

# HQ NRDC-ESP

Journal I – 2024

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## COVER PHOTO

Visit of His Majesty King Felipe VI to **HQ NRDC-ESP**.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of Felipe VI as King of Spain.



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# Commander's Foreword

Lieutenant General Fernando García-Vaquero Pradal (ESP-A)  
COMMANDER HQ NRDC-ESP

Dear reader,

It is with great pleasure that I present the first **HQ NRDC-ESP** Magazine of 2024. As we are a constantly learning Headquarters, we have tried once again to include articles which are directly linked to real-world situations at operational and tactical levels, such as in the sensitive area of Prisoners of War, referring to the ongoing war in Ukraine, or the impact of using Emerging Disruptive Technology.

In that sense, the use of Artificial Intelligence Technology will be an area which, even if we cannot oversee in our days, will have a strong impact not only in the military, but in all parts of our lives.

Regarding our activities during the previous months, one short preamble would not be enough to describe them. One of the most demanding and important events was the deployment of our Corps Forward Element (CFE) to Slovakia, "my eyes and ears in the area". With this deployment we have shown our strong commitment to NATO and our allies. Some others include the exercise Steadfast Cobalt 24, the experimentation of our Command Post concept, the planning process of exercise Valiant Lynx 24 and the continuous mentorship of MND-C.

On the other hand, as well as giving a warm welcome to all newcomers and their families who have been arriving at our HQ since the beginning of the year, I would like to highlight the arrival of our new DCOS OPS Brigadier General Panagiotis Lympereas. At the same time, we bid farewell and express our gratitude to his predecessor Brigadier General Nikolaos Dimitrakos, who has made an extraordinary effort at our HQ and who has returned to Greece to take up another demanding position.

Finally, I would also like to express my gratitude to the entire personnel of **HQ NRDC-ESP** for their work and their dedication during the previous decade. It was an honour for me to serve in that exceptional Headquarters not only as Commander but also as Chief of Staff and DCOS Ops.

Please take care of yourselves and your families, who are at any time the most valuable asset we have. Good luck!

In that sense I say for the last time:

**"Twelve Nations, One Team"**

Enjoy the magazine and I wish you all the best.



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## Leadership of a multinational military staff – Part 1

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

### **INTRODUCTION**

What does it take to lead a team of military personnel from various countries, cultures, and backgrounds? This is the question that I have been trying to answer since being appointed to lead a multinational team in HQ NRDC-ESP.

The HQ NRDC-ESP is composed of almost four hundred military personnel from twelve contributing nations. The multinational nature of HQ NRDC-ESP is one of its main strengths, as it provides a rich and diverse pool of expertise, experience, and perspectives. However, it also poses some challenges for leadership, as it requires managing different national and cultural backgrounds, languages, and procedures.

Leadership can influence people, behaviours, and organizations. It is also necessary that leadership vary by context and culture. Since December 2023, I have had the privilege and responsibility of leading a multinational team of military personnel from different nations, cultures, and backgrounds at this HQ.

This is not my first multinational experience, but this position is a new and exciting experience for me, as

well as a complex and demanding one. Therefore, I want to share my expectations and assumptions about this role, and how I intend to learn and adapt.

In the second part of this article, to be published by the end of my tour at HQ NRDC-ESP, I will reflect on my experience and outcomes as leader and compare them with this first part.

### **WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?**

Leadership is a complex and varied concept that has as many different definitions as there are people who have tried to define it. Each person may have a different understanding of it, depending on the leader, the followers, and the context<sup>1</sup>.

While there are many definitions of leadership, I will use a simple and practical definition that captures its essence: leadership is the process of influencing and directing people to act toward a common goal<sup>2</sup>.

However, leadership is not a one-size-fits-all concept. It depends on the context, the situation, and the people involved. Different types of leadership are required for different types of organizations, teams, and tasks. For example, leading a multinational military staff is different from leading a single nation military team or a civilian organization.



Other common misconceptions about leadership are that it is a top-down process, or a fixed attribute. Leadership is not only about giving orders and controlling outcomes, but also about creating understanding, building relationships, and influencing others. Moreover, leadership is not something that one is born with or can learn from formal education, but something that one can develop and improve through experience, reflection, and feedback.

