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Lieutenant General Luis Sáez Rocandio (ESP-A)
Commander HQ NRDC-ESP

Dear reader, Soldiers of HQ NRDC-ESP.

I am absolutely honored, as your new commander, to present to you the first HQ NRDC-ESP Magazine in 2025. It has been almost a year since I took over command of the HQ and we have accomplish quite a lot in that time.

Last October, the catastrophic flooding in Valencia meant a difficult and demanding time for all. Many lost their homes and belongings and tragically 227 people lost their lives that day.

I want to express my deepest condolences to all their families and assure them that they are not alone.

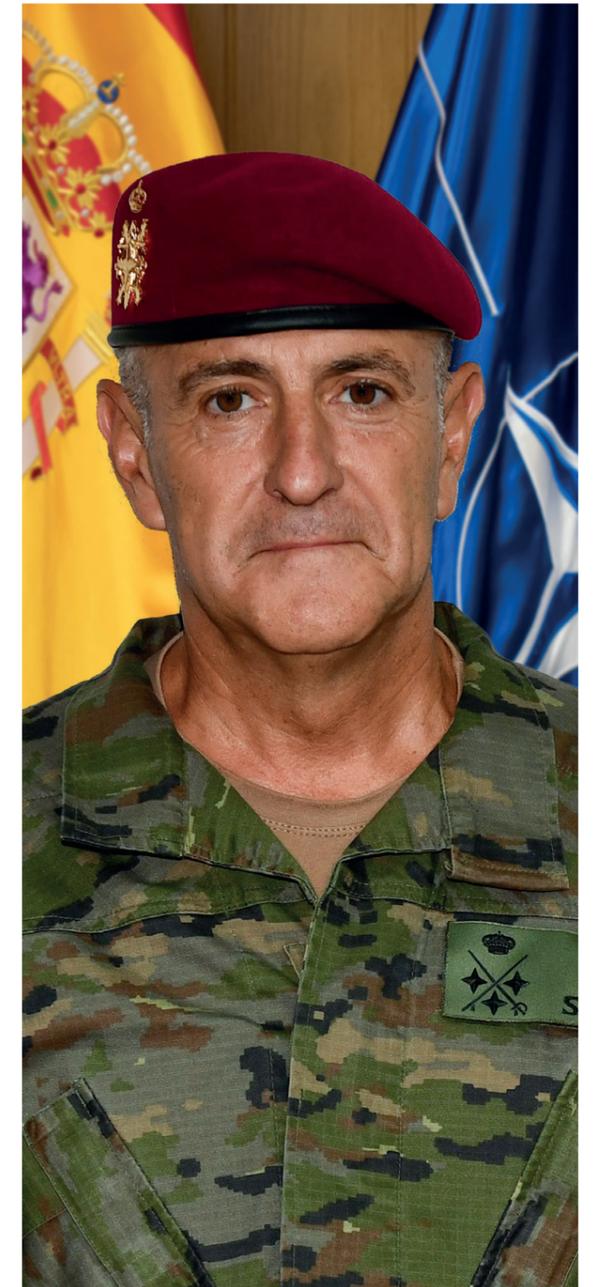
As a Warfighting Corps (WFC), we had to execute our main exercise Valiant Lynx 2024 in a different way than it was initially planned. The HQ deployed to Croatia with a modified setting, and we managed to attain important training objectives. We gained a lot of experience and important lessons were learned, particularly in deployment, logistics, and the rapid projection and sustainment of forces. These insights have allowed us to refine our plans and enhance our capabilities.

Additionally, we also made significant progress with the Full Operational Capability of Multinational Division Center and the Transfer Of Authority of the Forward Land Forces (FLF) Batle Group (BG) HUN. These milestones provided an important message and a strong signal of readiness, will and cohesion within our Alliance.

As commander of HQ NRDC-ESP, I am extremely proud that we welcomed Slovakia as the thirteenth nation to our team. This is another great example of how, as a united group of partners and allies, we are stronger together. I am grateful to have our Slovakian colleagues with us.

We also celebrate the one-year anniversary of our Corps Forward Element's deployment to Slovakia in April 2024. The tireless work of our men and women in Kuchyna is invaluable and critical to building a strong network with Host Nations and enablers. We will continue our efforts in the future to deepen our relationships with our partners in the AoR.

I also want to take the opportunity to welcome all new soldiers and their families who have joined the HQ over the last few months. A warm welcome goes out to our new DCOS Plans, General Gomariz and a goodbye and the best of luck for his new position to his predecessor General Romera. We also welcomed Command Sergeant Major Luna as the new Comand Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) of HQ NRDC-ESP.



Many challenges await us before the end of the year: testing our new CP concept, streamlining and refining our SOPs, conducting Exercise Avenger Triad, and our CREVAL process as a WFC, to name a few.

But with your dedication and your contribution as fuel for the HQ's engine, I am sure that we will face all this as a strong, well-prepared unit, ready to succeed.

Finally, I want to say thank you to all of you for the great work each and every one of you have done over the last year and the immense effort you invest every day. My gratitude also extends to your families who tireless support your work on a daily basis.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.
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Reimagining Command Posts: HQ NRDC-ESP's Modular Approach to Battlefield Survivability

Lieutenant Colonel César Garcia (PRT-A)
HQ NRDC-ESP G3 OPS

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of modern warfare, the traditional image of large, static Command Posts (CPs) is increasingly becoming a relic of the past. Recent conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and the Middle East, have exposed the vulnerabilities of centralized command structures when faced with advanced surveillance, precision-guided munitions, and sophisticated cyber-warfare capabilities.

As HQ NRDC-ESP prepares for the challenges ahead, it is imperative to rethink our approach to CPs at the tactical level. This article explores HQ NRDC-ESP's new CP Concept, a forward-thinking approach that prioritizes modularity, mobility, and survivability while acknowledging the real constraints of a Warfighting Corps headquarters.



View of a traditional CP

THE IMPERATIVE FOR CHANGE: ADAPTING COMMAND POSTS TO THE MODERN BATTLEFIELD

The modern battlefield, shaped by rapid technological advances, demands a rethinking of command and control (C2) structures. CPs must evolve to meet the dual challenges of agility and survivability in environments dominated by advanced surveillance, long-range precision fires, and electronic warfare. Recent conflicts have underscored the critical need for change. For example, in Ukraine, centralized and static CPs became high-value targets due to their visibility and rigidity. Kofman and Lee (2022) observed that Russia's hierarchical command structures were particularly vulnerable to precision-guided attacks.

The future operational environment will further amplify these vulnerabilities. Cyber and information warfare pose non-kinetic threats that can disrupt communications, compromise data integrity, and degrade operational effectiveness. To counter these challenges, CPs must adopt a dispersed and modular design that minimizes their footprint while maintaining functionality.

A modern CP must prioritize survivability through measures such as dispersion, mobility, and deception. For instance, dividing a CP into smaller, self-contained modules allows redundancy and operational continuity even if one element is compromised. Similarly, adopting mobile, agile configurations ensures that CPs can respond effectively to evolving threats.

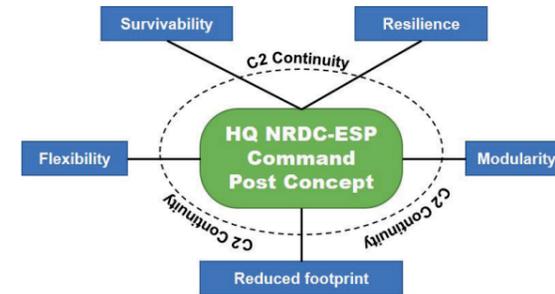
In sum, adapting CPs to the realities of contemporary warfare is not optional — it is a mission-critical necessity.



RUS CP being destroyed

HQ NRDC-ESP'S NEW COMMAND POST CONCEPT: A BALANCED APPROACH

Recognizing these imperatives, HQ NRDC-ESP has been developing a new CP Concept that emphasizes survivability without compromising operational effectiveness. The core principles of this concept are rooted in the understanding that C2 must be continuous, adaptable, and capable of operating across multiple domains, even in a degraded environment.



CP Concept Principles

Phased deployment and distributed C2. HQ NRDC-ESP envisions a phased, scalable deployment of CPs, beginning with distributed operations from the Permanent Headquarters (PHQ). This reduces the initial footprint and enhances flexibility during the early stages of an operation. By transitioning gradually to a fully deployed C2 system, HQ NRDC-ESP can maintain adaptability in response to mission dynamics.

Modularity. The Modular Main Command Post (MMCP) is the cornerstone of this concept. By breaking down traditional CPs into smaller, self-contained modules, HQ NRDC-ESP can enhance mobility and survivability. These modules can be configured to meet specific operational needs, reducing the risk of a single point of failure. For instance, critical functions such as intelligence, fires & targeting and logistics can operate independently, ensuring continuity if one module is compromised.

Survivability. Enhancing CPs survivability is critical in modern warfare and is achieved through a combination of tactical, procedural and technological innovations. Techniques like dispersion and deception, combined with resilience-enhancing technologies ensure functionality despite threats. Each module should be designed with protective measures and contingency plans, ensuring continuity of operations even if one module is compromised.

