

REVISTA ESPAÑOLA DE DEFENSA

INTERVIEW
Major General
Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz,
UNIFIL Force Commander

Aid to Ukraine

TRAINING AS LIFE INSURANCE



MINISTERIO DE DEFENSA



EARTHQUAKE IN TÜRKİYE

Spanish military to the rescue of victims



REVISTA ESPAÑOLA DE DEFENSA

HABLAMOS de Defensa

35 años de información de calidad

Commitment to peace

SPAIN continues to honour its collective commitments to Ukraine. It does so in coordination with its partners and allies, with whom it shares, in the face of war and destruction, the defence of international law, human dignity, freedom, peace and democratic values.

This assistance is provided in a variety of ways, one of which being the training of Ukrainian civilians who, without any previous military experience, wish to join their country's units to fight against Russia. Their training in Spain will be key to their effective performance on the battlefield. In addition, various contingents are being trained in specific courses to meet the operational requirements of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. All these activities are part of the European Union's EUMAM-UA mission, which aims to enhance the capability of the Ukrainian forces to defend their territorial integrity and national sovereignty within the country's internationally recognised borders, as well as to protect the population. Meanwhile, defence hospitals in Madrid and Zaragoza continue to care for the war wounded.

Spain is thus contributing to the EU's joint effort to train Ukrainian soldiers. This endeavour is being undertaken in particular by Germany and Poland, although 24 countries have already offered training modules. EUMAM-UA has a non-executive mandate to provide individual, collective and specialised training for up to 15,000 Ukrainian military personnel, although High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell has pledged to double the amount to 30,000 before the end of 2023.

In addition, within the usual contributions and capabilities offered by our country as a reliable and responsible ally, Spain continues to contribute to the deterrence and defence of NATO's eastern flank in various operations. "This is an essential task just a few kilometres away from a war, from a human drama to which no one can remain insensitive", stressed Defence Minister Margarita Robles at Adazi military base (Latvia) on 27 January when she visited the 600 Spaniards deployed in one of these missions, operation *enhanced Forward Presence*.

Also, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which is made up of 10,400 *blue helmets* from 48 countries and 800 civilians of 78 nationalities, has been under the command of Army General Aroldo Lázaro for more than a year. Under Spanish leadership, during this period of time "we have contributed to achieving a stable environment, one that will ensure the cessation of hostilities" in an area that is so crucial for world peace, as General Lázaro explains in an interview included in this issue.

Hence, our Armed Forces continue to contribute to global stability, demonstrating every day Spain's "clear and unequivocal commitment to peace", as Minister Robles underscored in Latvia.

RED



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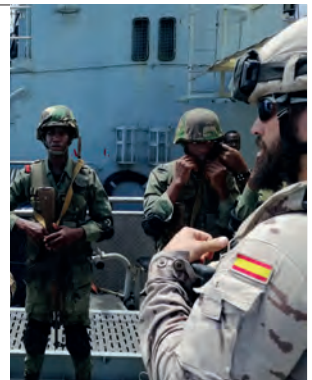
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An instructor helps a Ukrainian soldier with NBC individual protective equipment. Below, combat training in the Infantry School's training area. Left, performing a surgical intervention on a wounded Ukrainian soldier in Zaragoza's military hospital.



Hospital General de la Defensa



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The Defence Minister talks to a group of Ukrainian soldiers during her visit to the training centre at the Infantry School in Toledo on 20 January.

TRAINING AS LIFE INSURANCE

Ukrainian soldiers are trained in Toledo and Seville, while the wounded are cared for in defence hospitals in Madrid and Zaragoza

IN the training area of the Infantry School in Toledo, a group of Ukrainian soldiers, led by Spanish instructors, return to the training centre in a tactical march. They stop when they approach a crossroads and a few minutes later they fend off an ambush by some of their comrades. They have slept in a defensive position dug by themselves, but have had to leave it quickly at night after the anti-aircraft alarms sound.

Meanwhile, the members of another platoon put on NBC individual protective equipment for the first time in their lives and the members of a third platoon attend a theory class on improvised explosive devices (IEDs), complemented in the afternoon by a mine reconnaissance exercise. That same day, 26 January, at *El Coper* military base in Seville, the 74th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment completes a course in which 20 Ukrainian soldiers

have familiarised themselves with *Hawk* anti-aircraft launchers, six of which have been donated by Spain to the Kyiv government and will be used for defence against Russian drone attacks.

"The Ukrainians know what is at stake", says Captain Carlos Vega, the commander of the company that is training them in Toledo, "they know that every minute of training increases their chances to live". "They have been eager

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The five-week basic combat training module includes an intensive training schedule that runs from Monday through Sunday for twelve hours a day.

to maximise the benefit of this training since day one”, says Captain Gerson Heredia Canovaca, head instructor of the *Hawk* system.

One hundred and ninety-eight Ukrainians, civilians with no previous military experience, participate in a five-week basic combat training module at the Infantry School, where they are accompanied by seven service members, including interpreters and military liaison officers. However, those who have been trained to operate the *Hawk* have previous experience in the use of anti-aircraft weapon systems. They all arrived on 12 January at Torrejón air base, where Defence Minister Margarita Robles and other authorities were waiting for them. Two days later, on 14 January, an aircraft of the Spanish Air and Space Force transferred seven war wounded from Poland to Spain for medical care: three, with a companion, were sent to the Defence General Hospital in Zaragoza; and four, with another companion, to the Military Central Hospital Gómez Ulla in Madrid.

ORGANISATION

The two training activities are led by the Toledo Training Coordination Centre (TTCC), which is part of the European

Union Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM-UA), under the operational control of the Operations Command. This centre is designed to train rotations of some 400 Ukrainian troops every two months, 2,400 per year. The training programmes offered by Spain cover basic training, combat

casualty management, marksmanship, counter-IED activities, area demining, use of anti-aircraft weapons and other areas that may arise depending on the needs of the Ukrainian armed forces. The training module is provided to 194 men and four women, aged between 19 and 45 (the average age is 29), coming from a military training centre north of Kiev. Twenty per cent of these trainees are married and ten per cent have higher education. There are differences with regard to the first group that went to Toledo, not only in the number —64 Ukrainians were trained in November and December— but also in their composition, since that group was only made up of men and with a higher average age (34), most of whom had family responsibilities and higher education. Moreover, they had only been recruited for the war, whereas those of the current contingent have signed a three-year commitment to the Ukrainian army and will remain in the army even after the end of the conflict with Russia.

“We are sure that the training will help them continue fighting for their country, for freedom and peace”, said Margarita Robles on 20 January, when she met with the Ukrainian soldiers in Toledo. During the visit, she met with the contingent commander, Colonel Oleksandr Demchuk, who conveyed his “good feelings” about



Arrival of the second group of Ukrainian soldiers at Torrejón air base on 12 January, on a flight from Poland.

the course and thanked the Ministry of Defence for the support provided since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

"We want you to receive the best training so you can leave as best prepared as possible for combat", explained Lieutenant Colonel Francisco de Asís Iranzo, commander of the Combat Training Unit which is part of the Basic Training Company. This unit is made up of soldiers from the 66th Infantry Regiment *América* of Mountain Hunters, stationed at the Aizoán barracks in Berrioplano (Navarra).

AN INTENSIVE PROGRAMME

Given the limited time available to the Ukrainians, an intensive programme has been designed for them: twelve hours of training a day Monday through Sunday. Sergeant Christian Ordóñez, one of the instructors, believes that "they have great potential to learn, even greater potential to adapt and they are very motivated". "When you add these three aspects together, the result is terrific". "They are eager to learn and their commanders are involved in their training because they have a lot of respect for their unit," says Lieutenant Felipe Herrán.

"Above all, it's a question of patience", points out Sergeant Christian Núñez, who leads the NBC protection equipment exercise. "They are civilians who must be turned into soldiers; they have to learn values such as discipline, respect, teamwork... And at the beginning it's hard for them. We promote group activities to make them aware that if one fails, so do the rest".

The biggest difficulty is the language, because only 30 per cent understand English. The interpreters explain how each exercise is performed, but when it comes to correcting individual performances, it is impossible to have an interpreter for each of the students. "We have learned", explains Captain Carlos Vega, "how to say numbers and words in Ukrainian like 'stop', 'enemy', 'fire'... , and this speeds up the work. We also act with gestures and by imitation".

Some of the Infantry School's facilities have been fitted out to receive and accommodate the Ukrainian soldiers, offering them all the necessary services. Lieutenant José María Bel underlines the



Hélène Cécquet

European Mission

IN response to Ukraine's request for assistance to the High Representative, the EU Council decided to establish the European Union Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) on 17 October 2022.

- **Launched:** 15 November 2022.
- **Objective:** To enhance the military capability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in order to allow them to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as protect the civilian population.
- **Mandate:** Non-executive mission to provide training to 15,000 military personnel in EU Member States.
- **Commander:** Vice Admiral Hervé Bléjean (Director of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)).
- **Operational structure:** A Combined Arms Training Command in Poland and a Special Training Command in Germany, plus training modules established by other Member States.
- **Spain's offer:** Training of up to 2,400 Ukrainian military personnel per year at the Toledo Training Command (400 soldiers every two months).
- **Initial duration:** 24 months.

This training is part of the EU Military Assistance Mission

suitability of the training area. "It's very useful for practising deployments, covers, shelters...; along with flat and clear areas they also have forest territories in their country, like the ones we have here".

"We try not to create an emotional bond with them", explains Captain Vega, "because they are in a war and what happens to them on their return can affect us. But it's very difficult not to get attached knowing what can happen to them...".

AID TO UKRAINE



Ukrainian soldiers at the Toledo Training Command. On the right, two Ukrainian soldiers familiarise themselves with the *Hawk* anti-aircraft system at *El Coper* military base (Seville).

SEVILLE

The training was also intensive at the 74th AAAR facilities in *El Coper* military base, with morning and afternoon sessions seven days a week, starting immediately after the Ukrainians arrived in Seville. “The 106-hour programme was very demanding”, says Captain Gerson Heredia Canavaca, head of the training programme. The Ministry hired interpreters to help with the language barrier, and soldiers from other Army units who speak Ukrainian fluently helped as well.

The 74th AAAR has personnel specialised in the *Hawk* system and is also a training unit, as it regularly conducts *Hawk* operator and maintenance courses for Army officers and NCOs.

The Ukrainians who took the course had extensive expertise in some aspects, such as maintenance, tactical employment and anti-aircraft combat management. “They are familiar with weaponry coming from the former Warsaw Pact bloc”,

explains Captain Heredia, “and the *Hawk* is US-made, so although this is a change for them, it doesn’t prevent them from learning quickly”.

This is not the first time that Spain has provided training on the materiel delivered to Ukraine. Previously, Ukrainian soldiers were trained at Zaragoza air base in the use of another anti-aircraft system, and in the use of field artillery at the *Álvarez de Sotomayor* military base in Viator (Almería).

MEDICAL CARE

On 18 January, the Minister of Defence visited the four Ukrainian war wounded who had arrived in Torrejón six days earlier and were receiving medical treatment at the Military Central Hospital *Gómez Ulla*. She visited the patients with various amputations and traumatic injuries caused by firearms or concussions and learned about their progress and medical assessment. In this moving encounter, Margarita Robles

wished them a speedy recovery. The wounded expressed their “gratitude to Spain for all the help” and expressed their willingness to return to the frontline “as soon as possible”. According to *Gómez Ulla*’s medical staff, “a multidisciplinary approach will be necessary for each patient with the participation of different services of this military hospital”.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, Spain has treated 43 wounded Ukrainian soldiers, 25 of whom have already returned to their country. In addition to the four wounded in the *Gómez Ulla*, there are fourteen who are being treated in Zaragoza’s Military Hospital. The Directorate General for Defence Policy and the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration are arranging for them to be housed in Madrid so that they can continue their treatment on an outpatient basis.

Santiago F. del Vado
Photos: Pepe Díaz

Seven war wounded receive medical care in the military hospitals in Madrid and Zaragoza

Leopard tanks will reinforce the capabilities of Ukrainian armed forces

Tank crews

SPAIN completed the training of *Leopard* 2A4 tank crew members and technical personnel in mid-March. This was the first group of Ukrainian trainees to have taken these specific training courses taught by the Toledo Training Coordination Centre (TTCC) in Zaragoza.

These courses were launched after Spain's official commitment to contribute to the Ukrainian defensive effort by providing battle tanks.

At that time, Ukraine requested the training of crews and technical personnel for the operational deployment of the tanks supplied by Spain, namely a reinforced platoon of *Leopard* 2A4s that are being updated and integrated with those of the other countries.

This platoon is made up of six vehicles, but as Defence Minister Margarita Robles stated, "Spain is willing to send more battle tanks if necessary and if our allies ask us to do so". The first group of trainees arrived in Spain on 16 February to

receive the necessary training as battle tank crews and technicians. During the four-week course the Ukrainian personnel learned how to use the combat vehicle's operational systems, perform lead and follow-on echelon technical tasks on various mechanical and electrical components, and the tactical employment of these tanks in small units.

The personnel being trained had previous experience in using battle tanks, so the training focused on the technical features of this combat system. Tactical training was designed from the outset to set up operational and well-coordinated crews.

The *Leopard* 2A4 battle tank was created at the end of the 20th century and became the basis for developing one of the most modern and effective battle tanks used by Western countries: the *Leopard* 2A6 (in its different versions: German or Swedish) and the Spanish *Leopard* 2E battle tank, the spearhead of Spain's armoured forces.

Training tank crews in Zaragoza.



INTERVIEW

**MAJOR GENERAL AROLDÓ LÁZARO SÁENZ,
UNIFIL FORCE COMMANDER**

“WE HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ACHIEVING A STABLE ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON”

After his first year as head of the UN mission, he hopes to achieve a lasting peace in the near future

“I hope one day, not too far away, we will be able to witness a lasting peace agreement in this historical eastern Mediterranean region”. This is the insight of Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz, who on 28 February 2023 marked his first anniversary as head of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). This mission is trying to ensure peace on the Lebanese-Israeli border and facilitate humanitarian access to the civilian population and the safe return of displaced persons. From his experience after almost twelve months “contributing to achieve a stable environment”, he is convinced that “if we continue to move forward

with robustness and perseverance” the “hopeful optimism” prevailing in this mission will become “real and tangible”.

“This is a unique learning opportunity”, says this officer born in Sidi Ifni in 1962 and deployed for the fourth time to Lebanon. He has also been assigned to three missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to the headquarters of the European Rapid Operational Force (EUROFOR, Florence), the NATO High Readiness Land Force (Bétera, Valencia) and has commanded the 10th Mechanised Brigade *Guzmán el Bueno* (Córdoba). “In addition to dealing with complex situations from multiple perspectives, working with people from different cultures

within the United Nations is a real challenge. Working for peace in such a complex region and representing Spain’s commitment to this territory are unforgettable memories that I will take with me”.

—What are the peculiarities of commanding this mission?

—I would highlight the fact that the same individual is responsible for both the military and diplomatic leadership, the Head of Mission and Force Commander. Being the interlocutor for multiple facets of the mission with the parties and at the same time exercising command of the military component, while establishing close relations with the civilian population in a multicultural environment, involves a



Esther Sánchez/PIO UNIFIL HQ

complex coordination of activities and the development of strategies, which must be perfectly synchronised by the three pillars that make up the mission. It is a fascinating command and one that requires the support of highly skilled and specialised personnel.