#### **WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER IN A MULTINATIONAL MILITARY STAFF?**

Leading a multinational military staff requires a combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the key aspects of leadership that, from my own perspective, should be considered in the context of a multinational military staff.

**Communication** is more than sharing information. It is creating understanding, building relationships, and influencing others<sup>3</sup>. As leaders, we must communicate effectively in different situations and with different audiences. We must listen, empathize, and foster open and constructive dialogue. Communicate the HQ's vision, mission, and objectives, and monitor the staff's progress and performance. Build rapport, exchange feedback, and offer support.

**Trust** is believing that others are competent, reliable, and honest, and that they will act in your best interest. Trust is the basis of effective teamwork, as it allows people to share information, resources, and responsibilities, and to work

together toward a common goal<sup>4</sup>. As leaders, we must show and build trust with our team members and other leaders, both inside and outside the HQ. Show trust by delegating tasks and responsibilities and giving autonomy and flexibility. Earn trust by keeping your promises and commitments and admitting and fixing your mistakes.

**Cultural awareness** is recognizing, understanding, and appreciating the cultural differences and similarities among people, and adapting one's behaviour accordingly. It is vital for working effectively in a multinational environment, as it avoids misunderstandings, conflicts, and leverages diversity<sup>5</sup>. As leaders, we must respect and value the cultural diversity of our team and the HQ. Learn about the cultures of the nations within the HQ. Educate and sensitize your team members about the cultural aspects of the HQ and facilitate cross-cultural learning and exchange.

**Feedback** is providing and receiving information to improve one's performance, behaviour, and outcomes. Feedback is vital for learning and development, as it helps to identify and address strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement<sup>6</sup>. As leaders, we must give and get feedback regularly and effectively, both formally and informally, and both individually and collectively. Use feedback to understand the goals of your team members, being aware of their career and professional needs. Give feedback to your team members using specific, constructive, and timely comments. Get feedback from your team members and other leaders using an open, humble, and appreciative attitude.



**Integrity** is being honest, ethical, and consistent in actions and words, and acting according to values and principles. Integrity is the cornerstone of leadership, as it inspires trust, respect, and loyalty, and sets an example<sup>7</sup>. As leaders, we must uphold and demonstrate integrity, and ensure that our team follows the highest standards of professionalism, conduct, and ethics. Be honest, ethical, and consistent. Ensure that your team comply with the rules, regulations, and policies of the HQ and Host Nation.

## CONCLUSION

Leadership of a multinational military staff is a complex and dynamic process that requires various skills, knowledge, and attitudes. I have discussed some key aspects of leadership in this context, which are interrelated and influence each other, the context, situation, and people. I think these aspects can help one to become a more effective and successful leader of a multinational military staff, and contribute to the HQ NRDC-ESP vision, mission, and goals. In the second part of this article, I will reflect on my experience and outcomes as a leader in a multinational context and compare them with this first part.

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# Handling Prisoners of War in a modern country.

## The Ukrainian experience

Lieutenant Colonel Jorge Bayona Horta (ESP-Guardia Civil)  
HQ NRDC-ESP PROVOST MARSHAL

### INTRODUCTION

When Russia initiated the current phase of their invasion on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, Ukraine was already a modern state with enforced national regulations. Its administrative and criminal legislation was being applied in its territory as in any other modern nation. These regulations, prepared for time of peace and crisis, did not actually foresee the need for handling prisoners of war (POW).

As a party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and its Protocols, Ukraine quickly identified the need to modify its national regulations and administration to comply with the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The government of Ukraine assessed that a system for handling POWs that didn't respect IHL might jeopardize international support for its fight against the Russian Federation. At that moment, there was no national authority designated to implement the required actions and changes.

### CREATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE COORDINATION OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR

On March, 11<sup>th</sup> 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine issued the decision n. 257 for the "creation of the Headquarters for the coordination of Prisoners of War". The Headquarters was

established to facilitate the coordination of public agencies and institutions taking part in the treatment and handling of POWs.

The HQ includes representatives from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Justice, Armed Forces, State Security agencies and other matter-related entities. Currently, the designated Chief of the POW Coordination Headquarters is LTG Kyrylo Budanov, Head of the Directorate-General of Intelligence of the MoD.

