). After landing in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan, India, Cambodia, Vietnam and southern China, he reached his destination.



# HER, FASTER»

that made history and earned them international recognition. They and resources of Spanish aviation, and gave wings to the future



## > ATLÁNTIDA PATROL Melilla - Guinea

December 1926

Three Dornier Wal flying boats, commanded by Rafael Llorente, set off for Guinea with a threefold purpose: military, political and scientific. The journey ranks among the great feats of flying in formation and is also renowned for the outstanding logistics and engineering applied during the flight.



## > JESÚS DEL GRAN PODER Seville - Ibero-America

March 1929

This aircraft, one of the Breguet 19 Gran Raid variants, manufactured by the pioneering Spanish aviation company CASA, took off from Tablada airfield in Seville to make history. In 43 hours and 50 minutes, it landed in Camassary (Brazil) and later visited several Spanish American capitals.



## > CUATRO VIENTOS Seville - Cuba

June 1933

Adjusted for the flight, this Breguet 19 Gran Raid, led by military airmen Barberán and Collar, took off on 10 June 1933 from Tablada airfield bound for Havana. It arrived at its destination 7,895 km and 39 hours and 55 minutes later, but then disappeared without a trace on its way to Mexico.



## > SANTANDER Santander - Mexico

May-September 1935

Juan I. Pombo, a civilian pilot, departed from Santander on 12 May 1935 bound for Mexico in a British Klemm Eagle 2 single-engine aircraft. He flew to Seville and Cape Verde, crossed the Atlantic to Brazil, went up to Dutch Guiana and landed in Mexico on 16 September 1935, covering 15,970 km.

flights a reality, which would be held in León, home to the Air and Space Force Non-Commissioned Academy.

### AIR MUSEUM

Following General Figuero's opening address, Colonel Félix Manjón, presentation host and Air Museum director, took the floor. From the open area of the museum, the public watched a brief exhibition of historical aircraft from the neighbouring Infante de Orleans Foundation.

First, a patrol of three Bückers, the aircraft used by the Spanish Air Force from late 1936 to 1984, flew over the area. They were followed by a Comper Swift aircraft, a single-seat model used in one of the flights featured in this commemoration, which travelled from Getafe airfield to Manila (Philippines) in 1933.

The presentation was rounded off with a visit to the museum's Great Flights section, which featured all of the main protagonists together. There was an exact replica of the pioneering Plus Ultra flying boat, as the original is currently on display in Luján (Argentina); information on the Elcano patrol, which travelled from Cuatro Vientos airfield to Manila (Philippines); and the Atlántida patrol, which flew in formation from Melilla to the Spanish Guinea.

Also on display was the original Breguet 19 Gran Raid, the Jesús del Gran Poder (Seville-Ibero-America, 1929) —the model flown by Haya and Rodríguez from Seville to Bata (Spanish Guinea) in 1931—, the Ciudad de Manila —the single-seat aircraft flown from Getafe to Manila in 1933—, and the ill-fated Cuatro Vientos, which departed from Seville to cross the Atlantic to Cuba, where it managed to arrive before disappearing without a trace en route to Mexico.

Finally, the Santander, which took off from Santander in 1935, piloted by Ignacio Pombo, brought the commemoration to a close.

Esther P. Martínez  
Photos: Pepe Díaz

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## ANNIVERSARY

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# 20 years since the Solidarity Response to Pakistan

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Spain formed the core of NATO's first humanitarian mission outside its area of operations to assist the victims of the earthquake in October 2005

It was the first humanitarian mission of the Atlantic Alliance outside the Washington Treaty's area of operations and it benefited from Spain's leadership and significant contribution: *Solidarity Response II* took place 20 years ago to help the victims of the earthquake in northern Pakistan. For three months, the Spanish Armed Forces performed an essential task of solidarity with the victims, including rebuilding various infrastructures.

The earthquake, measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale, occurred on 8 October 2005, just before the onset of the harsh Himalayan winter. The epicentre was located in the Kashmir region, about 95 kilometres northeast of Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, and shook areas of Afghanistan and India as well. This violent earthquake and the strong aftershocks that followed sowed desolation and death in the region. Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistani Kashmir, and cities such as Bagh and



Balakot, were partly reduced to rubble. 86,000 people died, 106,000 were injured and more than three and a half million lost their homes.