— What is your overall assessment of this first year?

— Very positive. The security situation remains largely unchanged, despite the serious economic and socio-political crisis in the country. We have contributed to achieving a stable environment, one that will ensure the cessation of hostilities. This has been possible thanks to our patrols' activities on the ground, the excellent relations with the civilian

population and local authorities, and the high-level liaison and coordination activities carried out with Lebanese and Israeli government authorities and with the heads of their respective armed forces and the international community.

“One of our constant challenges is to reduce tensions as quickly as possible”

— What are your main objectives for the remainder of your mandate?

— To provide continuity to the current situation of stability, by creating the necessary conditions for the parties to reach a lasting ceasefire in the region, in accordance with the goals set by the Security Council for the UNIFIL mission. Likewise, one of our constant challenges is to reduce as quickly as possible any tensions that may arise.

— What forces and means do you have?

— Military forces and political, logistical and civil affairs components. The correct integration of strategies to use all of them and the performance of their activities in line with the objectives of the mission are the key to success. The military forces are organised in two sectors under the command of two brigadier generals, one of whom is Spanish, as well as a maritime component and reserve forces, with a total of ten battalions and various combat support and logistical support forces. Altogether, UNIFIL has 10,400 *Blue Helmets* from 48 countries and some 800 civilians of 78 nationalities.

— Are these troops sufficient or do you think you need to reinforce any capabilities?

— We are engaged in a strategic review process together with the UN Headquarters. These reviews are conducted on a regular basis, adapting the available force to the changing needs of the environment, allowing for a more efficient implementation of the mandate received from the Security Council. This process is not expected to identify the need to make any significant changes to current capabilities.

— The situation in this area of operations has often been described as a “fragile” or “tense” calm. Does this perception persist?

— Yes, it continues to be a situation of fragile calm. The main characteristics that define the security situation in this part of the world are those of a

INTERVIEW

“The security situation remains unchanged despite the serious crisis in the country”

classic VUCA environment: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, with the constant risk of an escalation of tension between the parties. One of the significant incidents that helps understand this tension took place in April 2022. It started with the launch of a rocket from Lebanese territory to the south, with the subsequent artillery response by Israel.

UNIFIL continuously monitors the cessation of hostilities and the unauthorised presence of weapons in the area of operations, preventing an escalation of tension. It is ready to act immediately, thus reducing the risk of a potential revival of the conflict.

—What have been the most serious incidents in the first year of your posting?

—Our patrols have been denied freedom of movement, while numerous violations of the *Blue Line* and Lebanese airspace have occurred, and we have observed the presence of unauthorised weapons in our area of deployment. When these events take place, letters of protest are sent to the parties' authorities and the UN Headquarters is informed. The most serious situation I have had to deal with was the armed attack on a UNIFIL convoy in December 2022, in which one of the Blue Helmets of the Irish contingent died.

—Is the severe economic, political and social crisis in Lebanon conditioning UNIFIL's mission?

—The political deadlock that is preventing the formation of a new government is impeding decision-making and is having a serious negative impact on the country's economic and social conditions. All this has considerably deteriorated the calm and stability of the population and incidents caused by the severity of the crisis are continuously taking place; however, so far they are not

significantly affecting the conduct of our operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces are being directly affected by this crisis, both in terms of human and material resources, which impacts their presence and operational capability.

—How are they being helped?

—The United Nations is aware of the serious difficulties encountered by the Lebanese Armed Forces and of the importance for them, as a key strategic partner, to remain as operational as possible. This is why the latest renewal of UNIFIL's mandate approved logistical support through the provision of fuel, food and medicines with a view to reducing the difficulties faced in deploying and operating jointly with UNIFIL.

With regard to the navy, our focus is to increase its capabilities, facilitating the conduct of support missions within the area of maritime operations. Training activities are also being carried out in order to prepare its command and control centres to take responsibility for conducting maritime operations, whilst the Lebanese navy is signing bilateral agreements to receive support from ships and equipment from other countries.

On top of that, UNIFIL advises the country's Armed Forces on the definition of realistic objectives and phases for the transfer of responsibility, within a process called Strategic Dialogue.

—How are UNIFIL forces received by the different religious, ethnic and social groups?

—There have been some disinformation campaigns aimed at distorting the public's perception of us. However, thanks to the action plan developed by the UNIFIL HQ and implemented by the units, and our impartial attitude, their effect has been neutralised. All religious, ethnic, social and cultural groups continue to have a positive attitude towards UNIFIL



Meeting with local authorities and religious leaders in southern Lebanon.

personnel, in line with what has been the norm in recent years.

Through close contact with the Lebanese local authorities and the implementation of projects in support of the civilian population, UNIFIL has demonstrated its constant concern to improve the living conditions of the people. Therefore, they are aware that we are here to contribute to the stability of the country, striving to achieve the normalisation of their daily lives as soon as possible.

—What activities are carried out to assist the local population?

—UNIFIL is not a humanitarian assistance mission, but we always keep in mind the needs of the population and try to support them as far as our capabilities allow. An annual budget of \$500,000 has been allocated for the implementation of quick-impact projects. Local needs are identified and considered and action is taken in those areas where it is most important, ensuring as far as possible the population's access to basic services, in accordance with a plan that guarantees



Ramin Francis Assadi/SCP-UNIFIL

the equitable geographical distribution of available resources. These actions are carried out coordinating the United Nations' own contributions with those of the countries that deploy troops to the mission.

Some 6,700 civil-military cooperation activities were undertaken in 2022, including more than 1,100 meetings with the population, more than 1,800 cases of medical and veterinary assistance and 170 projects inaugurated. These include the installation of solar panels in several towns and cities, with which we intend to solve the serious electricity supply problem affecting both private homes and essential services. At the national level, we also engaged a number of training activities, such as cholera and COVID-19 awareness and prevention campaigns, basic first aid training for women and Spanish courses under the *Cervantes* Programme.

—Has progress been made in demining?

—The existence of anti-personnel mines in this region and the risk they

pose to the safety of local personnel and UNIFIL patrols is one of my greatest concerns. In line with the goal of a safe and secure environment, 120 Blue Helmets from Cambodian and Chinese engineering units have cleared 24,200 square metres of minefield this past year, deactivating more than 5,400 mines and several explosive devices. Unfortunately, several accidents have occurred in the past year, in some cases resulting in the death of civilian personnel. This is why we must continue to focus our efforts in this direction.

—This is the longest running operation in which Spain participates

“We always try to support the population, as far as our capabilities allow”

in the international arena. What has it meant for our armed forces?

—The Spanish mission in southern Lebanon has been underway since 2006 under the name of Operation *Libre Hidalgo*. Since then, it has been an important boost to the motivation and training of our brigades and support units. After 38 contingents, Spain has shown the international community the excellent training and working capacity of our troops, the qualities of our materials and generation procedures and their use. We can be very proud of the remarkable professionalism with which the demanding activities required by the mission are carried out.

I would like to remember those comrades who have lost their lives in the service of peace and stability on Lebanese soil and representing the national colours. In particular the last one, Corporal Pedro Serrano Arjona, who died on 18 August in Marjayoun. His sacrifice, contributing to peace and stability in southern Lebanon, should serve as an example for our *Blue Helmets* to continue to do their duty as they have always done. We do not forget him or his family.

—How do you envision the future?

—The regional scenario we face is highly complex, with a number of state and non-state actors that impact Lebanon's social and economic stability. In addition, there is a convergence of political interests, not only of the parties involved in the conflict but also at the international level. All this makes it difficult to find a simple solution, thus requiring multidisciplinary action in which UNIFIL is designed as the tool that gives rise to the necessary conditions for the parties to achieve that long-awaited peace.

The willingness of the Lebanese and Israeli authorities and armed forces to build a framework of peace and stability that will lead to a lasting or permanent ceasefire in the region must be recognised. However, the challenges are numerous and require our utmost attention. The efforts of all are needed: those of UNIFIL, Spain, the United Nations and the parties involved.

Santiago F. del Vado



THE UME AND OTHER UNITS OF THE ARMED FORCES DEPLOYED

SPANISH MILITARY TO T

After 48 hours of work, the UME team rescues Leyla, the mother of Muslin and Elif, also pulled out alive from under the rubble.

IN THE AREA COME TO THE AID OF EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

THE RESCUE IN TÜRKİYE





Marines from the air-naval amphibious group *Dédalo* 23 work with their own hands on debris removal in the town of Alejandreta.

ON 6 February, at 4.17 a.m., the earth shook in southern Türkiye and northeastern Syria. The earthquake, measuring 7.4 on the Richter scale, located in the Turkish province of Kahramanmaraş, followed by several strong aftershocks, affected ten other provinces, an area of 500 square kilometres inhabited by five million people. By the end of February, the toll of the tragedy was 50,000 dead, 100,000 injured and 100,000 collapsed buildings, as well as extensive material damage. Early on, it was obvious there would be many casualties, therefore the Ankara government declared a level 4 state of emergency and issued a call for assistance to the international community. The response was not long in coming.

In the case of the Spanish Armed Forces, it was immediate. The Army's *Patriot* unit, deployed on a NATO mission to the hard-hit Incirlik air base in the Adana province, was immediately called into action after the earthquake. A few hours later, on the evening of 6 February, 58 members of the UME arrived at Adana

airport from Spain, most of them belonging to a USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) team from the Emergency Intervention Battalion (BIEM) II and the UMEDAT (UME Disaster Assessment Team). There were also three dogs specialised in the rescue of live persons and one in the rescue of fatalities. They were flown in two Air and Space Force aircraft, an A330 and an A400M, also loaded with humanitarian aid. They were followed, on the afternoon of the 8th, when the air-naval amphibious group *Dédalo* 23, which was sailing in

the eastern Mediterranean, arrived at the port of Alexandreta, in the earthquake-devastated Hatay province. The group consisted of LHD *Juan Carlos I* and amphibious assault ship *Galicia*, as well as 500 marines on board.

In addition to the two aforementioned flights, two other flights were chartered with humanitarian material and aid, and two more for the withdrawal of military and civilian emergency teams.

In total and over the course of seven days, more than 800 military personnel worked together and in coordination with the local emergency services and those sent by other countries, including the Spanish members of the Special Emergency and Immediate Response unit of the Community of Madrid (ERICAM), firefighters from Málaga and members of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). In this joint effort, eleven people were pulled out alive from under the rubble. The military also assisted in locating fatalities and unloading planes and ships with more than 3,600 tonnes of humanitarian aid,

**Spanish soldiers
rescued nine
people alive
and distributed
3,600 tonnes of
humanitarian aid**



Private Manuel Calurano carries Elif to the aid station for stabilisation. Below, the UME command post in Islahiye.



Image from the telescopic camera showing one of the three people rescued alive in Nurdagui.



The Marines also assist in the unloading of humanitarian aid at Limak port.



One of the three UME dogs specialised in locating people alive scours the devastated area.

One grateful family

Lieutenant Commander Aurelio Soto Suárez
Head of the UME's Public Communications Office

WITH every hour that passed, there was less hope of finding survivors, but all turned out well this time; two toddlers and their mother were rescued alive after five days buried in the rubble of a building that collapsed in the devastating earthquake.

For the operation, the UME's USAR team had to put into practice all the expertise and use all the means at its disposal as a UN-certified team. But above all, the 28 hours that the operation lasted were full of moments and decisions that conditioned the success of this rescue.

Like every search, it all starts with a sign of life, in this case, a phone call. During one of the regular UME meetings that Captain Juste —the liaison officer with the Turkish authorities— usually holds at the coordination centre, he is informed that they have received an emergency call. There is no response from the caller but the call has been geolocated. He therefore asks the Spanish reconnaissance team to go to the area in order to assess whether or not this is valid evidence.

Quickly, the technical search team, led by Staff Sergeant Rivero, deploy the geophones operated by Corporal Espada and Corporal Galindo. Lieutenant Mora, head of the platoon, asks for "silence"; the machines stop their engines, the personnel in the worksite remain motionless and the procedure begins: "Rescue team. If you hear me, shout or knock three times". All eyes are on Corporal Espada, who is wearing her headset; after a few long seconds of waiting, she claims to have received an answer. The operation is repeated for corroboration with the other operator. "Confirmed, there is one person alive", says Corporal Galindo.

At once, Corporal Adalberto looks at the truck park where Private Herrador has organised the cutting and drilling equipment; he now has to begin cutting open the three-metre hole which, through four reinforced concrete slabs, will finally bring three people out alive. Everything is done as usual, just like they have practised so many times before.

Little by little they drill their way through the concrete blocks in a delicate and complex operation to ensure the safety of the survivors. Night falls and Staff Sergeant Navajas' team takes over. At such low temperatures, they are aware of how challenging their task will be, but there is only one thought in their minds. Corporals Acosta, Lopez and Piedra maintain regular contact with the mother to confirm that they are advancing in the right direction. In the smallest crack, they insert the telescopic camera to try to see the family members but,

unfortunately, there is another concrete slab underneath. They have to continue widening the gap all night long.

As a result of their efforts, they are the first to hear Leyla's voice, faint but audible. She confirms that she can already see a ray of light, from the spotlights illuminating the work area, but where is the light reaching her from?

Lance Corporal Cañamaque decides to insert three different-coloured chemical lights into three different holes to see which one she can see in order to pinpoint her location.

By morning, the telescopic camera provides the first images of Leyla and Muslin; the team prepares for the rescue. Corporal De Lis does not hesitate to enter through a small passageway. In the dark,

his hands reach Leyla, but the priority is Muslin, whom he pulls with extreme care to the gap. There, Adalberto picks him up and passes him to Mora who, once outside, hands him to Captain Nurse Cruzado. The rest of the platoon have already formed a human chain to get the two-year-old safely down from the mountain of rubble.

Shortly afterwards, his sister, Elif, is also rescued, aware of that lifesaving moment and clear-headed enough to be the one to write her own name on a UME sticker as soon as she reaches the aid station.



Part of the UME team involved in the rescue of Muslin, Elif (pictured) and Leyla visit the family at Gaziantep hospital.

To get their mother out, they have to enlarge the hole while Muslin and Elif are given first aid and warm clothing in the UME tent. Lieutenant David checks on the health of both children, looks Elif in the face, hugs her, kisses her on the forehead and then he bursts into tears. It is only then that they are able to unleash all their emotions, contained until that moment to focus on their work.

Rescuing Leyla does not take much longer. She comes out with one of the chemical lights in her hand, the one that brought her back to the world, shouting loudly: "You are angels without wings".