One of the main tasks undertaken by this new structure was to draft the legal instruments necessary to carry out the handling of POWs. The legal changes affected the following areas:

- Regulation of the legal status of POWs;
- Provisions to guarantee that POWs detention is carried out under the scope of IHL;
- Procedure to assess POWs' actions in Ukraine taking into account the combatant statute;
- Procedural role of POWs in the investigation of war crimes;
- Set up of a political procedure for the exchanges of POWs with Russia: the HQ leads the actual process to exchange POWs, assessing the candidates in coordination with the Public Prosecutor Office and the Directorate-General of Intelligence of the MoD.



Russian soldiers captured by the UKR army. Source: Social Media

In addition to the functions outlined above, the Headquarters also provides the necessary support to the families of Ukrainian soldiers captured by the Russian army. To enhance this line of effort, different online resources<sup>1</sup> were created, such as the website [www.koordshtab.gov.ua](http://www.koordshtab.gov.ua)

## POW OPERATIONAL PROCESS

The operational process carried out by UKR for handling POWs does not differ greatly from the process acknowledged by NATO countries.

The capturing unit is responsible for moving the POWs from the capture point to the location where they will be transferred to a Military Police Unit. The MP unit will take them rearwards to a temporary holding facility. Most of captured enemy soldiers were processed backwards through detention centres located in Dnipro and Kiev<sup>2</sup>.

The capturing unit carries out the initial registration of the captured persons. They fill in three copies of the POWs identification data:

- One copy will be held by the unit.
- The second copy will be given to the Military Police Unit that receives the POWs.
- The third copy will be sent to the National Information Office, set up in accordance with art. 122 of III Geneva Convention and art. 136 of IV Geneva Convention.

During this initial phase, the POW is informed about his status, rights, duties, and rules of treatment. **Medical treatment** is provided during the process rearwards.

POWs who are not wounded go through a verification process: **intelligence exploitation** is carried out, with a double aim: to obtain valuable information and to determine whether the captured soldier has committed any war crimes. This process is coordinated with the ad-hoc Public Prosecutor office for War offences. Ukrainian authorities are making a strong effort to collect any piece of evidence regarding war crimes and their perpetrators, so the national criminal code is applied contemporarily to the alleged offences<sup>3</sup>. Evidence is being collected by the Ukrainian National Police<sup>4</sup> as the agency with legal authority to collect it for its use in court.



Source: Gordonua.com

POWs queuing in UKR POW holding facility.



Handcuffed Russian soldier is being processed rearwards by UKR forces. Source: AFP-FADEL SENNA

At the end of the process, POWs who respected the laws and customs of war are held in specific long-term holding facilities, until the end of the war or until they are exchanged for Ukrainian nationals captured by the Russian Armed Forces.

Ukrainian authorities selected a low security prison located in Mykolaiv as a long-term POW holding facility. This detention centre, renamed as WEST 1, was emptied of criminal convicts to turn it into a POW holding camp. POW facilities are managed by the State Criminal-Executive Service (Prison officers), not by the Military Police.

As camp WEST 1 has already reached its full occupancy, a new one (designated as WEST 2) has been opened in Vinnytsia region<sup>5</sup>, on the basis of the existing medium level prison in Mohyliv-Podilskyi.



Captured Russian soldiers. Source: New York Post/AFP

## CONCLUSIONS

The adequate handling of POWs has been one of the main efforts of the Ukrainian Government since the very beginning of open hostilities. Ukraine soon realised that its credibility was at stake: any wrongdoing during POW handling might negatively impact international support for their cause. Using IHL as a main reference, the set up of an appropriate system within Ukraine was much less complex than in a multinational operation, mainly because of two facts: firstly, detention operations were already taking place in its own territory, where their own legislation applies and could be adapted if needed; secondly, Ukraine was the only Detaining Power<sup>6</sup> on its side: since POW handling is primarily an issue for the Detaining Power, Ukrainian authorities just needed to agree within their administration in order to set up the POW handling system.

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- [6] Geneva Convention III, Article 12: Prisoners of war are in the hands of the enemy Power, but not of the individuals or military units who have captured them. Irrespective of the individual responsibilities that may exist, the Detaining Power is responsible for the treatment given them.