Wireless and Plug-and-Fight. Secure wireless technologies streamline CP connectivity, eliminating extensive cabling and enabling rapid setup. This is complemented by "plug-and-fight" systems that allow seamless integration of platforms and capabilities, ensuring the CP adapts to battlefield conditions with minimal delay.



Automated Mobile CP module

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While HQ NRDC-ESP's new CP Concept offers substantial advantages, its implementation presents several challenges.

Reduced manning and process adaptation. The new CP concept must account for the realistic constraints of a Warfighting Corps headquarters, which may face reduced manning levels. This requires prioritizing tasks and adapting technology. Efficient workflows, enhanced automation, and innovative resource management will be crucial in maintaining high operational standards despite reduced manpower.

Balancing functionality and survivability. While dispersing functions increases survivability, it can also complicate coordination and information sharing. Striking the right balance between these competing demands will be vital for success.

Training and familiarization. Operating a modular, dispersed CP requires a different skill set than traditional CP operations. Staff must be trained to operate in a more decentralized environment, where autonomy and adaptability are essential. Realistic training scenarios and exercises will be necessary to ensure staff are adequately prepared.

Technological integration. Integrating diverse modules and ensuring seamless communication across a wireless network requires robust and reliable technology. Careful planning, procurement, and testing of compatible systems will be necessary to ensure operational success.



Automated Mobile CP module

CONCLUSION: EMBRACING THE FUTURE, REALISTICALLY

HQ NRDC-ESP's new CP Concept represents a decisive step toward addressing the demands of modern warfare. By prioritizing modularity, mobility, and survivability, it ensures operational effectiveness in increasingly hostile environments. While challenges remain, these can be mitigated through experimentation, innovative solutions and continuous and rigorous training.

As HQ NRDC-ESP continues to refine this concept, its commitment to adaptability and resilience will be critical. We must remain realistic about our limitations, yet ambitious in our pursuit of innovative solutions. By embracing change, we ensure that our CPs remain ready to confront the challenges of the battlefield.

The HQ NRDC-ESP Corps Forward Element (CFE) has successfully completed its first year of deployment at Malacky Air Base (Kuchyňa, Slovakia)

Its primary function is to oversee the coordination of NATO's deterrence plans and to contribute to the defence of the Alliance's eastern flank.

Lieutenant Colonel José María Armenta González-Palenzuela (ESP-A)
HQ NRDC-ESP G10 Mil PA

BACKGROUND

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, NATO convened an extraordinary summit in Brussels in June of that year. The Allies agreed to strengthen NATO's military presence on the Eastern Flank and to increase military support for Ukraine. They approved the creation of four new battle groups (BGs), in Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Hungary.

Alongside this increase in BGs, the existing concept of enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) was revised and Forward Land Forces (FLF) were developed. The key point of the FLF is the ability of the BG (Battalion entity) to scale up into a combat brigade.

The consequent increase in capabilities agreed by the Alliance, in December 27, 2023, led the Spanish Council of Ministers to approve the participation of Spanish forces in Slovakia, as part of Spain's commitment to its allies.

This entailed two key responsibilities for Spain: first, acting as the Framework Nation (FN) for the Battle Group (BG) deployed in Lešť (Slovakia), that can scale up to a Brigade; and second, serving as the FN of an Army Corps Headquarters for high-intensity operations (Warfighting Corps, WFC), in the Slovakia-Hungary-Czechia area, with HQ NRDC-ESP as the command and control element. Additionally, the Council authorised the permanent deployment of a coordination element, and an Army Aviation unit.

To fulfil the deployment of this capability, the Corps Forward Element (CFE) concept was developed by HQ NRDC-ESP, allowing for a rapid transition from a peacetime command structure to a structure suitable for dealing with a crisis situation. Thus the CFE was born, deploying its first rotation at Malacky Air Base, in the village of Kuchyňa, Slovakia, on March 12, 2024. The fourth rotation of the CFE, currently deployed, took over from the CFE III on April 6.



CORPS FORWARD ELEMENT

It is important to clarify that the CFE does not constitute a command element, as it lacks the necessary capability. This function is instead performed by the HQ NRDC-ESP Commander. Until defence plans are activated, the CFE operates as a liaison element of HQ NRDC-ESP, providing situational updates and insights to the Commander.

At the same time, and in compliance with the Agreement of the Council of Ministers, this CFE is part of the national operational structure reporting to the Operations Command.

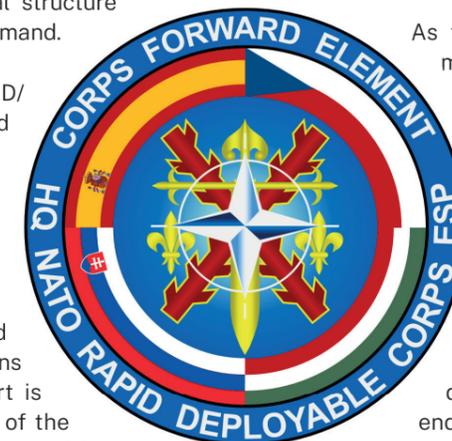
The CFE is composed of CGTAD/HQ NRDC-ESP personnel (based in Valencia and Bétera) and is supported by personnel from 21st Signal Regiment (Marines-Valencia), and the 1st Signal Regiment (Huesca), which provide command and control through advanced information and communications technologies. Logistical support is also provided by a detachment of the National Support Element generated by the 61st Combat Support Service Unit (Valladolid).

Among the tasks assigned to it, the following two stand out. Firstly, to liaise with the entities in the area of operations to facilitate the entry and assumption of responsibilities of the HQ NRDC-ESP as WFC. Secondly, to identify training opportunities between NATO elements (HQs and/or units) and the national defence forces of Slovakia, Hungary and Czechia.

Following several months of dedicated effort to establish a network of contacts with military authorities from the host nations, the network has continued to expand and consolidate throughout

the year, reaching operational and strategic military levels in Slovakia and Hungary. On specific occasions, the Army Corps authority has also been represented at the political level.

During the first half of this year, the CFE has focused its efforts on supporting the Multinational Battle Group Slovakia (MN BG SVK, deployed in Lešť) expansion to Brigade exercise, Strong Lineage 2025 (STLI25) and the alignment of Army Corps tactical plans with Hungarian and Slovak National defence plans.



As for living conditions, the facilities made available to the Spanish contingent by the Malacky Air Base were used for both living and working areas. However, the construction of a future living and working area began at the outset and is now well advanced. This new area will enable the deployment of additional capabilities, such as a Spanish Army Aviation unit that deployed to Malacky Air Base at the end of May this year.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the first year of CFE deployment in Slovakia was marked by significant challenges faced by the 35 men and women, yet it was a highly valuable achievement. There is no doubt that the extraordinary hospitality shown by the Slovak Air Force personnel at Malacky Air Base, which hosts the 46th Wing, has contributed very significantly to this success.

Spain's commitment to protecting the eastern flank is further demonstrated by its participation in this mission, thereby exemplifying its determined contribution to the Alliance's deterrence and defence efforts in Eastern Europe.

Strong Lineage 25 (STLI25) a mission rehearsal more than an exercise

Lieutenant Colonel Alfonso Santiago Ortega (ESP-A)
HQ NRDC-ESP G35

The NATO mission in Slovakia plays a crucial and indispensable role in the defense and deterrence strategy for Eastern Europe, with its focus firmly on fostering collaboration with local military forces, enhancing regional stability, safeguarding allied territories, and ensuring a well-coordinated response to any emerging threats.

By actively supporting these initiatives, NATO strengthens its presence in the region and sends a clear message about its commitment to collective security.



Spain, as a Framework Nation (FN), is deeply committed to NATO's mission and demonstrates its leadership by deploying, together with several allied nations, a Battle Group in Slovakia, with the capacity to scale up to a full Brigade if necessary, ensuring a flexible and responsive force to meet any challenges.

In this context, STLI 25 represents the first Spanish Joint Command Operations (MOPS - its Spanish acronym) exercise scheduled at the Brigade level in the land domain. This exercise will be vital for verifying the ability to expand to a Brigade-sized formation, which will enable the planning, synchronization, and execution of operations within the Brigade's Area of Operations (AoO).

The Spanish Joint Command Operations Commander (CMOPS - its Spanish acronym), as the Officer Scheduling the Exercise (OSE) for STLI25, has designated Comander HQ NRDC-ESP as the Officer Commanding the Exercise (OCE), placing them in charge of leading the preparation, coordination, and distribution of the EXPLAN (Exercise Plan). This exercise is designed to test not only the deployment readiness but also the effectiveness of Spanish leadership and integration within NATO's larger framework.

STLI25 will serve as a venue for Allied Land Command (LANDCOM) to verify the ability to expand to a Brigade-sized formation while enhancing interoperability at the Division and Brigade levels. This will be achieved through the use of common allied land doctrine, tactics, and procedures, which are essential for ensuring cohesion among NATO forces.



It is important to mention that the LANDCOM verification criteria require adherence to all the steps that would be carried out in the event of a real activation, which involves coordination at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Meanwhile, a simulated scenario will be designed for the Live Exercise (LIVEX) stage, which will enable verification that the Brigade can carry out its assigned mission according to the current plans or the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) developed based on these plans.

At the strategic level, once the Activation Pre-deployment (ACTPRED) order is received, the previous steps will be thoroughly verified to demonstrate Spain's role as a Framework Nation.