Before returning to Spain, the UME team visit the family at Gaziantep University Hospital and see what extraordinary people they really are. Leyla jokes about the names she has heard and makes noises to imitate the warning messages. Before leaving, she asks the team to convey her heartfelt thanks to all the people in Spain, who she will carry in her heart forever.

as well as distributing and delivering it to NGOs. In the early hours of 6 February, 120 kilometres from the epicentre at Incirlik air base, the effects of the earthquake shook the Patriot unit from their sleep. "The furniture moved, the drawers fell open... but we found that the one-storey building we were staying in was not at risk of collapse", says Lieutenant Colonel José María Contreras, head of the contingent of around 150 soldiers, most of whom belonged to the Aircraft Artillery Command, together with personnel from the Canary Islands Command and the Legion. What was to be a normal day of surveillance turned out to be an additional operation that remained in force "without neglecting the 24-hour *Patriot* system missile defence", stresses its commander. In order to support the management of the massive amounts of humanitarian aid that, from the outset, saturated the base's loading and unloading terminal and its runways, occupied by transport aircraft waiting for their holds to be emptied, the task force maintained groups of 15 soldiers working eight-hour shifts.

This Army unit also provided accommodation, food and logistical support at Incirlik air base to different groups specialised in this type of intervention, mainly from the UME and ERICAM, and even organised and led the projection convoys of both teams to Gaziantep and Alexandretta with its own vehicles.

"We were informed first thing in the morning on 6 February, on our way to the barracks", recalls Captain Ángel Saldaña, liaison officer of the Seville USAR Team and one of the five members of the UME who, for one-month periods, are permanently ready for immediate deployment anywhere in the world in the event of disasters like those in Türkiye and Syria. "We operated in nine worksites in the towns of Islahiye and Nurdagui; we rescued three people alive in each of them and assisted in locating nine bodies", he said on his return home, satisfied that "we did our job as well and as quickly as possible".

On 6 February, the *Dédalo 23* also set sail for Türkiye at full speed. "When the earthquake struck, we were sailing close to Egypt to begin a number of exercises and we were then instructed to head towards the southwest of the country",



The Spanish Air and Space Force sends two A330s and four A400Ms to Türkiye with personnel, food, medicine and warm gear.



Members of the Army's *Patriot* Unit load humanitarian aid at Incirlik.

explains its commander, Rear Admiral Gonzalo Villar. He points out that, as they were unable to disembark in the port of Iskenderum (Alexandretta), in the Hatay province, because it was closed due to the fire caused by the earthquake, they had to do so on Sariseki beach with LCM boats, "so our combat divers had to reconnoitre the area beforehand". Within four hours, 52 vehicles and 500 marines were deployed on the ground ready to intervene.

From the outset, they prioritised three activities. On the one hand, support for the debris and rubble removal work,

with 80 people working twelve-hour shifts non-stop, virtually with their hands. "To our satisfaction, we participated in the rescue of a seven-year-old girl and a 70-year-old adult when there seemed to be no hope of finding anyone alive", stresses Admiral Villar.

Members of the *Dédalo 23* also provided support to the deployed Spanish and Turkish teams. In this regard, 40 tonnes of their own food and water were supplied to various NGOs. Transport was also provided to ERICAM members, while logistical support was given to the Málaga firefighting brigade and also to set up the AECID's field hospital, supplying the latter with a further 40 tonnes of bottled water and food. "Our third activity was to help speed up the flow of humanitarian aid by unloading ships at Limak port and aircraft at Adana airport and loading trucks, including our own", explains the commander of the air-naval amphibious group. In addition to these tasks, 17 sailors and 16 marines joined the *Patriot* Unit's logistical task force at Incirlik air base.

J.L. Expósito

Photos: EMAD and UME

More than 800 men and women were immediately deployed as part of the Armed Forces' immediate response

Since 2014, Moscow has tried to consolidate its political, commercial and military influence on the African continent to establish itself as a major power with external projection

Russia's presence in Africa

Fernando Villena Sánchez

Security and Defence Coordination and Studies Division
Secretariat General for Defence Policy

DEFENCE Policy is guided by the constant search for peace, and the most important challenge for 2023 is to achieve this peace in Ukraine. Spain has strived to draw the allies' attention to threats on the southern flank and this was reflected in NATO's Strategic Concept approved at the Madrid Summit. Dangers coming from Africa threaten the security of NATO allies just as much as those from Russia and, in fact, both threats are in some respects overlapping. Hence our substantial effort to stabilise our geographical environment.

African countries have reason to be concerned. In addition to their dependence on grain imports, there is often political instability, inter-communal violence and terrorism, which, together with increasingly adverse weather, lead to clashes over resources and migration. The end of the war would relieve some pressure on staple food markets. Moreover, sanctions and the search to replace Russian oil could be a good opportunity to accelerate the energy transition and the exploitation of renewable energies in Africa, thus promoting technological development and employment and reducing dependencies.

Our concern for Africa encompasses Africa's own view of its problems and our own stance on terrorism, irregular migration and illicit trafficking. However, Africa is also an area to which Russia

pays special attention, as evidenced by its strategic ambition in the continent.

MOSCOW IN AFRICA

Since 2014, Moscow has been trying to consolidate its presence in Africa as part of its endeavour to establish itself as a great power with external projection in the midst of an increasingly polarised global context and while perceiving that the West is withdrawing from the continent. This withdrawal is leaving a power vacuum in Africa, which is turning the continent into a chessboard on which powers with global ambitions make their best moves to gain advantage in the balance of power of the 21st century.

For years Russia's political influence and the commercial expansion of its oligarchs have been growing in the continent. President Putin is trying to regain Russia's position in the international arena and consolidate its influence in the region through hybrid political, economic and military actions.

In order to weaken Western influence in the region, and globally, Russia's presence in both the Middle East and Africa has become a priority for the Kremlin. Moscow exploits power vacuums, and therefore Russian lobbyists have been active from Libya to Zimbabwe, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, among others.



Russian President Vladimir Putin at the opening of the Russia-Africa Summit held in the Russian city of Sochi in 2019 and attended by nearly 40 leaders from different African countries.

For its part, Russia's classic diplomacy aims at consolidating its influence in the region. Thus, Russia's expansive diplomatic action materialises in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Angola and South Africa (Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited the government of Pretoria at the end of January and it was agreed to conduct a joint military exercise with Russia and China in its territory), with actions such as the so-called vaccine diplomacy during the pandemic and the first Russia-Africa bilateral summit in Sochi in October 2019 (attended by 40 leaders), the second edition of which is scheduled for this coming July in St. Petersburg.

The hybrid strategy in this region can also be seen in Russia's interference in elections and its conducting of disinformation campaigns aimed at obtaining economic and political advantages for companies such as Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner group. Evidence of this strategy can also be found in education programmes and military advice, which give Moscow privileged access to military structures in the

region (between 2015 and 2019 Russia signed 19 military partnership agreements with African authorities). Moreover, the Kremlin does not hesitate to use these means to undermine pro-Western African governments, using disinformation strategies and paramilitary pressure.

Prigozhin's organisations play a key role in Moscow's strategy as they use economic, political and forceful means to gain a foothold in regions previously off-limits to Russia. This strategy usually follows a pattern whereby African leaders are first approached by diplomats, followed by the signing of agreements with military consultancy companies, and finally agreements with Russian resource exploitation firms. This is how the Wagner group operates in a "grey zone", expanding and offering a "stability" and "protection" against terrorism that the West "would be unable" to offer. This paramilitary organisation has been present in Africa assisting local governments against terrorism and criminal activities since 2017. First appearing in Mozambique and Sudan

***Russia's strategy
involves interfering
in electoral
processes and
conducting
disinformation
campaigns***

ANALYSIS

(2017), then in the Central African Republic (2018), Libya (2019) and recently in Mali, and will most likely soon land in Burkina Faso.

CONCRETE EXAMPLES

Russia has been exerting greater influence in countries such as the Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan and Madagascar, as their political regimes tend to fit more easily into Moscow's political and economic offers. In the CAR, Prigozhin's network has influenced public opinion by creating mass media; stabilised the political situation by fighting the opposition; and managed to remove pro-French members of parliament. In addition, in 2018, a bilateral agreement on military cooperation and consultancy was signed. In Madagascar, through the Concord group owned by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the same approach was taken in the last presidential elections of 2018. In Sudan, support was given to Omar al-Bashir following the same line of action, although this strategy failed after the democratic revolution of 2019. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Afric organisation linked to Prigozhin conducted a disinformation campaign and sent Russian election observers to the 2019 presidential elections in order to alter the results. The Kremlin has always denied its involvement and even the presence of Russian mercenaries with whom it claims to have no connection at all.

The main areas of interest for Russian corporations are the mining industry and participation in infrastructure projects in Uganda, Guinea, Zimbabwe and South Africa, following in the footsteps of Chinese investors. Also worthy of note is the progress in cooperation to develop nuclear energy projects through Russian companies such as Rostec or Rosatom in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Zambia and South Africa.

The Malian military junta's request for France to withdraw its troops favours Wagner's establishment in the region, and today there are many civil demonstrations chanting pro-Moscow slogans in the streets. Burkina Faso, meanwhile, underwent a second coup d'état last September. Like its counterparts in Mali, the army is leaning towards Moscow and defying Western demands to hand over power to civilians. Sudan, Chad, Guinea and Guinea Bissau have also undergone coups recently, and many of the military leaders involved had received military training from Moscow.

ECONOMY AND SECURITY

From 2014 to 2018, the Russian Federation boosted the growth of exports to African countries with increases of 87 per cent in North Africa and 85 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. Although Russia's economic presence in Africa is incomparably smaller than that of China, the United States or Europe. Yet Russia is the leading exporter of military equipment to the African continent and controls 49 per cent of this market, thus the volume of exports is largely accounted for by arms exports.

At least 12 sub-Saharan African countries receive Russian materiel, accounting for 30 per cent of the region's imports. In the north, Algeria is one of the Russian government's most important



A group of demonstrators in Bamako (Mali) show their support for Russia and

military allies in Africa. Also noteworthy is the growing presence of the Russian military industry in Egypt.

However, given the current international scenario, a slowdown in Russian arms shipments to Africa is to be expected, as Ukraine is absorbing much of this materiel and the US administration has threatened to impose sanctions on nations that sign agreements with Russia on the purchase of military equipment.

Africa is key to Russia in order to accede to natural resources, raw materials and their derivative benefits. Moscow has therefore signed exploitation agreements with some 20 African countries. Moreover, Russia aims to dominate the grain market on the continent, particularly in Algeria, Morocco, and Libya. It is also the main supplier of wheat to countries such as Egypt. The Russian government benefits politically from its influence in African nations as it receives backing for its stance on international issues. The 54



Hadama Diskite/ EFE

and their opposition to France and the UN mission in that country (MINUSMA).

African countries account for one-third of the votes in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This support was expressed in 2014 by way of the abstention of 20 countries from resolution 68/262 on Ukraine's territorial integrity. In the UNGA vote in April to suspend Russia's membership of the Human Rights Council, only 10 of the 54 African countries voted in favour; 9 opposed the resolution, and the remaining 35 abstained or were absent. A month earlier, only 28 African countries supported a UN resolution calling for Russia's immediate withdrawal from Ukraine.

Russia mainly projects hard power without any supplementary support for development

It is significant that countries in the UNGA are becoming less interested in, if not outright disaffected with, continuing to condemn Russia. In fact, the African continent's stance on the war leaves African leaders in a difficult position as condemning Russia's actions could affect bilateral relations with Moscow or even the very continuity in power of African leaders who have relied on Russian investments or the *Wagner* group's "protection".

Among other hybrid strategies, the Russian government's disinformation campaigns successfully introduce pro-Russian and anti-Western propaganda into African nations. This is the case of countries like Mali where, although the level of investment and development cooperation provided by the EU is unrivalled, Bamako was covered with Russian flags in 2021, disregarding the decades-long European effort in the country. In the case of Libya in early 2019, a social media disinformation campaign presented Russia as a stabilising actor and defender of the continent against the ineffectiveness of the UN and the West. The *Wagner* group's entry into Mali and other countries in the region is likely to bring further destabilisation, a scenario where terrorism and organised crime continue and spread to other countries such as Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Benin.

Additionally, due to Russia's influence in Libya and the Sahel, the Russian government is able to take the lead in exploiting irregular migration and influence the triggering of humanitarian crises brought on by the movement of refugees towards Europe.

DESTABILISATION

Russia's attempt to enhance its influence in Africa is likely to intensify, with clear detrimental consequences for Europe. For Russia, Africa could well represent the West's 'soft underbelly' through which to project its hard power at the expense of Europe's economy and stability. Additionally, this is a favourable scenario to support the sustainment of its ailing economy, which has been severely hit by the war in Ukraine, and a means for controlling the flow of human trafficking to Europe.

Russia presents itself to Africa as an alternative to the West's historical colonial influence and a way for some African leaders to cement their local power regardless of Western calls for democracy and respect for human rights.

However, trade or military agreements with Russia places African countries at a disadvantage. Russia's economic capacity to provide development aid or humanitarian support is very limited, considerably smaller than that of the EU or China. Russia mainly projects hard power, which is hardly subject to ethical or legal constraints and which, without any supplementary support for economic and institutional development, is likely to play a highly destabilising role in already destabilised countries. Agreements with Russia do not bring direct benefits for the population of the countries in the region, nor do they provide any source of long-term investment. On the contrary, they are likely to contribute to an increase in domestic problems in terms of political instability, as well as a rise in structural violence.

COLONEL MANUEL MARTÍN RICO, HEAD OF THE TRAINING TEAM AND COMMANDER OF THE SPANISH CONTINGENT IN EUTM-SOMALIA

“THE SOMALI PEOPLE SEE US AS A RELIABLE PARTNER”

He emphasises how training is helping the progress of operations against the main terrorist group and affirms that there is a solution to the conflict

“THE mission is progressing well, and what is most satisfying is that the Somali people view us as a reliable partner with only one goal in mind: to achieve reliable, effective and autonomous armed forces”. This is the view of Infantry Colonel Manuel Martín Rico, who leads the EUTM-Somalia Training Team and the Spanish contingent in this European Union mission. Due to the conflict between the government and the Islamist group *Al Shabaab*, he states that there is a high level of threat, but adds that “EUTM-Somalia is implementing a number of security measures to mitigate the risk and meet its objectives”.

Born 58 years ago in Quintana del Puente (Palencia) and posted to the Army War College, Martín Rico points out that his experience in Somalia has been “positive and very intense”. “I could sum it up”, he says, “in a phrase from Saint Teresa of Calcutta: We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop”.

—You are now facing the last stages of your mission. What have been the most relevant actions in these months?

—We have boosted the Somali-owned Training System by holding the first course provided solely by Somali military personnel. Our task was to mentor this training. It has been a first step that we believe will be the embryo to transfer training to the Somali armed forces in the future. We have also synchronised the delivery of the material acquired by the EU with the other activities of the mission, which the Somalis have much appreciated.

—What is the situation in the country?

—In August, the Federal Government began the so-called “total war” against *Al Shabaab*, the main terrorist group operating in Somalia. This “total war” has been carried out based on three pillars: military, with major offensive operations in some of *Al Shabaab*’s centres of power and the recapture of cities that were under its control; financial, by implementing

measures to reduce the terrorist organisation’s flow of income and money laundering; and ideological, by trying to delegitimise *Al Shabaab* in order to eradicate the popular support that sustains it.