Google maps picture of POW HF “West 1”

This situation encourages us to reflect on the following questions: What will happen when the Detaining Powers number more than just one nation? How will the Troops of Contributing Nations organise an IHL-compliant system for handling POWs in the case of a NATO art. 5 mission? Will the countries deal with their own POWs, or will they rely on a joint structure to do so?

The decisions eventually taken will have a direct impact on the implemented system and the infrastructure on the field; there will be a number of affected domains: firstly POW safety, but also their logistic & medical support, the intel exploitation, the legal process in relation to HN judicial procedures, holding and transportation, POW exchanges with the enemy and so on. A strong legal framework needs to be agreed upon in order to facilitate the NATO Commanders at all levels having a clear picture of the POW handling system, their actual responsibilities in the field and how to deal with any wrongdoing. In conclusion, not an easy task that will need to be clarified in the early stages of the planning process.

# The National Resistance, a new actor to consider in our area of operations

***“We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender.”***  
***Winston Churchill, 4 June 1940***

Major Francisco M. Pérez Pérez (ESP-A)  
 HQ NRDC-ESP G35

## THE RESISTANCE OPERATIONS CONCEPT (ROC)

During the Cold War, several NATO countries created what were known as “stay-behind networks”, in order to act against the Soviet Forces in case of invasion. These stay-behind networks were composed of civilian volunteers who were trained to conduct sabotage, subversion, intelligence collection and other guerrilla-type missions. Just prior to the invasion of Crimea in 2014, the US Army compiled all lessons learned from the Cold War and also WWII<sup>1</sup> and started to prepare the Resistance Operating Concept (ROC).

The final version of the ROC manual, written by US Colonel Otto Fiala (2020), explains how to develop an organized, trained and equipped civilian resistance, which is authorized by the recognized government and able to contribute to the national defense, in case of attack by a foreign state. The ROC is also based on creating a national resilience<sup>2</sup> that would highly contribute to the deterrence and would evolve into a resistance<sup>3</sup> movement when the invasion and loss of sovereignty occurred.

Those countries which have a National Defense Strategy based on the Total Defense concept are likely to consider the establishment of a resistance movement, which would look for mobilizing all support necessary to defend the nation and its territorial integrity against armed attack, including both civil and military defense. For that reason, the ROC has become a great reference and inspiration to some NATO countries, such as the Baltic States, to develop or improve their own national defense plans (Friberg, 2019).

## NATO’S APPROACH - THE COMPREHENSIVE DEFENCE

Of NATO’s three core tasks, the main one, established in the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, is Deterrence and Defence which has always been associated with Article 5. However, the current security environment is leading the focus on the importance of article 3, which states: “In order to more effectively achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack”.

Consequently, the civil preparedness would constitute a central pillar of the Allies’ resilience and a critical enabler for the Alliance’s collective defence. This resilience would be composed of three mutually reinforcing layers: military resilience,

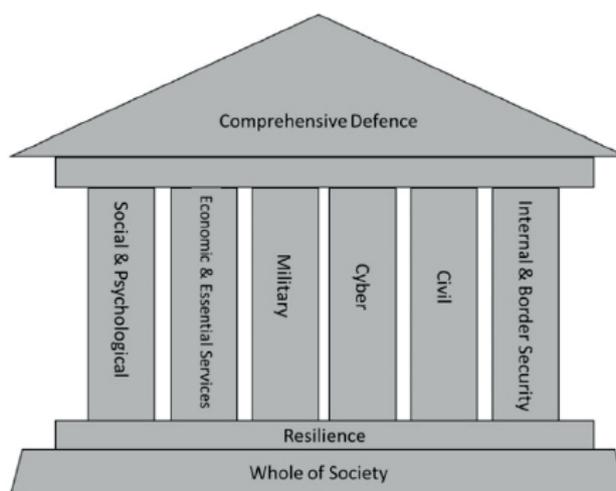


Scheme of Resilience and Resistance. Source: Fiala, 2020

military-civilian resilience and civilian resilience, this last one being understood as the civil capacity to deny competitors the ability to target civil vulnerabilities and distract/overstretch the military instrument. According to that, the civil resilience would contribute to the deterrence, by the way known as “denial of benefits”<sup>4</sup>.