In its role as FN, Spain ensures that the Host Nation (HN) makes every effort to align its Host Nation Defense Plans (HNDP) with the prevailing plans, ensuring the integration of the Forward Land Forces Battle Group (FLF BG), which guarantees continuous communication between the FLF and the HN.



Additionally, Spain maintains close, updated communication with the Troop Contributing Nations (TCNs), ensuring that the ACTPRED is communicated effectively and that deployment and RSOM (Reception, Staging, and Onward Movement) plans are received from the TCNs. These plans are then sent to the relevant NATO entities involved in the RSOM process.

At the operational level, deployment plans will be executed through the projection of forces into the area of operations, culminating in an actual Transfer of Authority (TOA) of the deployed forces to NATO.

At the tactical level, once the forces are generated, it is essential to prove that the deployed forces and resources contribute to enhancing the combat capabilities of all combat functions within the Multinational Brigade (MN BDE). This includes personnel, materials, resources, and combat equipment.

The MN BDE must also demonstrate its ability to successfully carry out the assigned mission in both the regional plans and the CONOPS, based on these operational guidelines.

To achieve this, a robust Command and Control (C2) structure must be demonstrated, with all the TCNs integrated effectively.

Additionally, it is critical to demonstrate interoperability with higher echelons, relying on an efficient Battle Rhythm (BR) and a solid Report and Returns (R2) process to ensure smooth operational flow.



One of NATO's primary objectives, beyond verifying the ability to successfully scale up to Brigade level, is deterrence. Without a strong STRATCOM campaign to back up the transition from BG to BDE, NATO's deterrence objectives would be difficult to meet.

The STRATCOM campaign, led by LANDCOM, must make a meaningful contribution toward achieving deterrence, ensuring that the HN population perceives a tangible increase in their security should an attack occur.

In that regard, it is clear that the BDE deployment aims to establish a robust presence that supports effective deterrence.

By reading through the information provided in the previous sections, it becomes apparent that more than just an exercise, STLI25 could be considered a mission rehearsal that encompasses actual phases of generation, deployment, and RSOM of forces, including only one exercise phase in the AoO, with the primary goal of demonstrating that the assigned mission can be effectively carried out.

In conclusion, this is how Spain, as a framework nation, is embracing this challenge. Every step taken in the planning phase, with the participation of all stakeholders and coordinated by the OCE, COM HQ NRDC-ESP, is strategically focused on ensuring the operation's success and contributing to NATO's objectives on the eastern flank, strengthening its defense posture and capabilities for the future.

Logistical projection: lessons learned from exercise Valiant Lynx 24

**Lieutenant Colonel Constantino Guerrero Escobar (ESP-A)
HQ NRDC-ESP G4 MOVEMENT & TRANSPORTATION**

Within the military sphere, the agility to project forces and resources to any scenario has become an essential capability for modern headquarters. Exercise VALIANT LYNX 24 (VL24) put this ability to the test, serving as an ideal setting to assess logistical effectiveness in both the planning and execution phases. Below are the key points and lessons learned from this operation.

TESTING THE CAPACITY FOR PROJECTION

One of the primary Objectives of Exercise VL24 was to demonstrate the HQ's ability to project itself to any location within a defined time limit. Unlike a conventional operation, where the RSOM process (Reception, Staging, Onward Movement) would be planned, directed, and executed by entities external to the HQ (JSEC for planning and JLSG for execution), in this exercise the HQ fully assumed these roles. This situation posed an additional challenge for the M&T (Movement & Transportation) staff, who had to coordinate not only the direction of movement but also its execution.

SELECTION OF THE LOCATION AND FACTORS CONSIDERED

To determine the ideal location for the exercise, up to five site surveys were carried out during 2023 and 2024 in Croatia and Slovakia.

Key aspects of RLS (Real Life Support) were assessed, including facility capacity, accommodation, catering, and ablution systems, as well as security factors and CIS (Communications and Information Systems) considerations.

Regarding M&T, a thorough study was conducted on ports and airports, in addition to a detailed reconnaissance of the road and railway networks linking these entry points to the training areas in each country. The ports and airports considered were Valencia, Sagunto, Trieste, Split, and Zadar, for maritime transport, and Valencia, Vienna, Zagreb, Split, and Zadar for air transport. The Port of Zadar was selected due to its proximity to a staging area, enabling the organisation and preparation of convoys heading to the training areas. As for airports, Vienna and Zagreb were chosen based on their closeness to the training areas and the availability of buses to efficiently transport personnel.

RESOURCES DEPLOYED AND MEANS OF TRANSPORT

During the exercise, the following were to be deployed:

- 560 personnel (PAX).
- 130 containers with general cargo, ammunition, and light weapons.
- Over 110 vehicles of various categories.

To achieve this deployment, land, air, and sea transport assets were utilised. The G8 branch of HQ NRDC-ESP handled the contracting of aircraft and buses for personnel transport, while the contracting of ships and container vehicles fell under the remit of Spanish Logistic Command. Without the financial contribution of the Spanish Army, the exercise could not have been carried out successfully.

The deployment plan involved an initial dispatch of units responsible for installing the living and working areas (Support BN, CIS Rgt and MP BN), followed one month later by the deployment of the Staff. The ships used were dedicated exclusively to the HQ's needs, one of which stood out for its clean-energy propulsion. Sailing times adhered to the Deployment Plan, meeting all milestones and deadlines.

CLASSIFICATION OF TRANSPORTED MATERIAL

The mobilised materials were divided into three main categories:

- CRYPTO material: Transported by road using a private company with the appropriate security accreditation.
- Armaments and ammunition: Loaded onto a ship under strict safety standards and documentary procedures, coordinated with civil and military authorities in transit and final destination countries. This matériel was subsequently transported by road in military vehicles escorted by the Croatian Military Police.
- General cargo: Transported by ship and later moved by road, in collaboration with private companies and military units.



CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN EXECUTION

One of the greatest logistical challenges was synchronising the arrival of personnel and support material, minimising idle periods, and optimising the days required for assembling the entire compound. The Port Terminal Unit, attached to the Spanish Logistic Brigade, played a significant role in conducting loading and unloading operations at both departure and arrival ports.

Moreover, close contact with HN Croatia and the Movement Control (MOVCON) cells in the relevant countries was crucial for simplifying procedures and expediting the HQ's projection. Exercise VL24 also served to update the documentation required for this type of transport, offering a training opportunity for military units and the HQ's logistics staff. Such training was vital for familiarising them with both national and multinational procedures, as well as with the large volume of documentation involved.



LOGFAS TRAINING

For training purposes, the entire Real Deployment Plan was created in LOGFAS by G4 operators. The FP&H (Force Profile and Holding) of the HQ and the Units, the rail, road, air and sea route networks, and the DDP (Detailed Deployment Plan) with all assets were included in the VL24 LOGFAS data base.

EARLY REDEPLOYMENT: A TEST OF ADAPTABILITY

The natural disaster that occurred in the province of Valencia led to an early redeployment, challenging the HQ's ability to reprogramme its Redeployment Plan at short notice. The willingness of private companies to facilitate the return journey, alongside their understanding of the emerging situation, was key to withdrawing all assets within a very tight schedule.

This scenario highlighted the staff's flexibility and diligence in overcoming unexpected circumstances, reinforcing the HQ's ability to adapt to any eventuality.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMELY AND PROPER CONTRACTING

Throughout the exercise, it became evident that prompt and reliable contracting of transport assets is essential to adhere to the planned schedule. When conditions change after the fact, disruptions can arise that significantly prolong or hinder deployment operations. Maintaining consistency between the initial plan and effective execution largely depends on avoiding substantial alterations to transport contracts.

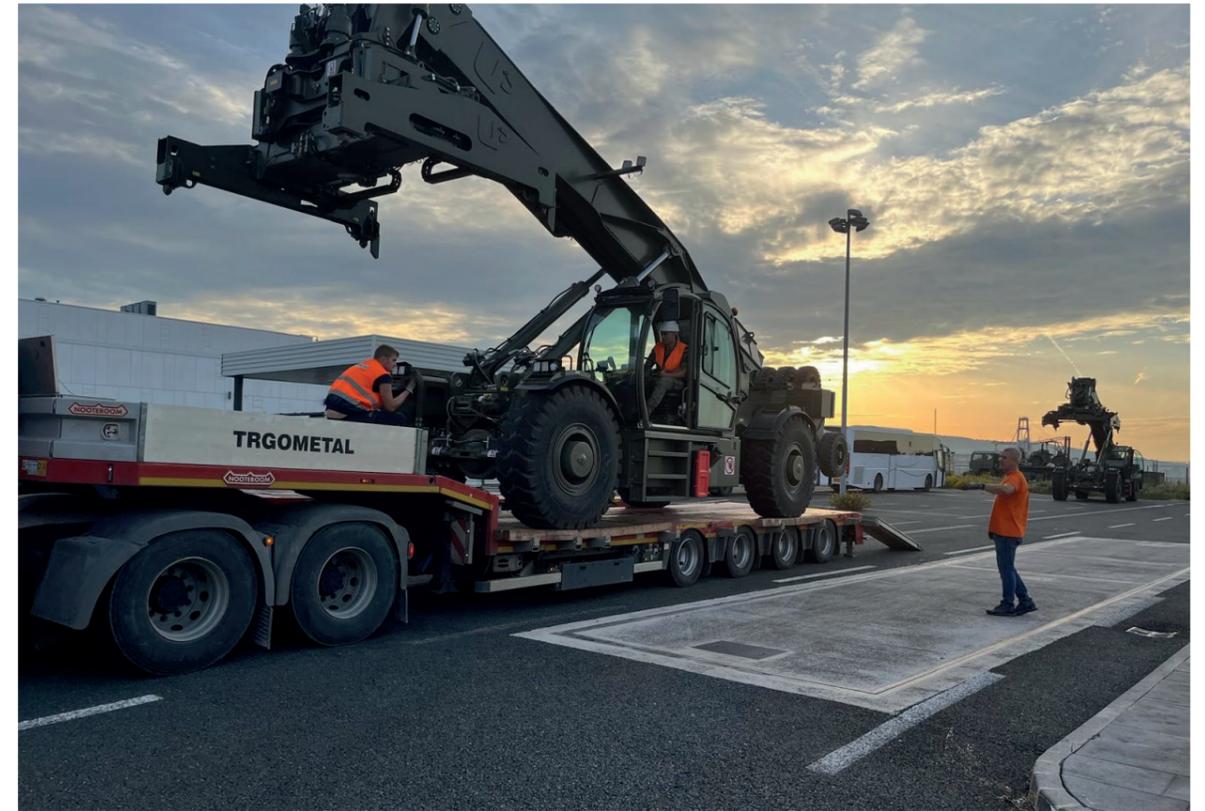
CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