Al Shabaab’s response has been harsh and, in recent months, both the number and scale of terrorist attacks have greatly increased to stop the government offensive; it has also retaliated against people supporting the government. It has carried out high-impact attacks, including attacks on hotels across the country (Hayat on 21 August, Tawakal on 23 October and Rays on 27 November 2022); a car bomb in the town of Beledweyne killing 60 people; and suicide bombings at the Somali National Army training centre in Mogadishu. The highest-impact attack took place on 29 October at rush hour against the Ministry of Education in the centre of the capital, with two car bombs killing 120 people and injuring more than 300. Also, in the capital and throughout most of the country, killings of members of the Somali security forces and



“From the first mandate in 2010 to date, EUTM-Somalia has trained more than 8,000 soldiers”

prominent individuals connected to the government offensive often occur, with an average of around five attacks a day.

—Another threat is the lack of water. What are the effects on the population?

—The drought in this part of the continent, and in particular in the Horn of Africa, is the worst in 40 years. Crops, pastures and large numbers of livestock have been lost, forcing thousands of people to flee their homes and putting thousands more at risk of starvation. The country is facing a famine affecting 8.3 million Somalis. No such announcement has been

officially made, which would probably allow much more aid to arrive. The government is worried that a famine declaration may lead to an exodus of people from affected areas to major cities and towns, depleting already limited food supplies and escalating criminality.

—How many Somali service members have already attended the training centre?

—Since EUTM-Somalia's first mandate in 2010 to date, more than 8,000 soldiers, NCOs and officers have been trained. Since the current mandate, the seventh, training has become more specialised, focusing on cadres, command of small platoon-sized units and company-size units, improvised explosive devices and intelligence.

—Have the objectives of the training changed considerably?

—Yes they have. In the early years, activities were carried out in Uganda because the security situation prevented them from being implemented in Somalia and were dedicated to the basic training of small units (sections and platoons). In 2014, the mission moved to Mogadishu and the task was to advise and mentor the Defence Staff and the Ministry of Defence, while continuing a training that was now more focused on leadership. It is since the seventh mandate that more specialised training has been provided, aimed exclusively at cadres and the use of enablers.

—Is training having the expected results in military operations?

—It certainly is. Towns that have for years been under the control of *Al Shabaab* have recently been recaptured. The various units equipped with non-lethal materiel purchased with EU funds are participating in this offensive. Moreover, the cadres that have received training have been mentored by EUTM-Somalia. They are responsible for planning and conducting these operations which, in some cases, are being carried out jointly with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) or with

INTERVIEW

“Our contingent is small, 20 soldiers, but with a high specific weight in the mission”

other international actors deployed in the country.

—What difficulties do European trainers encounter?

—The main one is the language, having to work with a Somali/English interpreters. Also, their difficulty to work in teams, probably because of their upbringing and lack of a structured training similar to the one in the West, coupled with a poorer learning ability than we are used to.

—What are the Somali soldiers generally like?

—Their main features are loyalty, honour and courage to face military operations involving great risk. There is no doubt that they are willing to sacrifice their lives for the benefit of their country in order to achieve a better future for the next generations. Therefore, they are generous in their actions. On the other hand, they have a great sense of camaraderie and are always willing to take part in decision-making.

—What are the tasks assigned to Spanish personnel?

—Our contingent is small, comprising twenty military personnel, although their professionalism, dedication and commitment give them a high specific weight in the mission. Spanish personnel are integrated in the General Staff, as well as in the Advisory Team, the Training Team and the Command Support Team, including the Communications Centre. We hold positions of great responsibility, such as Chief of Staff, Head of the Plans and Exercises Staff sections, Head of the Training Team, and deputy heads of the Advisory Team and of the Intelligence and Logistics Staff sections.

—Each contingent is deployed for eight months, longer than any other mission. Is it difficult to spend so

much time away from home?

—This is mainly due to the degree of responsibility that comes with the positions held. Of course being away from your family and friends has an impact on the staff. However, as it is a small group, the cohesion between the members of the contingent is very strong and we enjoy the possibility of living with this other family, the military family, and sharing our daily lives.

extended until the entry into force of the eighth mandate, which is scheduled for mid-January. Its main objective will be to enable the Somali armed forces to manage, plan and develop their own training plan, and to continue organising the units according to EU donations. In the country as a whole, the situation, in the aftermath of the latest operations and the declaration of “total war” against Al Shabaab, is gradually improving and



Colonel Martín Rico (left) is the head of the mission's Training Team, made up of military personnel of various nationalities.

—What is Mogadishu like?

—It is a city of more than two million people. Before the civil war it was known as the White Pearl of the Indian Ocean. Today, however, due to terrorism, the international forces must tighten security procedures when moving to the training centres where we conduct our daily operations.

—How do you see the immediate future of the mission and the country?

—The seventh mandate has been

areas that were under the control of the terrorist group for many years are now being recaptured.

—Is there a solution to the conflict?

—Of course there is, and by continuing to work with the various international organisations and supporting the development of the country, progress will be made.

Santiago F. del Vado
Photos: EMAD

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Air support gunners



Army Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) teams conduct air operations against ground targets



IN June 2017, the Army deployed a Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) team to Latvia within NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) mission. Its main task is to coordinate and conduct airstrikes on ground targets that are close to its own forces, those of the ten countries that make up the Canadian-led Battle Group, including Spain, which contributes a company-size task group of mechanised infantry to the multinational battalion.

For the first time, the Ground Force was projecting a unit abroad with its own personnel and assets, specifically from the Field Artillery Command (MACA), without having to resort to the forward air controllers of the Air Force or the Navy — its fighter pilots —, as was the case in Bosnia, Iraq or Afghanistan to conduct air to ground attacks. “These operations are called CAS (close air support) actions”, explains Master Sergeant Daniel Alzate Peña, who has been the leader of that first team as well as of the last — active until mid-January —, of a total of twelve that have operated at the Latvian base in Adazi since June 2017, i.e., one for each rotation of the Spanish contingent. “It’s not just a question of avoiding a fratricide, it’s also making sure that the bomb dropped from the Allied aircraft falls on the enemy’s tank and not on ours”, adds this NCO. “We must also minimise collateral damage, such as damage to civilian buildings close to the target, and even cease the attack when a bus carrying children passes”.

In addition to integrating the air component in support of ground troops in an operation, JTAC teams are in charge of “deconflicting the airspace”, says Master Sergeant Alzate. In other words, they are responsible for airspace management during the course of a CAS action or, according to this NCO, “when Raven UAVs are flying, mortars or artillery shells are being fired or when *Spike* anti-tank missiles are being launched”. It is therefore essential that these units serve as a link with the multinational battle group fire cell.

Although the composition of these teams varies depending on the type of operation, in Latvia they consist of five members, all of whom are gunners because of their fire support duties. At the helm of the unit is the Joint Terminal Attack Controller, “the only person who can communicate with the pilots of the aircraft”, says Master Sergeant Alzate, and who leads the air to ground attacks.

The men under his command are what he calls his “control tower”, which is comparable to the Air Force’s aeronautical control teams or TACP (Tactical Air Control Party). The second in command is a soldier with experience as an aerial gunfire observer who forms a tandem in the field of signal communications and target designation with the radio operator who, in turn, is primarily responsible for guiding the aircraft’s smart weaponry. The party is completed by a gun-firer who is in charge of the immediate defence of all its members and a specialist in off-road driving.

The Army’s “JTACs” are essentially gunners, but they can also be special operations soldiers of any Branch, prepared to carry out CAS actions infiltrated in enemy territory. Master Sergeant Lazate is one of the Army’s first batch of JTAC officers and NCOs.

These pioneers were trained in 2015 at the U.S. Air Force Ground-Air Operations School. Since then, subsequent classes of students have been trained at the *Méndez Parada* Parachuting School, together with members of the Navy and Air Force.

José Luis Expósito
Photos: Pepe Díaz



■ Master Sergeant Daniel Alzate Peña.
JTAC team leader

“I CHOOSE THE BEST MEN”

“FOR a gunner, being a Joint Terminal Attack Controller is like playing in the Champions League”, says Master Sergeant Alzate, appealing to this expertise acquired in 2015, which has since allowed him to “compete at the highest level” conducting ground-to-air strikes in numerous multinational exercises, “virtually all over Europe, including the Alps”.

But especially in his last two deployments abroad, both within NATO’s mission in Latvia, training with Baltic Air Policing fighters or US attack helicopters. First in 2017, at the launch of the allied operation, and more recently, from June last year to mid-January, its seventh time participating in an international operation.

He had previously been posted to Afghanistan as an aerial gunfire observer, a prerequisite for becoming a JTAC team leader. “The members of my team have my full confidence, and I theirs. I choose the best men and I take them under my wing”, he says.

Master Sergeant Alzate joined the Army 28 years ago, “22 of them as a gunner, always in the 11th Field Artillery Regiment (RACA) in Burgos”, he points out.

■ First corporal Raúl Palacio Alonso.
Radio and laser operator

“WE MUST BE VERY ACCURATE”

“MY job is easy. I detect targets, determine their exact position with the rangefinder and mark them with the Rattler laser designator so they can be shot down”, explains First Corporal Palacio, the unit’s operator specialised in the guidance of smart bombs, rockets or missiles launched from the air. “In this job we must be very accurate to avoid collateral damage, much more accurate than firing with artillery”, he says, recalling his work as a forward observer of the 11th RACA, the skill for which he was deployed to Afghanistan. “Previously, I was in Kosovo and now, for the second time, in Latvia”, where he is also in charge of signal communications. My task is “to ensure communications with the aircraft, the company in command, indirect fire units or UAV units, for example”.

“In other scenarios we always look for an elevated position to control the terrain, but here in Latvia everything is flat and covered with dense trees”, which makes it difficult to observe the target. “How do we solve this? With caution, getting much closer to the target. There is no other way to accomplish our mission”.





■ Staff Sergeant Rubén García Sanz.
Ground fire observer

“LOOKING TO ADJUST FIRE”

THE “eyes” of a JTAC team leader are those of his second in command. In his case, those of Staff Sergeant Rubén García Sanz under the command of Master Sergeant Alzate as a ground fire observer. This skill enables him to designate targets and to provide for the acquisition and control of fire support. In this post, he is required to “know how to look to adjust fire if necessary and to make the projectile reach the exact spot where the target is”, he explains. “Although the leader gives the orders and I obey, the truth is that there is a great deal of coordination between the two of us”, he says as a good subordinate and comrade. For example, in a CAS operation, he is delegated by his superior to carry out the mission on the ground in contact with the manoeuvre elements, while the latter concentrates his efforts on leading the actions of the aircraft.

Staff Sergeant Sanz joined the Army as a private soldier in 2006 and became a non-commissioned officer in 2014. For the last three years, he has been stationed at the 11th RACA, where he has been a “gun commander, member of an Artillery Fire Direction Centre, forward observer and aerial fire observer”, the latter skill being essential to become “second in command” of the JTAC.

■ Private David López García. Gun firer

“WE WORK VERY COHESIVELY”

“MY primary responsibility is to secure the team’s immediate defence from above while I’m mounted on the tower of the VAMTAC with my weapon, a *Browning* 12.70 mm machine gun”. However, when he joined this unit in 2020, Private David López García also had to familiarise himself with the targeting and designation systems as well as with the weapons guidance and signal systems used by his comrades, “in case it was necessary to collaborate with them during an operation”, he explains. “There are very few of us and our duty is to work very cohesively”. He has a far wider range of vision than the other members of the group from his elevated position, whether he is stationary or moving, which allows him to provide information to follow the mechanised platoon they are in and even cooperate in targeting”.

Stationed at the 11th RACA in Burgos since 2017, Private López García has been part of the crew of an artillery piece, has been a firing computer specialist and a radio operator at the Artillery Fire Direction Centre and, for the last four years, a forward observer, “skills that all members of a JTAC team have”, he stresses.





■ Corporal Israel García Blanco. Driver

“WE ALL KNOW A BIT OF EVERYTHING”

IN Latvia, as part of the JTAC team, Corporal Israel García Blanco operates inside the VAMTAC ST5 vehicle as a driver. When required, “I also assist the staff sergeant in targeting or help the first corporal getting the signal equipment ready for communications”, he says. “In this unit we all know a little bit of everything” because, like the rest of its members, he is also a forward artillery observer — “the best of the best”, he emphasises— a skill he has been honing at the 11th RACA in Burgos for the past five years. Nearing his second decade of service in the Army, he was previously assigned to the 62nd Field Artillery Regiment in Astorga and the 63rd Rocket Launcher Regiment in El Ferral (León).

At Adazi, in addition to his role as a gunner, he adds his proven experience in driving off-road vehicles to ensure a no less important mission: the mobility of the JTAC team in an area that he compares to the dune landscape of Dakar, “a huge beach of very fine sand with trees that requires a special driving technique”.

Corporal Blanco joined the unit a year ago, in January 2022, and six months later, in June, he was deployed to Latvia, his second international mission. The first one was Kosovo.



PREMIOS VIRGEN DEL CARMEN 2023

*Acercando la Armada y la
mar a través de la cultura*



OVERVIEW



Manu/ EFE

Operation *Chile*

The UME helps fight the wave of fires

CHILE is among the countries that are most susceptible to large forest fires due to its decade-long drought. The heat wave that swept the country in February only served to escalate the quantity and severity of the hundreds of active fires that left 26 dead, thousands displaced, and 280,000 hectares of scorched land.

The Chilean government requested assistance from the international community to handle this emergency and Spain replied by sending a detachment of the Military Emergency Unit (UME). The troops departed for the South American country from Torrejón air base on 5 February, only 24 hours after receiving the call. The team was made up of 50 troops, including 38 soldiers from the first Emergency Intervention Battalion (BIEM I), six firefighting advisors (analysis and logistics) and six members of the Signals Battalion equipped with drones and satellite telecommunications systems.

The contingent arrived at Santiago's international airport that night and proceeded to the Biobío region, one of the worst hit by the fires. The team leader, Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Javier Martín Traverso, described the complex scenario they encountered: "There is a lot of what we call forest-urban interface, with population centres and more isolated houses that have to be defended. Our instructions are, first, to save lives and protect them and, second, to avoid losing any more homes and, if possible, protect the environment".

The UME already collaborated in firefighting operations when Chile was hit by a wave of fires in 2017, sending a contingent of 56 soldiers whose work was highly praised by the South American country. Six years later, the appreciation of the affected population — people who, in many cases, had lost everything they had worked for their entire lives — as well as the good understanding and efficient coordination between the Spanish contingent and the rest of the local emergency services, have once again been demonstrated.

Naval exercise *Neptune Strike*

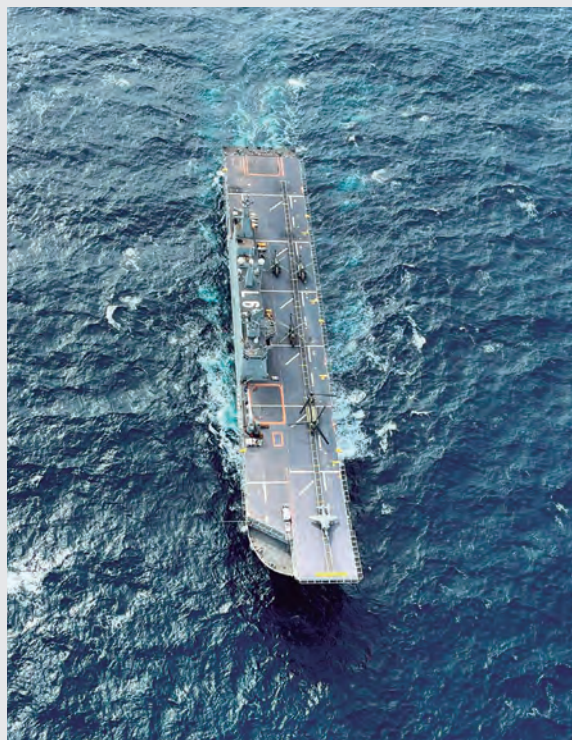
Assets of *Dédalo 23* take part in the exercise

FROM 20 to 27 February, Navy ships integrated in the Expeditionary Battle Group *Dédalo 23* took part in exercise *Neptune Strike 2023.1*. This is a multi-domain exercise organised by the Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO).