Taking all the layers involved in the national defense and the ROC manual as a reference, NATO has created its Comprehensive Defence concept, defined as “an official Government strategy, which encompasses a whole-of-society approach to protecting the nation against potential threats”. Afterwards, the NATO SOFCOM<sup>5</sup> has deepened its knowledge of the subject and developed two handbooks about the Comprehensive Defence concept, which include the civil defence as one of the six Comprehensive Defence pillars (NSHQ, 2020a, 2020b).

Civil defense is in turn mainly accomplished by what is named the Home Guard, which would be defined as a government-led, voluntary or conscript organisation comprising members of the population who contribute to various aspects of their nation’s safety and security.



Comprehensive Defence Pillars. Source: NSHQ, 2020a

As a part of this Home Guard, an Asymmetric Defence Component (ADC) could be included. This ADC would be formed by civilian volunteers who had been previously recruited and trained by SOF units. Therefore, ADC units would be able to conduct a huge number of unconventional warfare tasks, mainly led by SOF units or even by themselves.

Functional Area	Potential Tasks
<b>Sustainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storage and distribution of supplies</li> <li>• Medical treatment services</li> <li>• Equipment maintenance</li> <li>• Secure materials rationed or prohibited by occupying power (secret confiscation)</li> <li>• Battlefield recovery of weapons, ammunition, etc. (adversary and friendly)</li> <li>• Construction                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fortifications</li> <li>- Safe havens</li> <li>- Routes and crossings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Movement and Manoeuvre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct and indirect combat operations                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employing unconventional (irregular) tactics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Transportation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-standard (civilian) air, land, and maritime possibilities</li> <li>- Pack animal</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Route reconnaissance</li> <li>• Emplacing or removing obstacles                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Routes, landing zones, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Intelligence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enemy force composition, disposition, strength and intentions</li> <li>• Terrain analysis                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trafficability</li> <li>- Ability to support logistical sites, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Political information</li> <li>• Data related to potential targets</li> </ul>
<b>Fires</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spotting and observing fires                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performing joint fires observer (JFO) functions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Battle damage assessments (friend and foe)</li> </ul>
<b>Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing quarter and safe houses</li> <li>• Equipment cache</li> <li>• Identify documents</li> </ul>
<b>Information and Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce strategic communications message</li> <li>• Provide ISPs technical platforms</li> <li>• Provide courier support (i.e., message delivery)</li> </ul>

ADC Potential Tasks. Source: NSHQ, 2020a

In addition, to spread the knowledge and awareness of the importance of civil defence, the NATO Special Operations University (NSOU) annually teaches the Comprehensive Defence Course, which focuses on countering Hybrid Threats, Resilience and Resistance (NSOU, 2023).

Finally, NATO's concern about the national resistance support is also acquiring more importance in all the planning process levels. So, one dedicated and specific Appendix about resistance is commonly included as part of the Annex K Special Forces into the different operation orders.

## THE NATIONAL RESISTANCE IN THE UKRAINE WAR

The current Ukrainian war has increased the interest for the resistance concept because many successful actions on the field have been accomplished by way of a national resistance, partnered by Ukrainian military forces. To achieve that, since 2014 the US Special Operations Forces have been previously training and supporting their Ukrainian SOF counterparts in how to conduct unconventional warfare missions by, with and through a civilian population (Liebermann, 2022).



A US Army Green Beret does a close-quarters-battle drill with Romanian and Ukrainian special operators in Romania. Source: Atlamazoglou, 2022.

The Ukrainian approach to the Comprehensive Defence was well defined, considering lessons learned from the invasion of Crimea in 2014, and comprised into its "Law of Ukraine on the Fundamentals of National Resistance", which considers the effectiveness of integrating civilian / volunteer forces into its overall military structure



Civilians take part in a military training course conducted by a TDF unit. Source: Liebermann, 2022

and strategy. For that purpose, two elements would play a key role, the Territorial Defence Forces (TDF) and the Volunteer Formations of Territorial Communities (VFTC) (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2021).