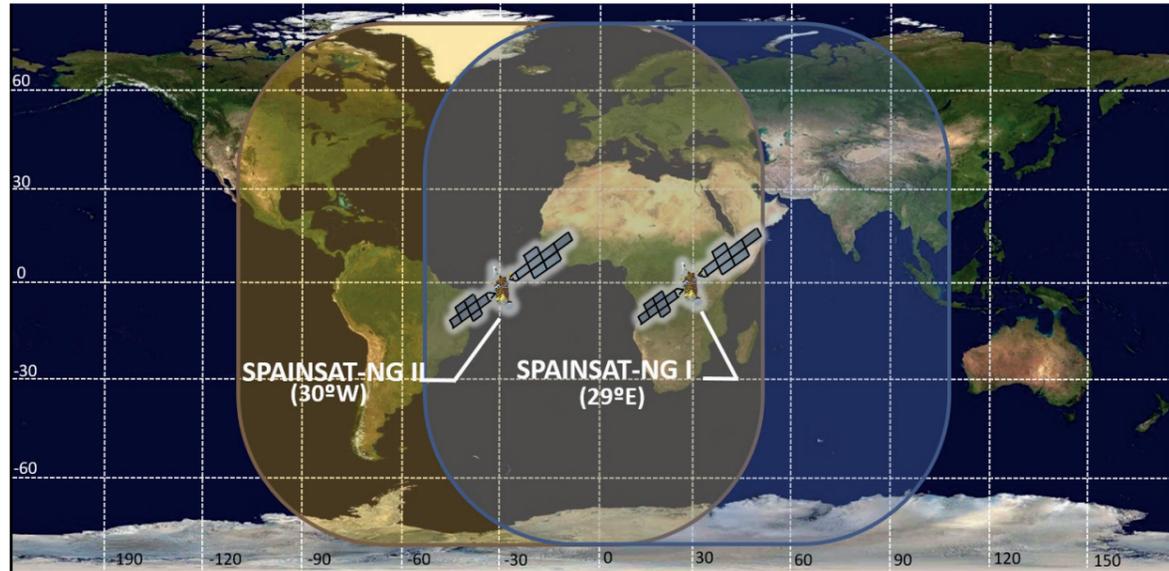
Exercise VL24 offered several key takeaways for

future projections:

1. **Coordination among stakeholders is crucial.** The effective integration of HQ NRDC-ESP, HN Croatia, Spanish Logistic Command, private transport companies, and military units ensured that logistics movements were carried out in accordance with the Deployment Plan and within established timelines.
2. **A model projection:** The outbound deployment ran smoothly, serving as an exemplary model of planning and execution.
3. **Ability to deploy with a 20-day Notice to Move:** HQ NRDC-ESP demonstrated its capability to accomplish its mission within the stipulated timeframe, provided the deployment location is known and transport contracts are firmly in place.
4. **Need to bolster M&T:** For future exercises of this kind, increasing personnel in the M&T area is recommended to ensure continuous oversight of all movements and reduce potential errors.
5. **Adaptability to the unforeseen:** The early redeployment clearly demonstrated the staff's ability to respond swiftly and effectively, even under adverse conditions, reaffirming their operational readiness and resilience.

Overall, Exercise VL24 was an enriching experience that enabled the HQ to put its logistical procedures into practice and refine both the planning and execution of a large-scale projection. The success of the exercise underscores the importance of well-coordinated, flexible logistics, capable of adapting to any operational scenario.





A New “Bird” in the Sky

**Colonel David Álvarez Lanzarote (ESP-A)
HQ NRDC-ESP ACOS G6 CIS**

On January 30, 2025, at 01:34 UTC, the SpainSat NG I satellite was successfully launched from Cape Cañaveral aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. Operated by HISDESAT as part of the Spanish Military Satellite Communications System (SECOMSAT), this launch marks a significant milestone for Spain and Europe, establishing one of the most advanced military satellite communication systems globally.

SpainSat NG I is currently transitioning to geostationary orbit (GEO), approximately 36000 km from Earth, a process expected to take about five months. Once operational, between July and August 2025, it will be positioned at 29° East over the Indian Ocean. Alongside its twin, SpainSat NG II, set to launch at the end of 2025, these satellites will provide coverage across two-thirds of the planet, spanning from Denver in the United States to Singapore in Asia, leaving only the Pacific Ocean uncovered.

With dimensions of 6.7 meters in height, 2.7 meters in width, a wingspan of nearly 50 meters when fully deployed, and weighing almost 6 tons, SpainSat NG I has a projected operational lifespan of 15 years, though its predecessors, SpainSat and X-TAR EUR, have exceeded initial expectations. This new constellation represents a major leap forward in military satellite communications, placing Spain among the leading European nations in the field.

ENHANCED COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES

The SpainSat NG satellites offer telecommunications services across three key military satellite communication bands:

- X-band: Traditionally used for command posts and deployed military units. The new satellites will quadruple the existing communication capacity.
- Military Ka-band: Currently limited, the new satellites will increase capacity by a factor of 36.
- UHF SATCOM Band: Crucial for NATO operations, this band provides satellite radio communication independent of terrain constraints. Spain will have sovereign control over more than 60 exclusive communication channels, attracting interest from NATO and allied countries.

INNOVATIVE FEATURES

SpainSat NG I and II introduce groundbreaking advancements:

- Onboard Digital Processor (DTP): Enhances flexibility by enabling cross-band switching (e.g., X-band uplink to Ka-band downlink), multicasting signals, and filtering out interference.
- Active X-band antennas: Capable of shaping coverage to specific areas, eliminating interference zones, and geolocating sources of disruption. Additionally, they enable beam hopping, shifting coverage up to 1000 times per second to concentrate communication in specific operational areas (e.g., special forces, aircraft, submarines).
- High-Altitude Nuclear Explosion (HANE) Protection: Shields against electromagnetic pulses from high-altitude nuclear detonations, a feature found in only a select few military satellites.

MAXIMIZING THE NEW CAPABILITIES

With increased bandwidth and improved technology, optimizing these new capabilities requires updates and integration into existing military infrastructure:



1. Upgrading Satellite Communication Equipment.

- CESTIC⁽¹⁾ has initiated upgrades to anchor stations, including new antennas and communication management systems.
- Modernizing satellite terminals will allow bandwidths of 20–40 Mbps, a significant improvement over the current 2 Mbps norm.

2. Integration into the Spanish MoD Integrated Information Infrastructure (I3D):

- Ensuring satellite terminals align with I3D’s architecture will unify satellite communication planning across the Ministry of Defense.
- The I3D Telecommunications Infrastructure (IT I3D) enhances secure communications using proprietary and commercial networks (e.g., LTE/5G, low Earth



- orbit (LEO) satellites like Starlink or OneWeb and the future European IRIS⁽²⁾.
- This dual communication model allows secure, government-owned communications alongside high-capacity, low-latency commercial options for critical services.

3. Expanding UHF SATCOM Radio Capabilities:

- The current limited UHF SATCOM capacity should be expanded to support brigade and battalion-level communications.
- Additional UHF SATCOM radios are required, along with upgrades to ensure compatibility with Integrated WaveForm (IW) Phase II, enhancing NATO and Spanish military interoperability.

CONCLUSION

The SPAINSAT NG satellites mark a new era in military satellite communications, positioning Spain at the forefront of allied nations. With the first satellite entering service in summer 2025 and the second in early 2026, Spain will dramatically enhance its military satellite communications capabilities.

These advancements will benefit not only national defense but also NATO, allied countries, and the European Union, reinforcing Spain’s role as a leading provider of secure satellite communications. To fully leverage these capabilities, modernizing SECOMSAT’s infrastructure and integrating these new technologies into the I3D framework are essential steps forward.