It will take place in the central Mediterranean to test the capabilities offered by the aircraft carrier strike groups for the defence of the Atlantic Alliance. Aircraft carrier battle group *Juan Carlos I*, US aircraft carrier strike group (CSG) *George HW Bush* and the Italian *Cavour* also took part in this edition.

In addition to the *Juan Carlos I*, Spain is providing the *Dédalo* with an embarked unit of *Harrier AV8B+* aircraft and helicopters, a reinforced Marine landing battalion, frigates *Victoria* and *Blas de Lezo*, amphibious ships *Galicia* and *Castilla*, combat supply ship *Cantabria*, submarine *Tramontana* and a helicopter detachment of the Army Air Corps.

When the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria struck, the *Dédalo* was deployed in the Mediterranean conducting training exercises with international forces. The ship then changed its schedule of activities and went to the affected area to help the victims and contribute to the distribution of humanitarian aid. It remained there for a week before returning to its planned exercise schedule.



Itaki Gómez/MDE

Mission in Senegal

The *Marfil* detachment celebrates its tenth anniversary

A very special date for the *Marfil* tactical air detachment was 5 February 2023, as it commemorated ten years of its mission in Senegal. In this decade, 39 contingents have been relieved, its aircraft have completed 4,807 sorties and have transported 7,000 tonnes of cargo and some 46,000 passengers, missions which have involved more than 13,300 flying hours.



EMAD

The *Marfil* detachment is part of operation Support to Mali and is tasked with intra-theatre tactical and logistic airlift missions to assist France in its fight against terrorism in the Sahel. It also supports UN missions MINUSMA and MINUSCA,

focused on the stabilisation of Mali and Central Africa respectively, as well as EU missions EUTM RCA and EUTM Mali, which support the training of the respective armed forces and the *G5 Sahel* Joint Force.

The 40th contingent took over on 18 January at the Escale Aéronautique Commandant Lemaître at *Blaise Diagne* international airport, from where the detachment operates. It is made up of 70 soldiers from various Air and Space Force units, mostly personnel from the 35th Wing of the Air Deployment Support Squadron (EADA) and the Mobile Air Control Group (GRUMOCA). It has two C-295 aircraft belonging to the 35th Wing.

SACEUR in Spain

Round of visits to Allied countries

The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), US General Christopher G. Cavoli, visited Spain on 1 March as part of his tour of Allied countries to present NATO's new military plans. During his stay in Madrid, he was received by King Felipe VI, Defence Minister Margarita Robles, and the CHOD, Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón.



Marco Romero/MDE

Ukraine was the central topic addressed by Cavoli and Robles. The minister thanked the former for his contribution since the start of the war and highlighted Spain's important contribution to deterrence on NATO's eastern flank, with more than 1,100 troops deployed in the area. She also emphasised the importance of continuing to support Ukraine's defence with military material and through the training of its personnel. General Cavoli explained the current status of NATO's new operational plans and insisted on the need to maintain a comprehensive approach to security.

Gender perspectives

NATO Committee meets in the Canary Islands



Ejército del Aire y del Espacio

THE participants of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP) together with the Gender Advisor to the International Military Staff (IMS) met from 24 to 27 January at the Canary Islands Air Command Headquarters. This body, made up of 30 people from NATO countries, promotes the integration of women in the Armed Forces and develops strategies to include the gender dimension in conflicts. "The gender perspective is an additional military and operational advantage", said Lieutenant Colonel Álvaro Villalobos at a briefing held on the sidelines of the meeting at Casa de África in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The Spanish representative, who was the only male member of the Committee, added that "societies are different in each country and the role of women in each of them must be analysed, as well as that of men, boys and girls, in order to draw lessons on how to interact with these actors and thereby advise the commander on the ground". For her part, the Committee chair, Portuguese Lieutenant Colonel Diana Morais, explained that most NATO operations are mainly carried out among the civilian population. And in this context, "women and men

are exposed to different threats", she said. Therefore, the Committee makes recommendations on the improvements that can be made to integrate this perspective into all NATO activities. She also noted that there are many gender stereotypes in society and in the armed forces that unconsciously assign different roles to women and men. "When we are at war, we sometimes need to overcome those stereotypes and assume, for instance, that a woman does not always have to be a pacifist and that, on the contrary, she can be a war agent".

The conference also featured the participation of the Gender Advisor to the International Military Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Katherine Prudhou of the British Army, who gave some real-life examples to explain the importance of a gender perspective in overseas missions. One was that when NATO forces arrived in Afghanistan, they realised that dealing with local women and girls was going to be difficult if the battalions were all-male. It was therefore decided to make them all-female or mixed battalions, which allowed for better interaction with the population, more information and deeper penetration into the communities.



Instructors from the Military Parachuting School, dressed in period costumes, jump over Alcantarilla air base in automatic opening mode.



ARMED FORCES

Paratroopers in the cockpit of the A400M getting ready to participate in the mass jump over Alcantarilla air base.

A JUMP IN TIME

The *Méndez Parada* Military Parachuting School celebrates its 75th anniversary with a mass jump featuring paratroopers from the Army, the Navy and the Civil Guard

AT San Javier air base (Murcia), 114 paratroopers from the Spanish Army; Air and Space Force; the Navy; and the Civil Guard gather in a small hangar in no apparent order. While those who have not seen each other for a long time say hello, they recharge their batteries with a snack. After being briefed by the commander, they put their equipment on and line up in reverse order of their turn to jump. There are no nerves, but there is responsibility, because this is going to be a special jump. They are about to board the A400M, which is already waiting for them on the runway and from which they will jump at 10,000 feet. Forty kilometres away, at Alcantarilla air base, around 2,000 people await them with their eyes fixed on an overcast sky that threatens rain. The distant noise indicates that the plane is approaching and, seconds later, the sky is filled with colours, those of

the parachutes which, skilfully manipulated by the paratroopers, land in the exact spot marked with flares, right in front of the grandstand from where King Felipe VI is attentively watching the events unfold. It was the 24th of January and, with this mass jump, one of the largest ever performed in Spain, the *Méndez Parada* Military Parachuting School (EMP) celebrated its 75th anniversary and recalled its first plunge into the air 75 years ago.

During this time, the School has held almost 2,000 courses, trained around 120,000 students and performed more than 1.5 million jumps. It has a workforce of 494 troops, of whom 136 are command staff and 304 are soldiers. The ceremony commemorating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the EMP was attended, among other authorities, by the President of Murcia, Fernando López Miras, the Air and Space Force Chief of Staff, Javier Salto,

and the mayors of Murcia, José Antonio Serrano, and Alcantarilla, Joaquín Buendía.

After welcoming the King and rendering honours to him, the headmaster, Colonel Alberto José Lens, read out the order of 19 August 1947 for the establishment of the school.

Then, Lieutenant General Pedro José García Cifo, Director General for Recruitment and Military Education and the oldest active paratrooper, presented a gift to Second Lieutenant Vicente López Cabrera, in recognition of his dedication and devotion. García Cifo highlighted the significant shift from carrying a parachute merely as emergency gear to using it as a safe descent element for entering combat.

He also valued “the passion” of the instructors who have taught at Alcantarilla. “The school is in a process of transformation, always striving for excellence”, he remarked.

Jump from the tailgate of the A400M at the School's anniversary celebration.



MASS JUMP

The first to land were six soldiers in period costumes who jumped from a C-212 Aviocar. "A raincoat and a bumper helmet padded on the sides with a chinstrap so that it won't come loose during the fall", explains Corporal José Antonio Ruiz Jiménez. "That's how they used to jump, and we are happy to do it again today to remember our veterans who have taught us everything".

They were followed by 104 other paratroopers, including two women, who descended at speeds of up to 200 km/hour. Second Lieutenant Diego Plaza, assigned to the EADA (Air Deployment Support Squadron) was one of them. "A jump with so many different units is quite unusual, but it's great because you share that same adrenaline with a lot of your comrades from other services".

Members of units such as the Parachutist Brigade, the Special Naval Warfare Force, the Parachute Sapper Squadron and the Special Operations Command participated in the event, as did members

of the Civil Guard, such as Major Felipe Pizarro, from the Underwater Activities Unit, who acknowledged that the jump "was quite complex but, fortunately, the School has a lot of experience. It's a pleasure to work with these professionals". Despite the 1,600 jumps under his belt, he admits that "the knot in your stomach when you jump never goes away. And the day it disappears is when you have to stop jumping".

The finishing touch to this commemorative jump was provided by



King Felipe VI, accompanied by the Chief of Staff of the Air and Space Army, Javier Salto, and the director of the School, Colonel Alberto José Lens.

ten members of the PAPEA (Air Force Parachute Acrobatic Patrol), the only unit of this service authorised to perform shows and participate in sporting competitions. After some spectacular manoeuvres and figures in the air, one of its members, Second Lieutenant Alberto Vidal, descended with the largest Spanish Flag ever displayed in a show of this type. It measured 1,350 square metres, weighed 65 kilos and a counterweight of 40 kilos was added so that it could fly. To get out of the plane and deploy it, Vidal needed the help of three other colleagues. Being a member of the PAPEA "is physically very demanding and difficult to combine with family life because we are away for many weekends", he explains. "We do five jumps a day Monday through Friday and then one competition after another. We train a lot and we do it in the cold, in the rain, in the heat, when we feel like it and when we don't. But it's wonderful", he adds.

During the ceremony, a small air parade took place with three C-212s, and a



Paratroopers in period costume jump from a C-212, the aircraft normally used at the School.

A member of the PAPEA carries a 1,350 square metre flag weighing 65 kilos, the largest used in this type of events.



The first parachute jump took place in Alcantarilla in January 1948, the year in which 165 soldiers graduated

land parade with the participation of the forces rendering honours to the King, URO vehicles, RG-31s and a training boat.

THREE SCHOOLS IN ONE

All paratroopers of the Spanish Armed Forces are trained in the EMP. It is actually made up of three schools: the military reference centre for parachuting; the one in charge of implementing the National JTAC (Joint Terminal Attack Controller) Training Plan; and the one responsible for training Air and Space Force crews in SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Extraction). Some 1,000 pupils attend the EPA each year.

To be a good parachutist "you have to be willing and skilful", says the school's head teacher, Commander Fernando Lombo. The centre runs 15 different courses and according to Commander Lombo, the fundamental one is the basic parachuting course, which provides the theoretical and practical training necessary to jump from an aircraft in flight in the automatic opening mode. "With this course, the student becomes a parachutist, with all that is involved in jumping out of a plane, which goes against nature", he says. It lasts a fortnight and takes place about 14 times a year.

In addition, it offers a manual opening course with the use of oxygen and a

jumpmaster course. Those who take the latter must jump at least ten times in manual opening mode in the twelve months prior to its completion. Paratroopers also learn at the centre how to jump in HALO-HAHO modes (low and high altitude openings), descend in tandem, fold parachutes, prepare loads, be an aircraft guide, a combat controller and command parachute units.

The teachers have an accelerated freefall training plan to jump with the students and to resolve any incidents during the fall. "They learn to handle themselves as if they were on the ground so as to be able to retrieve students that are rolling over and stop them or open their parachute if they get stuck", explains Major Lombo.

The centre has C-212 aircraft. The number of flights depends on the amount of courses at any given time and can reach up to six hours of flying time a day per aircraft. "And that is in addition to the simulators we have", adds Lieutenant Colonel Luis Enrique Antón, head of the support group and deputy commander of Alcantarilla air base. "But the time we have saved using simulators we have gained in courses. We do more than before". One of these

The School has trained some 120,000 students and performed more than 1.5 million jumps

simulators is the training jump and descent tower for automatic opening. It simulates the aircraft cockpit: pupils exit the cockpit through a door and down a ramp and descend a zip line. It is possible to simulate, for example, the malfunction of the main canopy which, despite being open, does not work properly. "What the student has to do in these situations is to open the reserve parachute and land with the two canopies", says Commander Lombo. In case of manual opening, the main parachute would have to be jettisoned before releasing the reserve parachute to avoid entanglement. Before boarding an aircraft, all applicants go

through this facility. "And if they don't manage to jump off the tower, they are dropped from the course", he adds.

Attached to this structure is a crane where the pupils are hung and released to learn how to flip before they reach the ground. "What we want them to do is to mechanise the movement, not to think about the way to do it but rather do it automatically. And that comes from doing it over and over again", explains Major Lombo.

Furthermore, to learn and practise manual opening, the EMP has a virtual reality parachute training simulator (PARASIM) and a freefall simulator, known as the wind tunnel. The former, using virtual reality techniques, allows students to practise dealing with the different emergencies that may arise when opening the parachute canopy and to learn how to navigate when the canopy is open.

When using the PARASIM, students are equipped with all the elements of a real parachute. "Once we put on our goggles, it's as if we're flying. The only thing missing is a fan to simulate the wind", jokes the head of the simulator section, Master Sergeant José Ángel Cuerva. With their goggles, students can see the GPS, the altimeter, whether they are pulling too little or too much... "And



A student descends a zip line after jumping from the tower that simulates an aircraft cockpit to practise the automatic opening manoeuvre.

An instructor checks that all equipment is correctly adjusted before boarding the aircraft.



Freefall training in the wind tunnel. Left, training canopy opening and navigation using virtual reality techniques.



we can reproduce any weather scenario: fog patches, clouds at different heights, wind or day and night jumps”, adds Master Sergeant Cuerva. It also simulates incidents such as the parachute not opening or the parachute rolling up. This simulator has ten stations that can be configured in a network to practise patrol jumps.

The wind tunnel, on the other hand, is used to practise free falls. Five metres in diameter, it can accommodate four jumpers simultaneously and reach speeds of up to 300 kilometres per hour. “We can simulate everything, with the only limitation of movement imposed by the walls”, explains Master Sergeant Cuerva. A jump from an aircraft can take between 35 and 40 seconds and in the tunnel there are entries every two minutes, which is equivalent to three jumps. The equipment used in the

wind tunnel is almost identical to that worn by the paratroopers on a real jump.

OTHER TRAINING

The JTAC (Joint Terminal Attack Controller) course is intended for those responsible for conducting air operations against ground targets and is the only NATO-certified course in the Spanish Armed Forces. It takes place once a year with a dozen students.

The school is also a reference centre for SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Extraction) where trainees are taught the necessary techniques to be able to return to friendly territory in the event of being isolated in hostile territory. “We teach them how to make shelters to protect themselves from bad weather, how to make water drinkable and different methods of signalling”, explains Captain



Hanging on the crane before being released, students practise flipping before landing. Left, Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) simulator.