### REQUEST FOR SUPPORT

In response to the request of Pakistani Prime Minister, General Pervez Musharraf, and to the express appeal of the United Nations, NATO conducted a humanitarian aid operation in the affected area, by activating and deploying part of its Response Force 2005 (NRF-5), whose land component commanded, on a rotating basis, the High Readiness Force Land Headquarters (HRF(L)HQ)

at Bétera (Valence).

According to Jan Egeland, the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator at that time, the earthquake in Pakistan had become the worst nightmare ever faced by the organization. He believed it to be even worse than the tsunami of the preceding year in the Indian Ocean, due to the inaccessibility





Ángel Manrique/DECET

Military doctors treat the wounded after a road accident caused by the fall of a bus. Below, development work for the Spanish contingent's operating base in Arja and two Spanish engineers working on the reconstruction of a building.



Hélène Gicquel



Hélène Gicquel



## ANNIVERSARY



Members of the Spanish engineer company rebuild a school in the town of Bagh, one of the most affected by the earthquake. Spain provided two sapper plato

of some places located in very mountainous regions, and the prevailing bad weather, with temperatures dropping below zero degrees. “We —Egeland admitted— are humanitarian civilians who do not know how to evacuate people from the Himalayas, but the largest military organization in the world has to know how to do so”.

Spain’s participation in this mission was approved by the government on 26 October and ratified the following day, on 27 October, by the Congressional Defence Committee, with no votes against and the abstention of Izquierda Unida (United Left). This parliamentary requirement was not yet binding, as the Organic Law on National Defence, mandating Congress to authorise the Armed Forces’ intervention in missions abroad, was still under consideration in the Senate.

### ACTIVITY

The Land Component of the NRF-5, commanded by General José Antonio

Bautís Otero and made up of personnel from Bétera Headquarters, remained in the area for 90 days. For the tactical command of the operations it had its own headquarters and the unit attached to it; an engineer battalion consisting of Bulgarian, Italian, Polish, British and Spanish companies, and a platoon from Lithuania; three Lithuanian water purification teams; a field hospital led by the Czechs and the Dutch; and French and Slovenian civilian-military cooperation teams. A total of 1,000 military personnel, which included 370 Spaniards, were deployed in the cities of Arja, Islamabad, Lahore and Rawalpindi.

The multinational engineer battalion cleared roads of landslides and snow, and reinforced and improved eighteen retaining walls in very difficult-to-access areas with steep slopes. It also built eight semi-permanent modules to house schools and another one for a healthcare centre; 84 shelters to be used as medical clinics and schools;

and a water tank and piping system to ensure the water supply of the people of Arjan. It also distributed 270,000 litres of drinking water and removed 41,000 cubic metres of rubble.

The Spanish company, which was part of this battalion —supported by troops from the United States, which provided the bulk of the helicopters and acted independently of the Alliance— consisted of 162 soldiers. Members of the Parachute Brigade (BRIPAC), the Airborne Light Brigade (BRILAT) and the 11th Specialist Engineer Regiment of Salamanca, rebuilt a healthcare centre and two schools, set up 13 tent schools, repaired 55 kilometres of roads and forest tracks and put into operation a water purification system for the daily supply of 8,000 people.

Logistic support was delivered by 50 service members from the 21<sup>st</sup> Logistic Group of Seville as well as other units, and the senior staff comprised 81 men and women stationed at the High Readiness





MDE

ons from the Airborne and Parachute Brigades and an engineer vehicle and machinery platoon. Service members delivering humanitarian aid to the population.

Force Land Headquarters —HRF(L) HQ— in Bétera.

The Army's Forward Echelon of Medical Care (EMAT) was sent to Pakistan, forming a Role-2 type medical support unit, assisting members of the international forces and the Pakistani people. It also helped reopen the medical centre in Arja, donating medicines, baby food and vitamin supplements, according to the most prevalent health needs among the local population. The local people were particularly grateful for the assistance provided on 11 November to those injured in a road accident near the Spanish detachment, when a bus carrying civilians fell from a height of 30 metres. On this occasion, two stabilisation cells — each consisting of a doctor, nurse, driver and health worker— and personnel from the aid station arrived at the scene of the accident in less than ten minutes. There, they classified, stabilised and transferred ten injured people to the EMAT surgical team set up in the detachment.