[1] CESTIC, the Center for Information Systems and Communication Technologies, is the highest authority in charge of the Spanish Ministry of Defense’s information systems and telecommunications. It oversees the development, integration, and maintenance of secure digital infrastructures that support military operations and national defense, ensuring that all systems meet the highest standards of reliability and security.

[2] IRIS² (or IRIS square) is Europe’s next-generation satellite communications system, designed to provide secure, resilient, and high-speed connectivity for defense, government, and critical civilian applications. It aims to ensure seamless voice, data, and multimedia transmissions even under challenging conditions. Current projections indicate that IRIS² is expected to become fully operational around 2030, with an estimated investment of approximately €10 billion.

Salutation from your new Command Sergeant Major

Command Sergeant Major José Manuel López Luna (ESP-A)
CSM HQ NRDC-ESP

INTRODUCTION AND CSM HQ NRDC-ESP INSIGHTS

To kick things off, I don't want to miss out on this opportunity to address everyone. I would like to say that there is no place I would rather be than serving at the headquarters with you all. I am honored and humbled to be here and part of this unrivalled team. For this reason, I will bend over backwards to uphold the high standing of the CSM position at our HQ.

As the Commander's senior enlisted advisor to this highly prepared and second-to-none organization, my goal is to keep an NCO-centric focus by interacting with and mentoring them. As your CSM, I have the privilege of problem-solving for our HQ, advising and listening to the workforce and bringing NCOs' issues and concerns to the Commander. If one of my NCOs has a problem, it's my responsibility to sort it out. It is a priority of mine to never let you down, leading with influence and humility at all costs. Getting to know and taking care of NCOs and their families is the cornerstone of my position because as far I'm concerned, the Army's strength lies in its Soldiers, and the Soldiers' strength lies in their families.



FROM CSMS MENTORS' MODELS TO TODAY'S CHANGES

When it comes to my time at the NCO Military Academy, the first thing that comes to mind is my drill sergeant's model. After almost thirty-seven years since that pivotal moment, I've had the golden opportunity to meet my role models—former CSMs of HQ NRDC-ESP. These exceptional senior leaders have paved the way for future

generations of NCOs, providing a wealth of knowledge, wisdom and insights from lessons learned throughout their careers. These NCO mentors have led the way and have done an extraordinary job. Living up to their legacy will certainly be a challenge. In my eyes, it is a massive privilege to be able to learn the ropes from my predecessors and referents. Nevertheless, the present era I am living in is thoroughly different and the global stakes much higher. It's time to hit the ground running and deal with new challenges and huge technological shifts. How do these changes impact our NCOs?

EXCELLENCE AND RESILIENCE IN HQ NRDC-ESP NCOS

After serving several months as HQ NRDC-ESP CSM, I am deeply grateful to lead you. I would like to highlight how well-prepared HQ NCOs are. These dedicated and professional servicemen uphold the highest standard of excellence, all while coping with and adapting to the times.

Throughout my career leading Soldiers—from squad to HQ Command level—I've witnessed so many changes. NCOs face numerous challenges to keep pace with ever-evolving modern warfare. By all accounts, HQ NRDC-ESP NCOs set the bar extremely high with their relentless preparation not only in individual military training, but also as part of NATO-led international contingents. This is evident from the first four tours of duty in Kuchyňa Air Base, Slovakia (CFE, Corps Forward Element) where three out of sixteen positions are covered by our NCOs. To perform those demanding missions, they must possess technological aptitude and steadfast commitment to learning, ensuring the technical knowledge needed to adapt to today's unpredictable conflicts.

Diving deep into the NCOs' tasks prior to deployment in Slovakia, they complete dedicated courses ranging from Communications and Information Systems (CIS), personnel, logistics and Healthcare Support, Operations, to pre-deployment training (fitness tests, weapons training, personal administration, and logistical administration).

Getting to the heart of the tasks implemented during the mission, they have beaten the odds by learning new Slovakian network systems, all-new procedures, and an array of responsibilities such as HQ Security Officer (HQ SO), Information Security Officer (INFOSEC), Information Management Officer (IMO), Web Manager and Terminal Area Security Officer (TASO). Additionally, they've excelled in deterring interference actions—such as terrorism, spying, sabotage, subversion and organized crime (TESSCO)—employing HUMINT Management and Reporting Tool (HMART) and using NATO's Intelligence



Functional Services (INTEL-FS) capability to manage collection, dissemination, and use of intelligence information.

THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS ON NCOS' ROLES

Think back to when we joined the Army many years ago. Today, as we stand on the brink of a new technological era, we need a complete overhaul in Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs). But how does progress in cutting-edge technology affect the role of NCOs on the emerging tech battlefield? To stay ahead of these rapid advances, Army leaders must be familiar with digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber warfare, virtual reality, robots, unmanned vehicles, and game-changing drones, among others. Considering how cutting-edge tech has reshaped the NCO mindset over recent decades, it is critical for us as leaders to continuously update our military capabilities for the new digital age and figure out how to adapt our duties for the present and the future.

Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that state-of-the-art tech is built on the solid foundation of NCOs' core competencies. Mastering skills such as marksmanship, combat life saving, land navigation, and battle drills remains essential. On top of that, proficiency in leadership, professional development and management is non-negotiable. As technology and equipment continue to evolve, NCOs are responsible for leading, training, caring for, and maintaining the standards of their Soldiers.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, if the NCOs hadn't kept pace with the ever-shifting high-tech landscape, the role of the NCO might not exist today. I believe that NCOs will need to be increasingly versatile and ready to adapt to technological evolution. However, we must never lose sight of what matters most: taking care of Soldiers, training them and leading them. No doubt, the most valuable asset, more than any technology, is the Soldier, the person.



Command Sergeant Major (CSM) José Juan Ríos López was born in Ferrol (Spain). He joined the Army in 1985, graduating from the NCO Academy as an Engineer Sergeant in 1988. His assignments include an Engineer Battalion, Logistic Group XXII, Army Training Centre, HQ NRDC-ESP, and Eurocorps HQ. He has participated in numerous military operations alongside NATO, the UN, and the EU, in regions including Pec-Kosovo, Naqoura-Lebanon, Kabul-Afghanistan, and Bangui-Central African Republic.

CSM Ríos has a particular passion for music, with a special interest in the guitar, and has brought this with him wherever he has moved in his career. In addition to music, he enjoys sports in general, with a special focus on football, tennis and basketball. He enjoys traveling and riding motorcycles.

He is married and has two daughters.

Let's start at the beginning. Ferrol, 1964. What was young José Juan like, and what did he want to be when he grew up?

My father was a marine infantryman, and I remember him taking me to parades and visiting the barracks where he was stationed. From a very young age, I felt drawn to that environment, especially to military music and uniforms and I think that was why I decided on a military career early on.

In 1985, you joined the Army, and just three years later, you were a sergeant in the Engineers. Looking back, what was it about military life that hooked you?

From the moment I entered the Basic General Academy for Non-Commissioned Officers, the effort required to achieve the goals set for us was a huge incentive and a source of personal satisfaction. I believe that when you earn something through hard work, you value it more. Furthermore, army camaraderie helped us reach those goals because there were tough times that were easier to overcome thanks to the support of my comrades.

Throughout your career, you've served in units in Jerez, San Fernando, Strasbourg, and Bétera, among others. What makes each posting special, and which one left the strongest impression?

I have very fond memories of all my postings, and each one taught me a great deal. During my first assignment with the XXII Engineer Battalion, I was able to put into practice the knowledge I gained at the Engineers Academy while carrying out the duties of a sapper sergeant. At the no. 2. Training and Mobilization Centre, I enjoyed training future soldiers for the Army, but my time at the Eurocorps Headquarters in Strasbourg probably left the deepest impression. It was an unforgettable experience both for me and my family, giving us the chance to explore Europe and enjoy different cultures and traditions.

Your arrival in Bétera was somewhat unusual, from that call in the middle of your vacation to writing "My car" as your address on your in-processing form. What do you remember about those early days?

I remember it perfectly. I was enjoying a vacation at the military residence in Málaga when, on August 12, 2002, at 8:30 a.m., I received a phone call in my room informing me that I had been assigned to the HQ NRDC-ESP in the ESP Official Defence Bulletin and had five days to report. That same day, I decided to leave the residence and head to my home in Cádiz to prepare for my trip to Bétera. The sudden shift in just five days — from a training centre to a NATO-ready headquarters over 800 kilometres from where I lived — was far from easy. Not having housing available in a military residence during those first few days is what led me to write "My car" as my address on the in-processing form. Despite the challenges, I gradually adapted to my new role as Chief Clerk in the Engineers Branch, where everything was new to me, and familiarised myself with the modern, advanced equipment.



In Afghanistan, you were part of a rock band, and in Bangui, you mixed African rhythms with Christmas carols. How important is music to you as a tool for connecting with people?

I'm a huge music enthusiast and feel a deep passion for it because it's so wonderful the way it can convey emotions for which there are no words. I started playing the guitar at a very young age, and it's been my faithful companion on every mission I've been part of.