Although the TDF could receive civilian volunteers, it would actually belong to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. On the other hand, the VFTC is a paramilitary unit formed on a voluntary basis from citizens, which participate in the preparation and execution of territorial defence tasks within the territory of the relevant territorial community. These Ukrainian partisans belonging to VFTC, as well as the TDF units have conducted remarkable activities in the Kherson region, by targeting pro-Russian activists or attacking Russian troops among others (Falk, 2022). It is widely known that these successful missions are usually mentored by Special Forces units (Rainsford, 2022), being President Zelensky who openly remarks on the importance of Special Forces in partnering with the resistance movement (President of Ukraine, 2021).



Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky presents state medals to Ukrainian Special Operations Forces. Source: Stringer, 2023

## THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT AND THE WARFIGHTING CORPS

Although, as mentioned before, the resistance is mainly partnered by Special Forces units, a Warfighting Corps (WFC) should be taken into account, because the Area of Operations (AoO) would be shared. Until the start of the conflict, with an enemy acting in the grey zone, the host nation had not lost its sovereignty yet, so the resistance movement would mainly operate in the WFC's rear and close area, to counter or monitor the enemy hybrid threats. If the enemy attacked and invaded an opposing nation, then the national resistance could conduct its operations into the new WFC's deep area, in order to contribute to restoring their territorial integrity.

In all the previous cases, the resistance movement acting by itself or supported by SOF units, would mainly conduct covert operations. Consequently, a liaison officer from

special forces units, embedded in our WFC HQ could result paramount in order to deconflict, set coordination measures and avoid fratricidal actions. Furthermore, one of the SOF truths establishes that “most Special Operations require non-SOF assistance”, which means that the WFC could sometimes be requested to support SOF units, so a minimum understanding about what these resistance operations are about would be necessary to provide a better support.

The WFC could also take advantage of the resistance’s operations, because the resistance would contribute immensely to maintaining the situational awareness in the area. Additionally, the hybrid threat in the rear area, consisting of proxies acting on behalf of a near peer state, could pose a great physical risk to our forces. The actions accomplished by SOF units by, with and through the resistance and against these enemy proxies, typically known as counter-hybrid operations, could help to mitigate that risk and improve the force protection to our WFC members.

## CONCLUSIONS

The resistance movement, defined in the ROC document and integrated into NATO and Ukraine’s Comprehensive Defence approach, has verified its great usefulness against an enemy who invades a sovereign country. Ukraine has showed itself to be especially concerned about its importance

since the Crimea invasion in 2014, and nowadays, the Ukrainian war is the current example of how a combination of Armed forces and civilian volunteers can halt the Russian troops.

In line with this concept, NATO continues to fostering the importance of this national resistance element, by incorporating it into exercises, courses and planning processes. Although the SOCC would be the main command to manage the resistance movement, the rest of the component commands are to have a minimum understanding of these sorts of operations.

The WFC HQ, as part of a Land Component Command (LCC), is to consider the resistance operations that can be executed within its AoO and ensure the proper coordination measures through the designated SOF liaison officers. These considerations would affect all phases of the operation, from a possible deterrence phase to a further offensive phase in order to restore national integrity.

What is clear is that, against a potential invading nation, some committed civilian volunteers, also known as partisans, resistance movements, the ADC component or VFTC in the case of Ukraine, are going to be formed. The more the WFC HQ coordinates with SOF elements and takes advantage of these resistance element capabilities, the more the effects in the AoO will successfully multiply.



Ukrainian Military and civilian volunteers. Source: unknown

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- [1] As the famous Operation Gunnerside, in which the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) unit recruited and trained a group of civilian Norwegians to conduct a successful raid against a German-controlled heavy water production (Fiala & Peterson, n.d.).
- [2] The ROC defines resilience as “the will and ability to withstand external pressure and influences and/or recover from the effects of those pressures or influences”.
- [3] The ROC defines resistance as “a nation’s organized, whole-of-society effort, encompassing the full range of activities from nonviolent to violent, led by a legally established government (potentially exiled/displaced or shadow) to reestablish independence and autonomy within its sovereign territory that has been wholly or partially occupied by a foreign power”.
- [4] Denial-of-benefits is defined as: “A secure home base acts as the first tier of deterrence by denial. It aims to convince an adversary that by following such a course of action they would not be able to realize their hoped-for benefits” (AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine, 2022).
- [5] Previously named as NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ).