In the last few days of the mission, Spanish soldiers handed out 5,000 folders with sheets of paper and pencils sent by the Ministry of Defence to the students of the boys' and girls' schools in Arja and Bagh.

#### WITHDRAWAL

In order to facilitate the return of our contingent, a service support unit was sent to Pakistan, made up of members of the 11<sup>th</sup> Specialist Engineer

**The earthquake occurred just before the onset of the harsh Himalayan winter**

Regiment of Salamanca and the 13th Railway Regiment of Saragossa. Heavy equipment was shipped by rail from Islamabad to Karachi, and from Karachi to Spain by sea. The final military personnel flight, carrying the last thirty soldiers to withdraw, arrived at Torrejón air base on 16 February.

"Our service members are able to touch people's hearts. Although we were first welcomed with mistrust, they were now very happy with our presence", explained General Bautís Otero on 29 January upon his arrival at Manises airport (Valence). He also highlighted the difficulties in carrying out his mission, since "travelling ten kilometres could take several hours", and referred to the atrocious living conditions of the population. "Despite the hardship in which they live and the little they have, they offered you everything they had", said Sergeant First Class Anabel Rodríguez.

**Santiago Fernández del Vado**



# AT NATO'S DISPOSAL

Spain takes over command of the Allied Maritime Reaction Force



NRDC ITA

Handover ceremony at ARF headquarters in Italy.  
Below, the Minister of Defence attending a presentation by Vice Admiral Pérez Puig in Rota.



Rubén Somonte/MDE

**T**HE Spanish High Readiness Forces (Maritime) Headquarters (SP-MARFOR) assumed command of the Maritime Component of the Allied Reaction Force (ARF) on 1 July 2025, and will hold this role for a year.

The handover ceremony was held at ARF headquarters in Solbiate Olona, Italy, where the ARF commander, Italian Army Lieutenant General Lorenzo D'Addario, presided over the presentation of the guidon to the new commanders of the maritime and land components.

Spain is taking on this important role for the Alliance for the first time since the ARF was established in 2024. This is a high readiness force prepared to respond immediately to any crisis that may endanger the security of the Alliance. The Headquarters' staff and crew have been on board the flagship LPD Castilla at Rota naval base since 1 July 2025, on "notice to move," ready to set sail within five days of receiving NATO's activation order and ready to accomplish the mission within ten days.

The Spanish headquarters has undergone an intensive certification process for over a year, participating in three NATO exercises: Steadfast Dagger 24, Dynamic Mariner/Flotex 25 and Steadfast Cobalt, thus achieving NATO "Mission Capable" status. Furthermore, the entire process has been completed without restrictions, demonstrating high readiness.

On 23 July 2025, Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles visited this headquarters and was briefed on its functioning by its commander, Vice Admiral Juan Bautista Pérez Puig. In addition to visiting the premises from where the naval operations are conducted, she signed the guest book and met with the Headquarters' staff and the ship's crew. "The best indication that Spain is a great country with highly skilled armed forces and, most importantly, great human qualities that leave their mark, is when the Alliance congratulates us on our work", said Robles.

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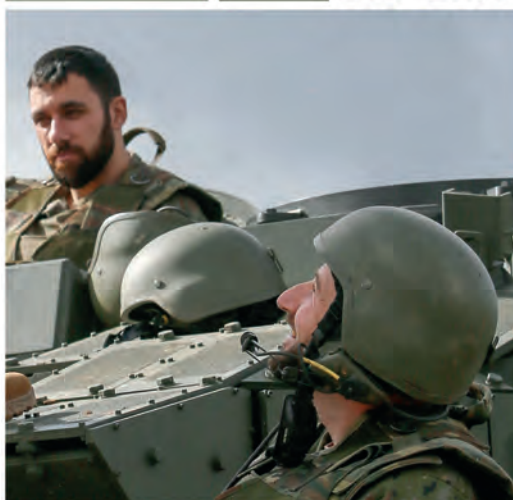
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