On my first mission in Kosovo in 2000, it helped me cope with my lack of experience and overcome loneliness. In Lebanon in 2010, it got me free meals on some weekends at two restaurants in Tyre in exchange for playing for their customers. I also played some afternoons with a group of Indonesian soldiers from the Security Unit at Naqoura Headquarters, and occasionally near the headquarters hospital because some Indonesian nurses enjoyed Spanish music. This proved lucky for me the day I had a bad fall while running and cut my hand open. When I went to the hospital and the nurses saw me, I didn't have to wait in line — they treated me right away like a VIP patient so I could recover quickly and get back to playing the songs they loved.

Just a few days after arriving at my new mission at IJC in Kabul in 2012, I attended a small concert by an American rock band on the base and later joined them. We performed short gigs on Thursdays at the N2 Bar in the based. There, I returned to my musical roots, playing rock songs that reminded me of my early days with electric guitar, but I also included Spanish songs like "El torito enamorado de la luna," which the audience loved and helped lift their spirits.

In Bangui (Central African Republic) in 2017, I lived

up the French contingent's masses with songs from the repertoire I played on Sundays at the church when I was stationed in Strasbourg. I also formed a group with locals to perform at the Hispanic Day celebration. That was another great musical experience thanks to the African rhythms I got to enjoy.

I've tried to pass this passion for music on to my daughters since they were born, and I think I've succeeded.

In 2020, you took on the role of Senior Non-Commissioned Officer at HQ NRDC-SP. In this position, what would you say has been the greatest challenge?

The greatest challenge has always been trying to improve the professional and personal conditions and addressing the concerns and problems of my non-commissioned officers and of enlisted personnel at my headquarters.

You're married to Marta, who even learned Valencian to work as a teacher. How did you both experience that adaptation to Valencia?

She studied for a degree in education in A Coruña and therefore has an intermediate level of Galician. Then we moved to Cádiz, and finally, when I was assigned to HQ NRDC-ESP in Valencia, she achieved both intermediate and advanced levels of Valencian to teach in this region. This shows her commitment to staying by my side and supporting me, which is why I often say that half the medals I've been awarded really belong to her.

Your grandchildren see you as a military grandfather with stories that sound like something out of a movie. What do you enjoy doing with them when you are together?

Having grandchildren and being able to enjoy them is a true gift in life. When I'm with them, they usually ask me to play the guitar so they can sing and dance. Being with them requires staying in good physical shape because all three are very active and sometimes tireless, but it's thrilling to see them grow up and feel the love they give me.

Now that you are retiring, what's the first thing you want to do in this new chapter of your life?

I'll have more time to play the guitar, exercise, spend time with family, and travel with my wife. But most importantly, I'll have my own schedule where I can include all the things I couldn't do before.

If you could give advice to the young Sergeant José Juan Ríos who started in the Engineers in 1988, what would you tell him?

To always keep in mind the military values instilled in him at the Basic General Academy for Non-Commissioned Officers and to never lose his enthusiasm or drive, because military life is a great opportunity — you just have to dare to live it.



HQ NRDC-ESP Military Police Battalion I





Lieutenant Colonel (Ltc) Marian Sobčák is the current G35 Plans Leader at HQ NRDC-ESP. Born in Cadca, Slovakia, he joined the Armed Forces in August 1989, and graduated from the Military Academy in 2000.

His assignments include Leading Senior Officer – Deputy Head, Strategic Planning Staff, General Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces, Training Battalion, NATO Joint Force Training Centre, Combined Arms Training Command Poland, and currently, HQ NRDC-ESP. He has been deployed to Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Iraq.

He loves skiing, hiking, rafting, and kayaking. Lieutenant Colonel Sobčák is married and has three children.

LTC SOBČÁK, what led you to join the army back in '89?

I decided to enlist in the Armed Forces in 1989 because I deeply desired to serve my country. I was educated with integrity and discipline, which pushed me to choose a career in the military. My enthusiasm was ignited by the steadfast friendship inherent in military life.

The steadfast friendships that are a part of military life stoked the flame in me. I saw the Army as more than just a place to do my job. It was an opportunity to develop both personally and professionally. This journey helped me become a better leader.

From 1989 to today... Looking back, from that young man who joined the Military School to the officer who now leads plans at a NATO headquarters, what moment in your career do you think has defined you the most?

One particular event that really sticks out when I think back on my journey from a young student at Military High School to my current position as a G35 Plans Leader at a NATO headquarters is my deployment to Afghanistan during the ISAF mission. In addition to helping me improve my tactical and operational abilities, this experience significantly impacted how I view joint military operations on a global scale.

I learned a great deal about the complexity of contemporary warfare and the critical role NATO alliances play in achieving mission goals while I was in Afghanistan. The knowledge I gained during this time still informs my leadership style and strengthens my resolve to promote collaboration among our allies.

You have been on missions in Afghanistan, Bosnia, among others. What do you remember most about those experiences?

Those two missions significantly influenced my view of military service. The complexity of the environments and cultural diversity taught me much about diplomacy and the importance of comprehending local procedures.

When I was deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina for the ALTHEA operation, I participated in peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. I saw firsthand how our mission facilitated communication among groups impacted by conflicts, demonstrating how military operations can promote cooperation and respect again.

Both missions demonstrated how military troops and local communities must cooperate, be flexible, and be sensitive to cultural differences to establish long-term peace and stability.

Three years at the NATO Joint Force Training Centre training key officers for Afghanistan and Iraq... How is it to prepare someone for a war zone from a distance?

During my three years at the NATO Joint Force Training Centre, we focused on delivering comprehensive pre-



deployment training for “Key Leader Engagement”. We created realistic environments for them that replicated the operational conditions, including “Role Players” from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Knowing that our efforts directly impacted their readiness and safety in deployment zones, we tried to make every training session remarkable.

Collaborating with specialists from different NATO member states improved our programs by enabling us to integrate varied viewpoints and optimal methodologies applicable to every operation.

You have attended military academies in Slovakia and the USA. Do you notice many differences in how a soldier is trained depending on the country?

My experience at military schools in both the US and Slovakia has shown me that the two countries’ training methods are very different. These differences are due to their different educational philosophies, operational needs, military cultures and history.

When I was in Slovakia, I mostly learned the military tactic, with a focus on discipline, working together, and understanding national defence plans within the NATO framework. With a big focus on leadership ideas, the curriculum was made to instil a strong sense of duty and dedication.

The United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, on the other hand, gave students a more comprehensive and global view of military activities. The main concepts in the course of study were working together, thinking critically, and being able to adapt to new situations. The varied experiences of our foreign counterparts in the program deepened our conversations and made it easier for us to share more ideas and strategies.

Despite their differences, both training programs aim to build leaders who can make sound judgments under pressure. Both Slovakia and the US increased

my understanding of military operations and allied cooperation.

What is a day like in the office of a G35 Plans Leader at HQ NRDC-ESP?

A typical day in the office as a G35 Plans Leader at the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Spain is dynamic and multifaceted, reflecting our varied planning responsibilities.

There are many working groups and meetings at the HQ NRDC-ESP to resolve essential tasks, discuss ongoing projects, assess the status of current plans, and focus on exercises. We collaborate closely with other staff branches to fulfil HQ NRDC-ESP tasks and coordinate efforts.

Working with dedicated HQ NRDC-ESP professionals who care for alliance stability and security is beneficial. I could not have a better opportunity to improve my skills than to learn from my respected Spanish and international colleagues.

You have lived in Slovakia, the USA, Poland, Spain... What would you highlight about life in each of them?

The friendly and hospitable Slovak people highly value family values. Colorful folklore reflects the nation’s rich heritage, while beautiful scenery, such as the High Tatras, provides fantastic recreational possibilities.

My trip to the USA demonstrated to me the country’s diversity and multiculturalism. I loved discovering many different landscapes and cultural experiences. I observed a great sense of community among military families.

In Poland, I was impressed by the people’s determination and lively culture. During my military missions, I observed the commitment to NATO and the cooperative attitude among partner forces.

I currently live in Spain and value the country’s vibrant

heritage and friendly way of life. The thriving social life, particularly during festivals like Las Fallas, emphasizes community. The Mediterranean environment increases the thrill of traveling across this stunning nation, which promotes outdoor activities. Before my deployment to Spain, I had the opportunity to visit beautiful Andalucía, which has many magnificent parts, such as the Alhambra in Granada, where my brother Peter was learning at the Real Conservatorio Superior de Música “Victoria Eugenia” de Granada.

I live in Spain now and love the country’s rich history and nice people. Valencia is a unique place to experience culture because it has both old and new elements. The Spanish put a lot of value on family, leisure, and living life. This can be seen in everything they do, from sharing meals to throwing big parties.

Overall, each place has helped to shape my personal and professional development, teaching me vital lessons about cultural variety, resilience, and the value of community.

You are someone who skis down slopes, kayaks down rivers, and hikes in the mountains... Has that adrenaline helped you in military life, or is it your way of escaping from it?

Doing things outside, like skiing, kayaking, and hiking, gives you a rush of energy and a much-needed break from military life. These adventures are a lot like the difficulties I face in the military. They help me become more resilient, flexible, and quick-thinking.

At the same time, being in nature helps relieve stress and gives you a new viewpoint. It allows me to relax and think, creating a balance that lets me get back to my tasks with more energy and clarity. Ultimately, my love for these activities helps my military job by making me feel excited and refreshed. I am happy that my family not only supports me in these activities but also does them together with me. For instance, my children Zuzana, Tomas, and Patrik were long-time members of the Skii club in Slovakia.