Álvaro Saavedra, head of the SERE section. It has been 75 years since the EMP opened its classrooms to military parachutists. The first 165 graduates at that time were possibly branded as fearless or reckless. They were definitely a bit crazy since jumping out of an aircraft is not for the faint-hearted according to those who do it regularly, even though it appears to be an easy task when you watch them manoeuvre in the air. One only has to look at the PAPEA's shows —more than 900 in its 45 years of history— and the many championships it has participated in, in which it has been ranked among the top ten teams at international level. This is within the reach of very few because, as Major Lombo states: “It's not for everyone”.

Elena Tarilonte
Photos: Pepe Díaz

THROUGH THE SKY, always on time

The Air Evacuation Medical Unit (UMAER) ensures that casualties will be transported from any location in the world and stabilised in the best conditions

FOR a sick or seriously injured person thousands of kilometres away from Spain, the best medicine is knowing they will soon be able to return home. When a soldier in his flying clothing approaches him/her after disembarking from a plane, the patient will be able to see a blue patch bearing the motto: "Through the sky, always on time". Within hours, the patient will land in Spain and his/her journey will be in the best of hands, cared for during the flight by the UMAER (Air Evacuation Medical Unit) as if he/she were in a hospital. They are members of the Spanish Air and Space Force and are located at Torrejón air base in Madrid. Medical Lieutenant Colonel Pilar Salvador, the unit commander, does not know what it is like to spend more than a few hours away from the base. "The service has to be ready to act all year round", she says.

HOW TO PREPARE AN EVACUATION

"The Operations Command (MOPS) receives the first call informing us of the number of patients to be evacuated, the kind of injuries they have, their location and their degree of urgency", explains Pilar Salvador. From then on, the UMAER coordinates its services with an international organisation called the EATC (European Air Transport Command), of which Spain and six

other countries are members. The EATC improves the effectiveness of military air transport and aeromedical evacuation. If a nation does not have a dedicated national aircraft of its own, it can request the EATC to send any available assets from a nearby member nation of the organisation.

UMAER personnel work ahead while awaiting the EATC's approval so that everything will be ready when the departure is confirmed. Among other things, they propose to the JMOVA (Air Mobility Command in Zaragoza) the most suitable type of aircraft for the evacuation, based on its capacity and the urgency of the flight. "We usually suggest a couple of aircraft and they tell us which one is available". Five aircraft are approved for Air Evacuation: the A400M, A310, Falcon 900 and C-295 aircraft and the Super Puma helicopter. The NH90 helicopter and the new A330 MRTT aircraft have yet to be validated.

These aircraft range in capacity from the A400M, which can carry five critical and fourteen stable patients, to the Falcon, which only has room for one critical and one stable patient. A critical patient is defined as a patient who requires the same equipment as in a ground ICU.

Unlike the German service, the UMAER does not have aircraft of its own, but as medical Lieutenant Colonel



Part of the UMAER team next to the C-212 Aviocar they use for training.

Francisco Cantalejo points out, "what at first seems to be a drawback is actually our great strength: we can fly in five different aircraft. It also involves greater efficiency in the use of assets because there are no aircraft standing idle while there is no mission".

AIRBORNE MEDICAL CARE

The UMAER consists of a unit commander, two medical captains/lieutenants in active service, a reserve medical lieutenant colonel, five nurses, nineteen medical air evacuation technicians and four ground support staff. Lieutenant Colonel Salvador highlights the relevant role of volunteer



medical reservists who also join the unit on a temporary basis. "Thanks to them, we have managed even when there has been a lack of staff", she admits. Captain Francisco Javier López is the reservist currently serving on staff and works as an emergency physician in the civilian world. He conveys great enthusiasm when talking about his job in the unit: "One of the greatest moments of my professional life was when we brought a master sergeant from Beirut with serious thrombosis. He recognised me because I had treated him some time ago in Lebanon for a severe finger injury, and he warmly expressed his gratitude", he recalls.

The UMAER does not have pilots of its own, rather they are assigned to the aircraft requested. Once these pilots are called, they are informed of the needs of the flight (from altitude to whether the patient could endure a storm). In the air, treatments can be complicated. When administering serum, for example, a perfusion pump is necessary because the drops do not fall as they would in a hospital on the ground. In addition, accelerations, temperature, poorer lighting conditions and vibrations must be taken into account. Critical patients, for instance, are usually placed in row 20, which is the one with the least vibrations. Nurse

Captain José Antonio Galán recounts a very complicated transfer in which he participated last year: "Due to a soldier's vertebra fractures, he had to be completely immobilised throughout the transfer and the plane could make no sudden movements". And two other cases in Mali: "They were both in the ICU because of a traffic accident. One of them had a cranioencephalic fracture so we were conditioned by the flight altitude because it is always imperative to prevent the formation of intracranial air bubbles". Not to mention how the "transfer" of patients is carried out. The medical staff who hand over the patient at the airport cannot be left



An A400M can carry up to five critical and fourteen stable patients. Below, training on the ground.



without equipment, “so, at the foot of the ramp, all the mechanical systems keeping the patient alive have to be changed, without causing him/her any pain”, says Captain Galán.

Air evacuation technicians are a fundamental part of the team. Two of them are Javier Piñón and Adriana Muelas and they both agree saying that “the problem is that once we are up there, nothing the patient might possibly need —from oxygen to blood— can be missing. We have basic equipment and then we go on adding things that may be necessary”.

350 MISSIONS

Throughout its history, the UMAER has accomplished some 350 missions. In the last year alone, they have carried out 25 rescue operations of military and civilian personnel, transporting 155 people (109 patients and 46 family members). “Each mission is special and your heart goes out to all involved”, admits Lieutenant Colonel Salvador. For example, in July a child from Mali with a serious tumour pathology was brought to Zaragoza. In these cases there is no need to mobilise medical equipment so rather than being evacuation missions they are medical escort missions.

However, in other cases we do quite the opposite. Like on 15 August, when an Air Evacuation or MEDEVAC (Medical Evacuation) was conducted to transfer a five-day-old baby in critical condition from the Son Espases

Throughout its history, the UMAER has accomplished some 350 missions

hospital in Palma de Mallorca to the Vall d'Hebron hospital in Barcelona. "This evacuation required such a large configuration, due to the great amount of medical equipment, that civilian aircraft were not able to carry it out", recalls the unit commander. Five persons made up the team, all of whom were experts in ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) that was necessary for the patient's stabilisation and treatment.

THE GREAT EBOLA CHALLENGE

In 2014, the unit transferred two Spanish priests, Miguel Pajares and Manuel García, as well as Sister Juliana Bonoha, who were infected with Ebola, a highly contagious disease. Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Cantalejo was involved in their evacuation from Liberia and Sierra Leone: "The patients had to be completely isolated. These are lessons learned that are afterwards exchanged at international conferences. In fact, since then, the UMAER has undergone a lot of training in the use of high biological isolation means". As a result of this transfer, the components of the UMAER were awarded the Cross of Aeronautical Merit with white badge.

Training on the ground is essential. For this reason, simulations are performed using a dummy patient. While the patient is being treated, the lights in the room begin to flash, making it extremely difficult to see. "All of this is to bring us closer to real situations that can occur on a flight", explains Pilar Salvador. The lessons learned do not fall on deaf ears; last summer a patient was found with symptoms similar to Ebola, but he was actually suffering from Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever. The Ministry of Health asked the Ministry of Defence to move him from Ponferrada (León) to San Sebastián, where there were more means for his treatment.

As Lieutenant Colonel Cantalejo notes, "it is a very serious and contagious disease that is spread through contact with blood or fluids. It is a highly

challenging case because you have to work inside an aircraft with very limited space and using isolation chambers".

All these experiences feed back into the civilian world as UMAER members provide in-flight medical training in various universities.

EVACUATING IN WARTIME

These professionals have also been impacted by the war in Ukraine. Last summer, they brought 46 Ukrainian children with cancer who had crossed

UMAER members sometimes need to ask for additional staff from outside the unit. This is what they did when they went to pick up the three survivors of the Villa de Pitango, the fishing boat that sank in Newfoundland in February 2022. "In this case, besides carrying medication for the treatment of their common pathologies (hypertension, etc.), we also asked for a psychologist because of the stressful experience they had gone through", says Lt Col Salvador.



Inside the aircraft, nothing the patient might possibly need—from oxygen to blood—can be missing.

into Poland. Each of them was accompanied by an adult. Medical Lieutenant Guillermo José Tarnawski, a Spaniard with a Polish father and who is fluent in Polish, was on board the return flight. He immediately fell in love with this unit. "After passing the Resident Medical Intern examination (MIR in Spanish), I obtained a position in traumatology at a hospital in Barcelona but I gave up everything, much to the surprise of my inner circle, to join the UMAER", he claims.

UMAER members also provide medical escort services on commercial flights. On one of those trips, coming from Istanbul, they avoided an emergency landing. Nurse Lieutenant Penélope Márquez and Corporal Samuel García, an expert air evacuation technician, attended for two and a half hours to another passenger who had fainted. And, as their motto goes, "through the sky, always on time".

Gabriel Cruz

Photos: Hélène Gicquel and UMAER



Painting of the Battle of Pavia (1525), showing the clash of the arquebus against the heavy cavalry.

BICOCCA

changed previous tactics

In 1522, Spanish arquebusiers ended the traditional hegemony of the feared Swiss pikemen

FIVE hundred years ago, in 1522, the Battle of Bicocca took place in the north of Milan, Italy. It was fought between troops of King Charles I of Spain —and Emperor Charles V of Germany— and King Francis I of France in the context of the Four Years' War (1521-1525).

This battle, which preceded the final victory in Pavia (1525), played a decisive role in the development of a new combat tactic: an orderly and continuous rolling fire maintained by the Spanish arquebusiers, which

quickly destroyed the formations of Swiss pikemen, hitherto considered unbeatable.

Both battles were part of the Italian Wars. They were successive conflicts —a continuation of the traditional struggle between the Aragonese and Gauls for control of the Italian peninsula— which between 1494 and 1559 pitted the crowns of Spain and France against each other for hegemony in Europe.

After the times of war during the reign of Ferdinand V (the Catholic), in which many of the young commanders who would later play leading roles in

Bicocca served under the orders of the Great Captain, and the treaty signed in 1516 between the aforementioned Francis I and a young Charles I in 1521, there was a precarious balance in Italy.

PRE-WAR SCENARIO

On the one hand, thanks to this agreement, the Spaniards had retained the kingdom of Naples and the Gauls saw their conquest of the duchy of Milan recognised.

On the other hand, four years after the pact, in 1520, the Spanish-French rivalry reared its head again, with an

even greater intensity than before. After Charles I was elected Holy Roman Emperor, an appointment also sought by the Frenchman, who, after losing, started a new war, fomenting rebellions in the Low Countries and Navarre, against the interests of the emperor.

Once these were neutralised, the heir to the Empire turned his attention to Italy in order to drive the French out of the country once and for all. Charles I, now also Emperor Charles V, in alliance with Pope Leo X, ordered his forces in Naples, commanded by Prospero Colonna and the Marquis of Pescara, to join the papal troops and advance towards Milan.

At the same time, he dispatched lansquenets (German pikemen) under Georg von Frundsberg from the north.

The French could only count on the support of the Venetian Republic, which did little to hinder the passage of the Germans.

WITH MILAN ON TARGET

The French governor of Milan, Odet de Foix, Viscount of Lautrec, had few troops, the population was against him and, although he received some reinforcements, he could not avoid losing the city on 22 November after a surprise attack.

He withdrew, leaving only a few hundred men in Sforza Castle, remaining in possession of a few squares in Milanese territory.

Francis I wanted to revive the fighting with new troops, especially Swiss infantry, French cavalry, Venetian forces and Italian mercenaries, but avoiding open confrontation in a great pitched battle. A scenario that also —and above all— eluded Charles I's imperial army.

Nevertheless, both sides continued with their skirmishes and sieges of garrisons. Colonna focused mainly on the defence of Milan, waiting for Lautrec's attack to relieve the castle garrison; but the French attacked Novara and Pavia in order to draw the Imperials into a decisive battle.

The Viscount razed the land between Milan and Monza to cut off enemy

consulting with his commanders, decided to take shelter and await the attack in the entrenchments they had prepared in the park of the palazzo that stood in the area, where a small palace is still to be found. Behind it and its landscaped grounds laid the imperial camp, separated by a ditch.

The location was in itself an excellent defence. To its left (west), in addition to a marshy area that was difficult to cross, there was a canal that had swollen due to the rains. The (northern) front of about 500 metres —the place where the main French attack came from— was closed off by a sunken road that had been flooded, a sort of moat inside of which an earthen rampart was erected.

IMPERIAL DEPLOYMENT

Behind this front, in a very dense formation, were the Spanish arquebusiers, supported by four squads of Spanish pikemen and German lansquenets. On both sides, artillery was placed on earthen platforms.

To the right of the position (east) ran the road from Milan to Monza and, parallel to it, another ditch, an extension of the one separating the camp and the park, crossed by two small bridges. To guard the latter and the whole of his rear guard (south), Colonna placed staggered infantry troops and a good part of his cavalry, both light and heavy.

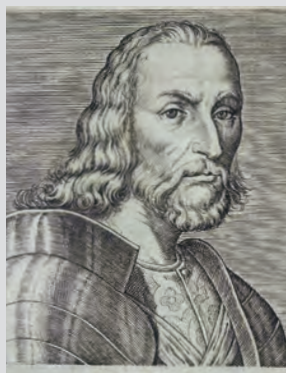
The French troops, under Lautrec's command, brought cavalry elements to the front, especially the feared Black Bands, mercenaries of the condottiere Giovanni de' Medici; and Gascon, Gallic, Italian and Swiss infantrymen, with the Venetians remaining behind as a reserve. On his left, on the road to Milan, he placed the bulk of his cavalry, 4,000 light and



Tiziano (Museo del Prado)



J. Clouet (Museo del Louvre)



A. Capriotti (Biblioteca Municipal de Trento)



M. Sitrow (Palacio Real de Madrid)

From top to bottom and from left to right, King Charles I of Spain —and Emperor Charles V of Germany—, the French sovereign Francis I with their respective military leaders in the Battle of Bicocca and in previous clashes: Prospero Colonna and Viscount of Lautrec.

communications in the north. Colonna now left Milan and fortified himself at a place called La Bicocca, six kilometres to the north, awaiting a response.