Initial image generated with Artificial Intelligence

## Military Logistics in a New Era: The Utility of Artificial Intelligence in Military Logistics

Lieutenant Colonel Anastasios Kotsampasis (GRC-A)  
HQ NRDC-ESP G4 DACOS

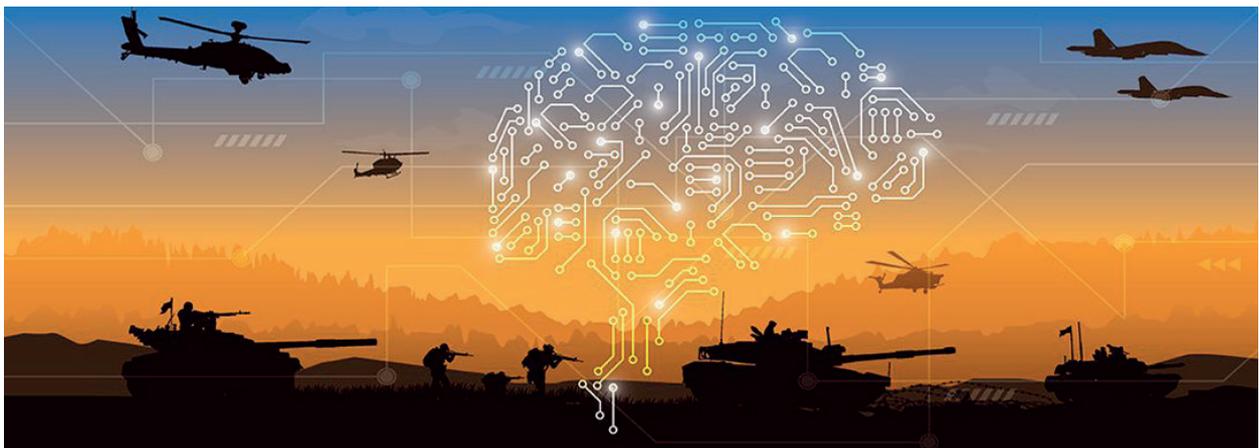
### INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving operational environment of modern warfare, the significance of military logistics cannot be underestimated. From route optimization to predictive maintenance, AI<sup>1</sup> enhances efficiency and reduces the risk of supply chain disruptions<sup>2</sup>. In this new era, where technology is advancing at an unprecedented pace, the integration of AI into military logistics offers innovative practices and new opportunities to armed forces operations, enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and overall effectiveness.

### THE EVOLUTION OF MILITARY LOGISTICS

Historically, military logistics has involved intricate planning and coordination to ensure that troops had the necessary resources at the right place and time. The advent of motorized vehicles, aircraft, and advanced weaponry in an MDO<sup>3</sup> environment increased the complexity of military operations, demanding more sophisticated logistics solutions.

In the contemporary era, the need for real-time decision-making, adaptability, and efficiency has become paramount. Traditional methods of logistics planning and execution often fall short in meeting these demands, prompting the military to turn to AI for innovative solutions.



The battlefield's complexity and the AI. Photo credit: [www.curtisswrightds.com](http://www.curtisswrightds.com)

## THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MILITARY LOGISTICS

AI offers a game-changing solution to the current battlefield challenges by providing advanced decision support systems that can analyze vast amounts of data in realtime, helping military logisticians make informed decisions rapidly. These systems are described below:

### 1. DATA ANALYSIS AND PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS:

One of the key applications of AI in military logistics is predictive analytics. By analyzing a plethora of historical data, AI algorithms can predict future needs and potential challenges, especially for energy resources. Using AI systems is better for determining how much, when, and where fuel is needed to sustain military missions, as well as future solutions for generating energy on the battlefield<sup>4</sup>. This capability allows military planners to anticipate supply chain disruptions, optimize resource allocation, and minimize risks associated with logistical operations.