Your daughter wants to be a military doctor. What advice would you give her and other young people who want to follow in your footsteps?

You are right; Zuzana passionately pursues her dream of studying at the esteemed Faculty of Medicine in Hradec Kralove, a prestigious part of Charles University in Prague.



So, my advice is to follow your passion and pick a career path that fascinates you, my daughter, and other young people who aspire to become military physicians. Since science and math are essential components of a medical career, you must perform very well in your studies. Look for healthcare volunteer opportunities and investigate military educational programs that will help you on your path.

Accept the difficulties that are ahead since the road will be difficult. Remain strong and focus on your long-term objectives. Seek mentorship from clever and wise people. Do not forget that serving and protecting others is the commitment of being a military doctor; seize this chance with pride and resolve.



With such an active and diverse family, is it difficult to balance your professional and personal life?

Keeping up with work and personal life while taking care of an active, diverse family is challenging but very fulfilling. My family is involved in many things, like my kids’ sports, schoolwork, and everything my wife Lenka provides, making our lives more interesting.

My older son Tomas plays guitar, while my younger son plays football for “Club de Fútbol CRACKS” Valencia. Spain is famous, among other things, mainly for football, flamenco, and guitar playing, so we could not wish for anything more than to live in beautiful Spain.

Sometimes, my tasks feel too much, but I make time for quality time with people I love. Planning and open communication are essential. We often plan family events and ensure we have time for each other even though we are all very busy. This keeps us in touch and helps us support each other’s goals.

In the end, the joy and energy that my family brings to our lives make me feel better all around. Adopting this busy way of life strengthens our family and gives me a valuable outlet that helps my career.

Finally, what message would you like to give to young officers who are starting their careers in the Armed Forces?

Continue studying, seek mentorship, and lead with honesty to develop trust. Remember that good leaders build trust and lead by example. Serve with honor and pride and seek to improve your military community and beyond.



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Master Corporal Clemente was born in Nava del Rey (Valladolid).

He began as a conscript soldier in the 12th Cavalry Regiment “Farnesio” in 1991. He then entered the Training Center in Rabasa (Alicante) in 1994, graduating as a professional soldier, and being assigned to the 8th Cavalry Regiment “Lusitania”.

In 2002, he was assigned to HQ NRDC-ESP and, since 2008, he has been assigned to the Military Police Battalion I. His deployments on international missions include Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Qala e Naw, Kabul, Mali and Tunisia. He was promoted to the rank of Master Corporal in 2016.

He has a partner and enjoys walking in the countryside, travelling and domestic life. His recreational activities include motorcycle riding and participation in sports such as football.

From Nava del Rey to Valencia, and from conscript soldier to Master Corporal. If someone had told you in 1991 that you’d have this career, what would the young man who joined Farnesio have thought?

To be honest, when I did my military service, I was already hooked on military life. From 1992 to 1994, I worked civilian jobs, but I had already decided to enlist as a professional soldier, and from then on, my goal was to climb as high as I could in my rank.

Of all the units you’ve served in, which one has left the biggest mark on you, and why?

The one that’s left the biggest mark, and where I’ve spent the most time, is the Military Police because the work I do there feels the most real.

Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Mali... Which mission was the toughest, and why?

The two in Afghanistan were the toughest because of the danger we faced every day.

In Qala e Naw, you served with the Military Police, and in Kabul and Mali, you were an escort for the highest-ranking authority. What’s it like to be someone’s shadow in places where a single mistake can be costly?

It’s an enormous responsibility because people don’t fully realize what escort duty entails. As harsh as it sounds, you have to put yourself between the attacker and the official you’re protecting, even if it means risking your own life. I see it with the personnel I work with — many of them don’t fully grasp that.

They say you never forget your first mission. What image stuck with you from that mission to Bosnia in 1995?

The one that hit me the hardest was when a APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier) was attacked from Serbian positions with an artillery shell, striking it and wounding a Spanish lieutenant. We had been sent to secure that position.

You’ve served at HQ NRDC-ESP and now at the Military Police Battalion I. What would you highlight about each of these postings?

HQ NRDC-ESP was more office-based work. Military Police Battalion I is much more hands-on and involves a lot more interaction with civilians.

You were once a student and, in 2023, an instructor for authority protection in Tunisia. How does your perspective change when you go from learning to teaching?

You learn something every day—you never know everything, and you always have to keep updating your skills to teach properly. I’ve always enjoyed teaching, and I do it whenever I get the chance. Teaching is crucial because everything you explain carries responsibility, so you have to prepare thoroughly for what you’re going to teach.

You said, “I love enjoying home life and walking with my partner and my pets.” Is that your way of balancing so many years in conflict zones?

Actually, I’ve managed to balance my personal life and military life pretty well. Whenever you come back from a mission, it’s good to disconnect and focus on family because they have a harder time here at home than we do when we’re deployed. We’re trained and mentally prepared for our work—we know what we’re getting into—but the uncertainty for the families left behind is tough on them.

Military life is intense and full of changes. Have you had to sacrifice a lot personally?

Not sacrifice exactly, but you do miss seeing your family more often.

After so many years of service, what advice would you give to a soldier just starting out?

Above all, they should be clear about what they want to do and have a solid idea of where they want to go. Learn as much as possible, even if it takes sacrifice. Take responsibility for the role they’re going to fill because you’re never alone—we depend heavily on both our own efforts and those of our comrades.



Commander's takeover ceremony at the HQ NRDC-ESP

Spanish Army Chief of Staff, Army General Amador Enseñat y Berea, presided over the takeover ceremony of Lieutenant General Luis Sáez Rocandio as the new commander of the HQ NRDC-ESP. The ceremony was held at the "Jaime I" Base in Bétera (Valencia) on 30 July, 2024.

The Army Chief of Staff highlighted the personal qualities and professional skills, the experience and prestige of Lieutenant General Sáez Rocandio all of which make him the ideal person to hold the post of Commander HQ NRDC-ESP: "I will highlight only three aspects", he said. "His leadership, exhibited through his style of command, personal charisma and exemplary character, and a firm conviction that to command is to serve; his humility, evident in his politeness and affability with all those around him; and finally his resistance to frustration, his refusal to give in to pessimism, or complacency, no matter how adverse the situation may be, no matter how insurmountable the difficulties may seem, no matter how many problems there may be or how difficult they may be to solve. These are all qualities that he not only possesses but also exports to his entire working environment, becoming a multiplying force in service efficiency".

In his speech, the new commander outlined his objective to maintain the readiness and preparedness of the HQ NRDC-ESP in order to effectively fulfil the duties entrusted to it. He also requested his new subordinates adhere to a vocation of service, individual commitment and team spirit.



Spain's Minister of Defence visits the HQ NRDC-ESP

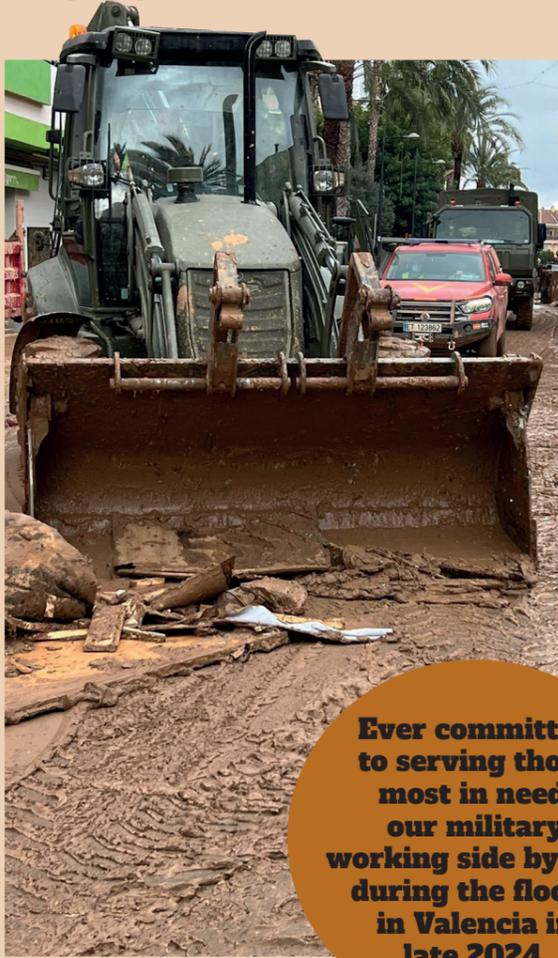
On 16 August, 2024 the Minister of Defence, Ms. Margarita Robles, accompanied by the Chief of the Army Staff, Army General Amador Enseñat y Berea, visited the HQ NRDC-ESP in Bétera (Valencia).

On her arrival at the Bétera Military Base, the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Army Staff were welcomed by Lieutenant General Luis Sáez Rocandio, Commander of HQ NRDC-ESP. Subsequently, they were briefed on the HQ NRDC-ESP's composition, organization and capabilities as a NATO Warfighting Corps (WFC), followed by a tour of the Operations Center (OPSCEN) and the Planning Room, which are equipped with advanced tools and capabilities to conduct real operations.