THE CONFRONTATION

On 27 April 1522, Gallic troops advanced from Monza towards Bicocca. Prospero Colonna, after

The battle fought just a few kilometres from Milan was part of the Franco-Spanish wars to rule over Italy

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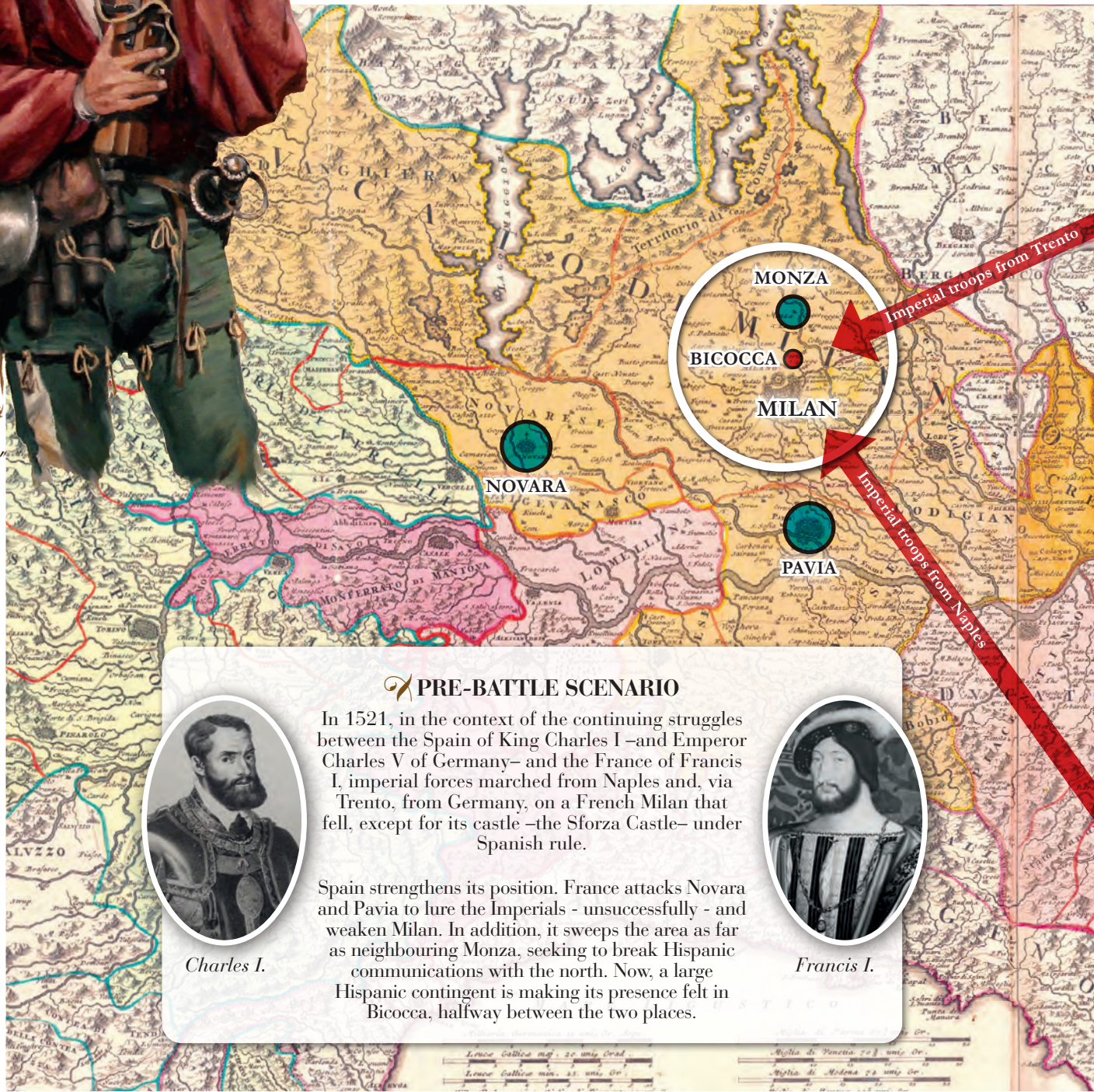
THE SUCCESS OF THE BATTLE OF BICOCCA

The heavy rolling fire of the arquebusiers was a tactical novelty that would be used until the 19th century

THIS unique victory for the Spanish Monarchy was notable for the innovative use of its arquebusiers. Positioned in four files, they were able to maintain continuous fire. The first row would fire their weapons, kneel to avoid getting in the way of the next line, which would rush to fire and repeat the manoeuvre without giving their enemies a chance to recover. Thus, they massacred the hitherto invincible squads of Swiss pikemen.



Arquebusiere in
Cervia
F. 1512/11



PRE-BATTLE SCENARIO

In 1521, in the context of the continuing struggles between the Spain of King Charles I –and Emperor Charles V of Germany– and the France of Francis I, imperial forces marched from Naples and, via Trento, from Germany, on a French Milan that fell, except for its castle –the Sforza Castle– under Spanish rule.

Spain strengthens its position. France attacks Novara and Pavia to lure the Imperials - unsuccessfully - and weaken Milan. In addition, it sweeps the area as far as neighbouring Monza, seeking to break Hispanic communications with the north. Now, a large Hispanic contingent is making its presence felt in Bicocca, halfway between the two places.



Charles I.



Francis I.



Cavalry



Pikemen



Lansquenets



Arquebusiers



Artillery

UNITS USED IN COMBAT

Both sides had cavalry and pikemen. Swiss pikemen and G. Medici's Black Bands, among others, fought for France. The Gallic heavy cavalry was very numerous. This was not the case in the Emperor King's army, which nevertheless included artillery and arquebusiers, the staples of the clash. The lansquenets were the German pikemen.



TRENTO

MAIN FRONT OF THE FRENCH ATTACK

First, cavalry units advance to break the imperial siege. In the second line, five squads of pikemen await their moment.



The Gallic horsemen collide with the organised Imperial defence, trapped in the reinforced northern flank of the Spaniards and under their fire. Still, the pikemen advance. Casualties increase greatly.



Marshy area



La Bicocca palace

MAIN FRONT OF THE SPANISH DEFENCE

Cavalry, artillery, arquebusiers and pikemen (lansquenets) wait behind the rampart erected to reinforce the flooded natural moat north of Bicocca.



DECISIVE ACTION

Imperial troops hold off the French attack thanks to forces arriving from Milan.



Milan reinforcements.

The French suffer heavy casualties and escape, pursued by the Spanish.



ENCIRCLING MANOEUVRE

Parallel to the first mounted attack, the bulk of the cavalry seeks to surprise the Imperial rear guard.

Road from Monza to Milan

It seizes the first bridge but does not manage to take the second.





The preserved palace of Bicocca now gives its name to a Milanese district.

heavy cavalrymen. The battle began with a heavy artillery exchange that did little damage to the Imperials but a lot to the French cavalry. The latter, followed by sappers, had started the attack on the northern flank to gain information on Colonna's deployment and defences, fix the enemy and break through the imperial lines. The departure of a company of Imperial light cavalry neutralised the advance in a close skirmish.

THE SWISS DEBACLE

Immediately behind the French vanguard, the pikemen squads advanced,

in particular three units of Swiss soldiers. The one in the centre split into two columns and charged forward impetuously, without even waiting for the Venetian backup forces that were to outflank them. The artillery in grazing fire caused large breakthroughs in the formations, which, however, did not stop, even competing with each other to be the first to arrive.

As they reached the imperial positions, however, they encountered two major surprises that stopped them in their tracks. First, they came across the road, now turned into a moat, that separated them from the park of La

Bicocca. And behind it, receiving them with a devastating closed volley, were the Spanish arquebusiers.

The surprise and effect were further heightened by the implementation of a new tactic that allowed for continuous drumfire and would be commonplace until the 19th century.

The commander of the Spanish troops, the Neapolitan Fernando de Avalos, 5th Marquis of Pescara, had ordered his arquebusiers to form in four files. Once the first file had fired, they would kneel down and reload, while the second, standing up, opened fire.

The manoeuvre was repeated with the third and fourth lines. Once the last file had fired, the arquebusiers in the front row would rise again and the sequence would start all over again.

One of the two Helvetic columns was completely destroyed in the moat. The second, despite being hard-hit, managed to get over the sunken road and up the parapet until it collided with the imperial lansquenets.

Helvetic and German pikemen hated each other's guts. After a fierce duel between the leaders of the two forces, in which the Swiss Steir was killed, his troops fled in disarray, pursued by Spanish units.

Medici charged the Imperials to protect the retreating Swiss, causing damages until Colonna ordered a swift cavalry counter-attack that forced the withdrawal of the Black Bands and the entire Gallic army after two hours of battle. The Venetian reserve never engaged in combat or did anything to protect its allies.

AGAINST THE REAR GUARD

Despite the spectacular partial victory, the Imperials could also have lost the battle due to an action south of their positions.

At the same time as the first cavalry attack on the northern flank, Lautrec sent the bulk of his horsemen, under the command of his brother Thomas de Foix-Lescun, along the road to Milan to try to encircle the troops of Charles I from the south.

The plan was to seize two small bridges over ditches in the area and attack the defenders of La Bicocca from behind. The first part was successful: they

A "bargain" of a victory

It is well known that both military terminology and history and the geography associated with the latter have contributed numerous words and expressions not only to the Spanish language but also to other languages. The curious thing is how a word can have a different meaning in one or the other language, depending on the outcome of the fight for each contender. This is the case of the battle at hand.

Bicocca was an area of meadows, about six kilometres northeast of the city of Milan. In fact, today, engulfed by the growth of the Italian capital, it is a stylish university and artistic district of Milan.

The site was located between a marshy area and the road that ran between Milan and Monza. There, the Milanese Arcimboldo family built a Renaissance summer palace in the 15th century, which they called, somewhat ironically, La Bicocca.

Of uncertain etymological origin, perhaps from medieval Italian, the word designated a small one-storey fortification or a humble and dilapidated hovel.

The word continues to have these two meanings in both Italian and French. Specifically, in the latter language, "bicoque" is defined —according to the dictionary of the Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales— as a "small village or fortification whose defence is precarious" and "small house of poor appearance, unattractive and uncomfortable".

The first meaning, that of "small fortification of little defence", also exists in the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (RAE), although it is in disuse, as is that of "thing of little esteem and appreciation".

However, the military victory of 1522 left a colloquial meaning of the word "bicoca" in Spanish that is still valid today: "Something that is considered good and that is obtained for little money or with little effort", as well as "advantageous or favourable situation". To use another term, also recognised by the RAE: a "chollo" (a bargain).

broke through the defence of Spanish horses and infantrymen, seized the first bridge, the one parallel to the road, and set about plundering the imperial baggage. The bulk of the battle then shifted to the pass between the camp and the Spanish positions. This is where the key action took place. A very close battle took place between cavalry and infantry on both sides, with the Imperial cavalry commanded by the Navarrese Antonio de Leiva, who would become one of the best captains of the Spanish Tercios (Spanish pike and shot infantry unit). Colonna even moved some light artillery pieces to reinforce the position.

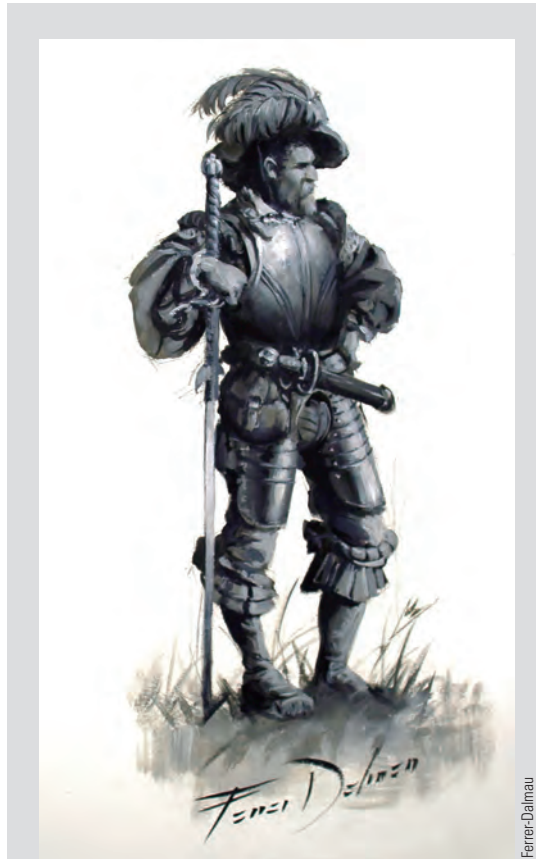
The French were finally thwarted when reinforcements arrived from Milan under the command of Duke Francesco Sforza. Lescun —who suffered serious facial injuries— led a heroic resistance, but, in the end, had to flee with heavy casualties.

DECISIVE ACTION

Although not as well known as the later Battle of Pavia, to which it was a preamble, Bicocca was, while not a decisive victory, certainly an illustrative one. Above all, it introduced a major tactical innovation. The hitherto invincible Swiss halberdiers and French heavy cavalry proved to be vulnerable to a saturation of arquebusier and artillery fire, especially when the Swiss cavalry's line relay system allowed a high and continuous rate of fire. This change, which was perfected with the combination of pikemen and arquebusiers, definitively established the Spanish Tercios as the best troops of their time. However, despite its proven advantages, the system was not appreciated by Francis I, who insisted on classical tactics, leading to the final defeat of Pavia three years after Bicocca.

How many casualties occurred in Bicocca? This is as uncertain as the precise number of soldiers who took part. Based on the Gallic, Swiss, Venetian and other Italian troops called up, it seems that the French could have envisaged a force of between 19,000 and more than

30,000 men. For his part, Prospero Colonna, in command of the imperial troops —German, Papal, Milanese, Neapolitan and Spanish— was able to muster some 18,000 men. However, it seems that the fighting did not involve more than about 16,000 soldiers on each side. As for casualties, the legend usually speaks of over three thousand Swiss dead, including a score of captains,



Above, a drawing of a Spanish "montante", a name that alludes to the broadsword on which a soldier's right hand rests. Below, an example of heavy cavalry of the period.



to just one imperial death, the latter from a mule's kick. This seems to be the balance of the significant clash between the Helvetic pikemen and the Spanish arquebusiers. In any case, the secondary battles on both the northern flank and in the rear guard were very bloody and must have resulted in a good number of additional casualties on both sides. Thus, for example, among the troops of Charles I, the death of Captain Ginés in the pursuit of the Swiss or that of the Count of Golizziano at the first bridge are recorded. Another striking factor, very much of the time, was the indiscipline among the mercenaries, who were more interested in money and booty.

It seems that the Swiss, who were owed several payments, forced Lautrec to precipitate the attack that was to prove so disastrous for them. It was later discovered in Paris that the 400,000 scudi intended to pay them had been "lost" in court dealings and never reached Italy. On the Imperial side, it is said that the Lansquenets refused to pursue the Swiss by fleeing in disarray against the orders of Pescara and until they were paid double the three salaries due to them.

CONSEQUENCES

The French defeat meant that the Gauls were virtually driven out of the Milanese Empire. The Swiss returned to their cantons demoralised and most of Lautrec's remaining troops took refuge in Veneto. The Venetians, under the command of the new doge Andrea Gritti, decided not to continue the war and signed a peace treaty with Emperor Charles in July 1523.

Very soon after the victory of Bicocca, still in 1522, Colonna besieged and took Genoa. As a result, the French evacuated the few remaining defenders in Milan's Sforza Castle and withdrew the forces stationed in northern Italy. Francis I tried to counterattack, but finally, defeated and captured in Pavia, he was forced to sign the Treaty of Madrid (January 1526). Italy was thus almost definitively in Spanish hands.

Alfredo Florensa

Applied in the Gulf of Guinea since 2021, Brussels has included a new area of interest for the implementation of this tool in the North-West Indian Ocean

COORDINATED MARITIME PRESENCES, THE EU'S MARITIME DIPLOMACY



A crew member of offshore patrol vessel *Atalaya* and another one of the Ivorian Navy during a deployment in the Gulf of Guinea.

THE leaders of EU Member States endorsed the Strategic Compass in Brussels on 24 March 2022. This was one of the major milestones on the European defence agenda for that year and confirmed the partners' ambition to turn the European Union into a global player—including in the field of maritime security—capable of defending the common interests of the Member States at sea, improving the interoperability of naval forces and reinforcing the Union's strategic outreach in increasingly contested maritime areas.

The Strategic Compass, a benchmark for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) for the next decade, is an endorsement of Europe's commitment to enhancing maritime security. It also gives special relevance to the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept as a tool that strengthens EU maritime diplomacy, optimises the use of naval assets deployed under the national chain of command, ensures the Union's continuous presence in areas of interest and promotes international cooperation and partnership at sea.

The origin of the CMP is closely associated with the Gulf of Guinea. From Senegal to Angola, this area covers a coastline of nearly 6,000 kilometres and a vast maritime space that facilitates access from the western ports of the African continent to important trade routes.

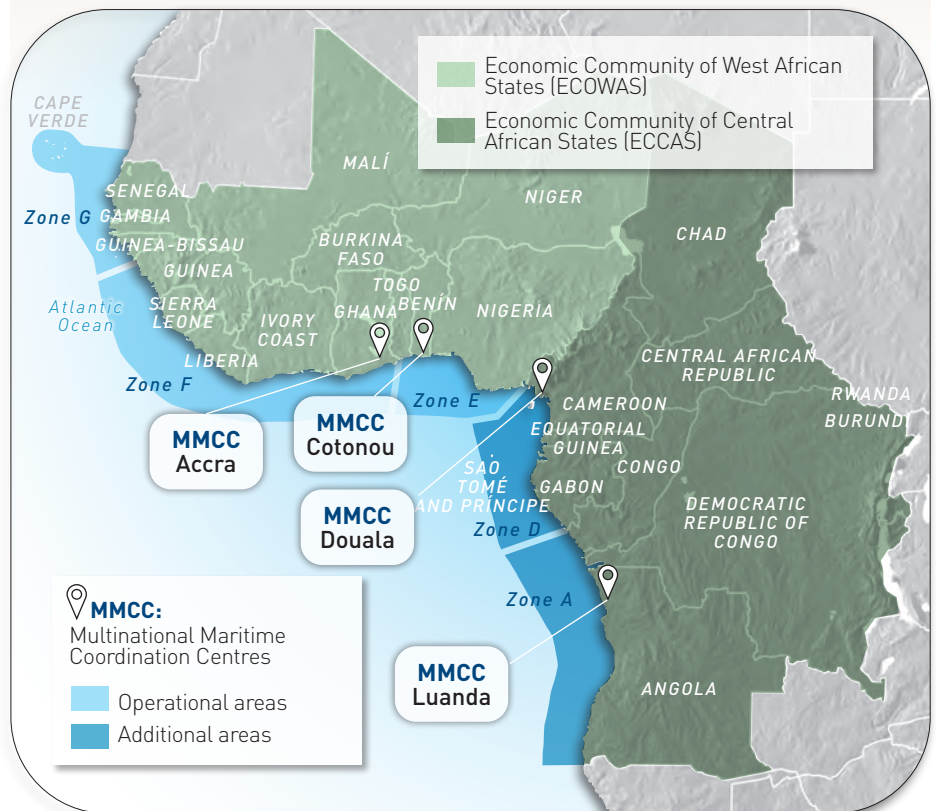
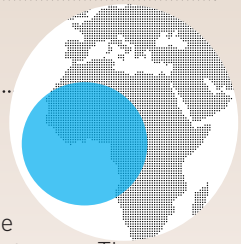
The strategic relevance of this region is critical, so the need to ensure the security and freedom of navigation through its waters is unquestionable. Raw materials as well as energy and fishery resources circulate in the Gulf of Guinea. Their commercial exploitation is essential to ensure the socio-economic development of the countries bordering the Gulf, while they are also of vital importance for the Old Continent. Moreover, the conflict in Ukraine has further highlighted the importance of securing the energy flow to Europe from alternative Eastern regions.

However, and despite a certain trend in recent years towards fewer piracy incidents, maritime security in this area has undergone a serious deterioration in the last few decades, directly proportional to the increase in violent crime and other illicit activities such as illegal fishing, smuggling and transnational organised

COORDINATED MARITIME PRESENCE IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

THE EU endorsed the CMP concept as a pilot project in this area in January 2021; a year later it was effectively consolidated and extended until January 2024.

- 95% of the world's maritime hijackings take place in this area.
- Piracy and armed robberies occur at sea.
- There are cases of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.
- There are records of transnational organised criminal activities.
- The CMP concept provides support to eradicate threats to freedom of navigation.
- It is an efficient tool to ensure the continuity of the EU presence in the region, and
- enhances cooperation and partnership with coastal states and security organisations in the Yaoundé Architecture.



Rafael Navarro/Revista Española de Defensa Source: European External Action Service.

crime, all of which goes hand in hand with many coastal states' lack of assets to combat them.

In an attempt to reverse this situation, a summit was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in June 2013, bringing together more than a dozen heads of state and government from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea

Commission (GGC). The result of this summit was the endorsement of the Yaoundé Architecture and the Code of Conduct concerning the repression of illicit activities in these waters. With regard to the design of the maritime security architecture—still in the process of being implemented—the coastal states pledged to develop a project structured in a network of operational and coordination centres, capable of controlling the five

The EU works with countries in the area to improve maritime governance and boost training

operational maritime areas into which this vast coastline was divided and responding to the threats arising at sea. Since then, the EU has supported this Architecture with various tools.

A year later, in 2014, Brussels adopted the EU Gulf of Guinea Strategy, with which the partners showed their support for African leadership and promoted a dual approach based on enhanced security and socio-economic development as a solution to the problem of maritime insecurity in this area.

The EU strategy was an additional initiative to the multiple efforts that some Member States had been making for years through the deployment of naval units in order to improve maritime governance and stimulate the education and training of the navies and security forces in the region (Spain's deployments began in 2010).

However, the results achieved with these efforts were not as expected, and in view of the continuous increase in piracy cases, in 2019, during an informal

meeting of defence ministers in Helsinki, the concept of Coordinated Maritime Presences emerged.

THE NATURE OF CMP

The CMP concept is a new tool of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and different from the European Union's operations and missions. It is conceived as an instrument to give the Union greater visibility in the maritime sphere and boost the diplomatic aspect of its integrated approach without minimizing its other two components (both socio-economic and security and defence approaches).

Thus, this tool complements operations already existing in the CSDP and taps the voluntary contribution of the Member States present in a Maritime Area of Interest (MAI) to give greater visibility to the EU. The use of these assets is always under national command, i.e., contrary to what happens in CSDP military operations and missions, and despite "flying the European flag", operational control of the

assets is not transferred to the Union. This non-operational nature of the CMP concept is particularly relevant in the Gulf of Guinea, where operations —executive military missions— could be flatly rejected by some coastal states if they are perceived as an encroachment on their sovereign powers.

As part of its advanced planning at the political-strategic level, the EU constantly monitors those maritime regions where Member States' ships and aircraft are already deployed and where the application of this concept could lead to the optimisation of efforts and resources. In this regard, the CMP concept is characterised by its applicability to any maritime area in the world declared a MAI by the European Council. Once an area has been designated, the roadmap includes the approval of an implementation plan specific for each area, which can be revised periodically.

The implementation of this tool enhances the coordination at strategic level of available assets, while providing continuity, complementarity and synergies between the partners' actions. The CMP also contributes to promoting international cooperation and partnership in the maritime field and to improving participation, analysis and exchange of information through the Maritime Area of Interest Coordination Cell (MAICC), which is organically integrated into the General Staff of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

In addition, each Maritime Area of Interest has a Committee made up of representatives of the EEAS, the Council and the Member States, which serves as a forum to assess the functioning of the CMP. This Committee also includes a Senior Coordinator (in the case of the CMP for the Gulf of Guinea the position is currently held by the Spaniard Nicolás Berlanga Martínez) who, at the political-strategic level, plays the essential role of guaranteeing coherence between all the actions promoted by the EU and which form the well-known integrated approach of the European Union's CSDP. At the technical



Joint exercise with the Sao Tome and Principe Coast Guard on board offshore patrol vessel *Atalaya* during a port call of the Spanish vessel on the island of Sao Tome.

EMAD

level, coordination and exchange of information is carried out through the Maritime Surveillance Network (MARSUR), a project which, although not under the auspices of the EU, is leveraged and managed by the European Defence Agency (EDA) and is a technical solution allowing the exchange of maritime security information in the military domain between participants. The primary objective of MARSUR, which involves 20 Member States, is to improve the “recognised common maritime image of the European Union” by facilitating the exchange of information and existing maritime services, such as ship positions, their identification data, chat or images.

In doing so, the Union seeks to strengthen its maritime situational awareness in the MAI; enhance its naval presence through activities —mainly in the context of defence diplomacy— contributing to Brussels’ political objectives and strategies; and cooperate at sea with other nations in order to increase maritime security in designated areas.

Finally, unlike operations, where effectiveness is more important than efficiency, the CMP concept attacks the root of the problem, using resources made available by Member States to help supported coastal states improve the foundations on which to build their own security. Generally, these assets belong to the field of training, collaboration, consulting, and the provision of basic equipment or services on an ad hoc basis. As a result, their effects, although not as immediate as those of the operations, are more lasting and sustainable over time.

IN THE WATERS OF THE GULF OF GUINEA

On 25 January 2021, the European Union launched a CMP pilot project which, although originally related to the Gulf of Guinea, was intended to be used in future Maritime Areas of Interest (MAI) as a complementary instrument to



Friendly approach of a vessel in the Gulf of Guinea to monitor activities jeopardizing maritime security.

the Union’s various tools for enhancing maritime security. During this period, Spain has made a visible contribution to this project. The most evident way it has contributed —although not the only one— has been through deployments of Navy patrol vessels (one every six months, for a duration of three to four months) which, planned and led by the Operations Command, have been part of the CMP since the beginning of 2021. This way, the same activity that Spain has been carrying out since 2010 is now partially supported by the European Peace Facility (EPF) and backed by the EU, which in turn benefits from the efforts made by Member States. In short, the implementation of this concept is a win-win situation for both parties.

In terms of the results obtained in this area, it has been shown that in those regions where operations are not possible, the CMP concept, together with the efforts of coastal states and regional actors, can

have a substantial impact when addressing existing challenges in the maritime domain. In this regard, and in a security environment such as the west African coast, which is still particularly difficult, reducing maritime security incidents by more than 50 per cent over the last year, although not exclusively due to the implementation of the CMP, demonstrates its usefulness and effectiveness and strengthens the role of the European Union as a maritime security provider.

In February 2022, the pilot project was reviewed and, as a result

of the lessons learned and the objectives achieved, Brussels decided to extend the application of the CMP concept in this MAI for two more years, no longer as a pilot project, and also pointed out the need to support the development of agreements with coastal states ensuring the prosecution of offenders by competent courts and guaranteeing the subsequent imposition of penalties and their enforcement.

That same day, the Council, reaffirming the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific, launched the development of the CMP in the North-West Indian Ocean (CMP-NWIO) by establishing a MAI covering the maritime area from the Strait of Hormuz to the Tropic of Capricorn and from the northern Red Sea to the central axis of the Indian Ocean.

NORTH-WEST INDIAN OCEAN

While the Strategic Compass sets out the commitment to develop the CMP concept and extend its implementation to other areas —starting with the MAI NWIO—, each area clearly requires a specific implementation plan as each has unique and different characteristics.

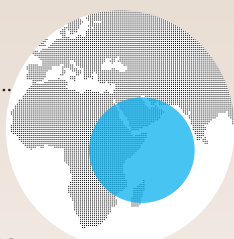
From a geopolitical standpoint, the case of the MAI in the Indian Ocean basin has little to do with that of the MAI in the Gulf of Guinea. Therefore, the implementation of this concept for the Indo-Pacific should include significant differences with respect to what has already been implemented in the Gulf

**Incidents
in the Gulf of
Guinea
have decreased
by 50%**

COORDINATED MARITIME PRESENCE IN THE NORTH-WEST INDIAN OCEAN

IN February 2022, the EU declared a maritime area of interest in the North-West Indian Ocean and approved the implementation of the CMP concept in that region.

- This region is among those with the most dynamic economic growth in the world.
- 80% of world trade takes place in this area.
- It is rich in natural resources.
- Secure maritime traffic lines in the region are key to trade between the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe.
- The CMP concept aims to strengthen its strategic focuses and activities in the region,
- secure its naval presence,
- enhance cooperation and partnership with maritime actors in the area, and
- strengthen the EU's role as a maritime security provider.



Rafael Navarro/Revista Española de Defensa Source: European External Action Service.

of Guinea. In this regard, the valuable legacy of Operation Atalanta in the region —since it was launched in December 2008 and thanks to its achievements— as the EU's main asset in the area and synonymous with CSDP success, is a key factor that must necessarily be considered.

This fact cannot be overlooked by Brussels when designing an implementation plan that must adequately highlight the key role of the operation's commander and his headquarters as valid interlocutors of the European Union, who

are highly recognised by the maritime industry and by all relevant regional actors in security matters. Thus, the CMP concept in this area could be regarded as complementary to the actions of Operation Atalanta, capable of coexisting with it while reinforcing the EU's diplomacy and visibility in the region by coordinating the port calls carried out by the naval units of the countries that voluntarily wish to contribute to this initiative and organizing the activities under the EU flag during these port calls.

FUTURE OF THE INITIATIVE

The experience gained during the implementation of the pilot project of the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept in the Gulf of Guinea has shown that this initiative is a useful and efficient tool that can and should be used —as set out in the Strategic Compass— in those areas where Brussels deems it necessary to defend its interests at sea and to boost EU diplomacy. In practice, the CMP will serve to reinforce the capabilities of the navies and military actors of some coastal states involved in maritime security. This was already being done bilaterally by many partners but will now be done on behalf of Brussels and with the support of the European Peace Facility (EPF), which will provide the EU with greater visibility and, consequently, a greater capacity of influence in strategic areas of interest. In this sense, it is crucial that all elements of the CMP structure, with the Senior Coordinator at the helm, devote their efforts to the general dissemination of this concept in the countries affected by its activity. Only this way, through visits, institutional events, port calls by ships patrolling the MAI, exercises, etc., will it be possible to achieve the complicity of the countries that are being provided with support, which is necessary for any relationship of cooperation and collaboration, seeking the long-term objective of considering existing problems at sea from a regional perspective.

However, the CMP concept is still a developing tool and its nature and application are likely to evolve as lessons are learned. In the short term, this evolution is subject to improving and consolidating the EU's continued maritime presence in the Gulf of Guinea and to implementing a modus operandi in the MAI NWIO, where Brussels already has a permanent presence thanks to Operation Atalanta. In this regard, Coordinated Maritime Presences should be oriented as a complement to, and not a substitute for, other CSDP activities or for the numerous Commission-led programmes. Hence, the result should be a tool that reinforces Brussels' maritime diplomacy and provides greater visibility of the European Union as a capable and reliable maritime security provider to other communities, regions or countries.

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