During the visit, the Minister of Defence held a video conference with the Corps Forward Element of the HQ NRDC-ESP, currently deployed in Slovakia. Since March, a small contingent from the HQ NRDC-ESP has been permanently stationed at the Slovakian base in Kuchyňa. Their role is to liaise with entities in the area of operations to facilitate the entry and assumption of responsibilities by the HQ NRDC-ESP as a WFC. Additionally, they identify training opportunities between NATO elements (HQs and/or units) and the national defence forces of the countries that constitute that area of responsibility. The Minister also had the opportunity to see first-hand the resources and personnel of the 21st Signal Regiment, the Military Police Battalion I and the HQ NRDC-ESP Support Battalion.

In her speech, Margarita Robles highlighted the role of Spain in NATO's deterrence and defence efforts on the Eastern flank and emphasised that the work they carry out, both on national territory and abroad, is "essential and very important" for peace.





Ever committed to serving those most in need: our military working side by side during the floods in Valencia in late 2024.





The Slovak Republic's flag is hoisted at the HQ NRDC-ESP in Bétera

At the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Spain Headquarters (HQ NRDC-ESP), an official ceremony was held to hoist the flag of the Slovak Republic, on the occasion of the incorporation of some Slovak officers to the Headquarters, on 27 January 2025. The event was chaired by Lieutenant General Luis Sáez Rocandio –Commander of the HQ NRDC-ESP. The Senior National Representatives of the allied nations were present in the parade.

The ceremony follows an established tradition, consisting of the raising of the national flag, when a new allied country incorporates personnel to the Headquarters.

The procedure for the participation of new members is formalized during regular meetings (“Plenaries”) held by the allied countries, in which, among other issues, positions on the Headquarters staff are offered to the rest of the allies, in case of they were interested on fill them out. In recent plenary meetings, the Slovak Republic showed its interest in being part of the HQ NRDC-ESP, thus being a total of thirteen countries that make up this Headquarters.

The Slovak Republic joins at a key moment for this Headquarters, concurrently with the deployment of the Corps Forward Element at Kuchyňa Air Base, in Slovakia.

The increase of countries that make up the NATO Headquarters in Bétera is clear evidence of the prestige it enjoys in Spain and among the rest of the NATO Allies. It is also a sign of the commitment of the member countries, of the cohesion and good health of the Alliance.



The NATO Military Police Working Group (MPWG) is hosted in Valencia

From 3 to 7 February, 2025 the city of Valencia hosted the NATO Military Police Working Group (MPWG). This event brought together 91 military personnel from 25 different nations, with the aim of developing and coordinating Military Police doctrine, tactics and procedures in combined and joint environments.

The MPWG, which has recently been elevated to Working Group status, takes place annually and is attended by representatives from NATO member nations, as well as agencies and friendly countries with an interest in military policing.

During that week, participants attended several plenary meetings and working sessions at the Santo Domingo barracks in Valencia, where key issues for NATO member nations' military police units were discussed. Additionally, social and cultural activities were held to foster camaraderie among participants.



HQ NRDC-ESP at the forefront in the use of the Classified Mission Network on the Eastern Flank of the Alliance

Last March, 2025, the HQ NRDC-ESP with the support of the Spanish Signal Brigade (MATRANS, its Spanish acronym) has designed, configured and deployed the classified network Mission Secret (MS) WFC HQ NRDC-ESP, as the main Command and Control system for the Army units deployed on the Eastern Flank.

In addition to providing service to Spanish units, the MS WFC network provides Command and Control capability to units of other nations, such as the Multinational Division Center (MND-C), based in Székesfehérvár (Hungary), which is part of the structure led by HQ NRDC-ESP on the Eastern Flank. Collaboration with the units that make up this structure is not only limited to the deployment of assets, but also includes advice and mentoring for nations in the process of integrating their own CIS assets into NATO networks.

This Command and Control System (C2) allows information flows to be maintained between the different headquarters and their units, both Spanish and multinational, that form part of the deployment. This type of action requires fully trained, equipped and prepared Armed Forces with highly technical capabilities that allow them to deploy with our allies in an interoperable manner, and at the NATO level, Exercise Steadfast Cobalt (STCO), under the leadership of the NATO CIS Group (NCISG), ensures the integrity and interoperability of the Communications and Information Systems (CIS) that make up C2.



Strengthening Strategic Communication: Visit of the Spanish Defence Public Affairs Course to HQ NRDC-ESP

On May 19, a group of students from the Spanish Defence Public Affairs Course visited the Headquarters of the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Spain (HQ NRDC-ESP), located in Bétera, Valencia. This visit formed a vital component of their academic program, offering insight into the communication structure of HQ NRDC-ESP in a NATO operation.

The delegation was officially welcomed by the Chief of the Communication Division of HQ NRDC-ESP, who extended greetings on behalf of the Corps Commander, absent due to other commitments. The visit included a comprehensive series of briefings delivered by personnel from the Communication Division, covering the organization of the division, the concept of Strategic Communication (STRATCOM), its procedures, and how the information environment is assessed. Further sessions focused on the structure and mission of Information Activities and Military Public Affairs. Particular attention was given to a new analytical platform currently being implemented at HQ NRDC-ESP, developed in collaboration with leading universities from the Valencian Community. A highlight of the day was a videoconference with the Public Affairs Officer of the Corps Forward Element, currently deployed in Slovakia, providing its perspective on communication efforts undertaken.

The course is organized by the Institutional Communication and Press Office of the Spanish Ministry of Defence and the curriculum includes workshops, themed panels, and external visits such as this one to HQ NRDC-ESP.

This year's visit comprises 26 officers from the Spanish Army, Navy, Air and Space Force, and the Military Emergency Unit (UME), accompanied by Ms. María del Mar González, co-director of the course, whose visit is gratefully acknowledged.

In the afternoon, the group visited the editorial offices of LEVANTE-EMV, a leading regional newspaper in Valencia. Welcomed by the management team, the attendees were given an inside look into the operations of a major media outlet.





The Central Market of Valencia: A Modernist and Social Treasure

The Central Market of Valencia, known in Valencian as Mercat Central de València, is an architectural gem and a vital hub of the social and economic life of the city. Inaugurated in 1928, this market is not only a place where fresh goods are traded but also a symbol of Valencian modernism and a meeting point for locals and tourists.

HISTORY

The site that the Central Market occupies today has been the usual location for street markets since the first urban expansion of the city. In 1839, an open-air market known as the New Market was inaugurated in this location, serving as the main point of sale for fresh food in Valencia. However, as the city grew, this market could no longer keep up with demand.

In 1910, the Valencia City Council held a competition for the design of a new market. Architects Francesc Guàrdia i Vial and Alexandre Soler i March, who both trained at the Barcelona School of Architecture and collaborators of Domènech i Montaner, were in charge of the project. After some modifications, the work was completed in 1928 by Valencian architects Enrique Viedma Vidal and Àngel Romani Verdeguer.

ARCHITECTURE

The Central Market is a masterpiece of Valencian modernism. Its structure combines iron, glass, ceramics, and stone, creating a space that many

describe as a “cathedral of commerce.” The base of the building forms the shape of an irregular 14-sided polygon, adapting to the terrain it occupies. The roof, with sloping surfaces and domes, creatively resolves the irregularities of the structure.

The central dome, made of iron, glass, and ceramics, reaches 30 meters in height and is crowned by a weathervane in the shape of a parrot, a beloved symbol of the market. The stained-glass windows and decorative ceramics depict scenes of everyday life and the Valencian countryside, adding a touch of authenticity and homage to the region’s culture.

SOCIAL FUNCTION

Since its inauguration, the Central Market has been a meeting place for Valencians. Its main function is the sale of fresh local products, such as fish, seafood, fruits, spices, meats, and sausages, both for domestic consumption and to supply top restaurants in the city. Yet, its significance extends beyond trade.



The market is also a cultural and tourist landmark. It receives around 3.15 million visitors a year, a third of which are from outside Valencia or abroad. This influx of visitors has led to the implementation of a code of good practices to ensure that tourist activity does not hinder the market’s commercial function.

HIGHLIGHTS

One of the most notable aspects of the Central Market is its impressive modernist architecture. The combination of wrought iron, stained glass, ceramics and stone creates a unique environment that reflects the spirit of early 20th-century Valencia. The central dome and the weathervanes in the shape of a parrot and a fish are iconic features that capture the attention of every visitor.

The market is also celebrated for the quality and freshness of its products. With more than 200 stalls, it offers a wide variety of foods ranging from vibrant fruits and vegetables to succulent meats and fish.

This display of flavors, colors, and smells makes the Central Market a paradise for food lovers.

The market is also notable for its seamless integration into the urban environment. Located in the Ciudad de Brujas square, next to the Silk Exchange and the Church of Santos Juanes, it blends perfectly with other important monuments of the city. This privileged location makes it a reference point for both locals and tourists.

THE CITY’S LANDMARK

The Central Market of Valencia is much more than a place of commerce. It is a symbol of the history, culture, and daily life of the city. Its striking modernist architecture, vital social function, and essential role as a tourist attraction make it a treasure that deserves to be visited and appreciated. Whether you’re looking to buy fresh products, admire its architecture, or simply enjoy the atmosphere, the Central Market is a must-see on any visit to Valencia.





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