Data Analysis for military practices  
Photo credit: [www.smartdatacollective.com](http://www.smartdatacollective.com)



Autonomous Military Vehicle  
Photo credit: [www.engadget.com](http://www.engadget.com)

### 2. UNMANNED GROUND AND AIR VEHICLES:

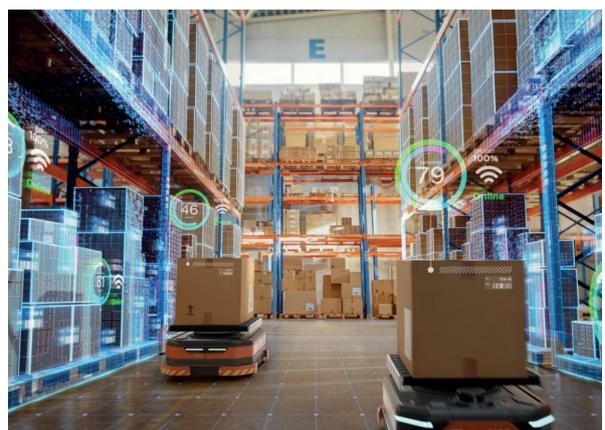
The integration of AI in autonomous vehicles and drones has the potential to transform the transportation aspect of military logistics. In an Article V situation, where NATO would not enjoy freedom of movement in a restricted tactical battlespace, the use of smaller, less detectable, stealthy swarms of UGVs<sup>5</sup> may ultimately represent the only viable alternative to conventional logistic transport<sup>6</sup>. Drones, as well, equipped with AI can be utilized for reconnaissance, surveillance, and even cargo delivery, reducing the risk to human personnel.



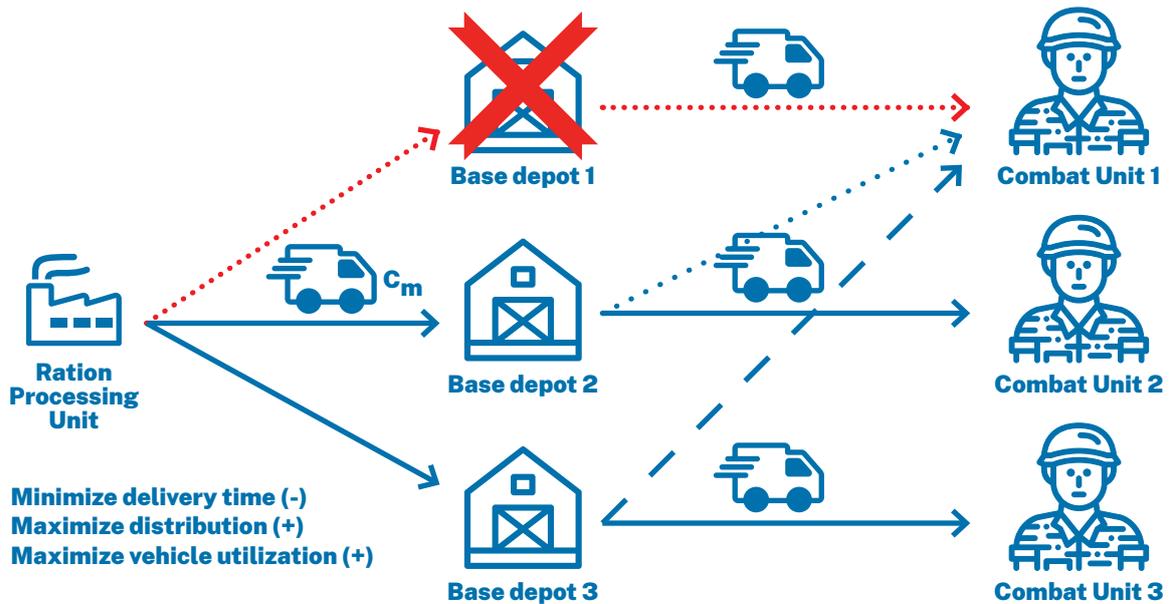
Cargo Military Drone.  
Photo credit: [www.clubic.com](http://www.clubic.com)

### 3. ROBOTICS IN WAREHOUSING AND MAINTENANCE:

AI-driven robotics plays a crucial role in streamlining warehouse operations and maintenance tasks. Automated systems can efficiently manage inventory, reducing the risk of errors and ensuring that essential supplies are readily available. Additionally, AI-powered robots employed for maintenance tasks, perform inspections and repairs more quickly and accurately than their human counterparts do.



Robotics in Warehousing  
Photo credit: [www.innovationinbusiness.com](http://www.innovationinbusiness.com)



Dynamic Route Planning

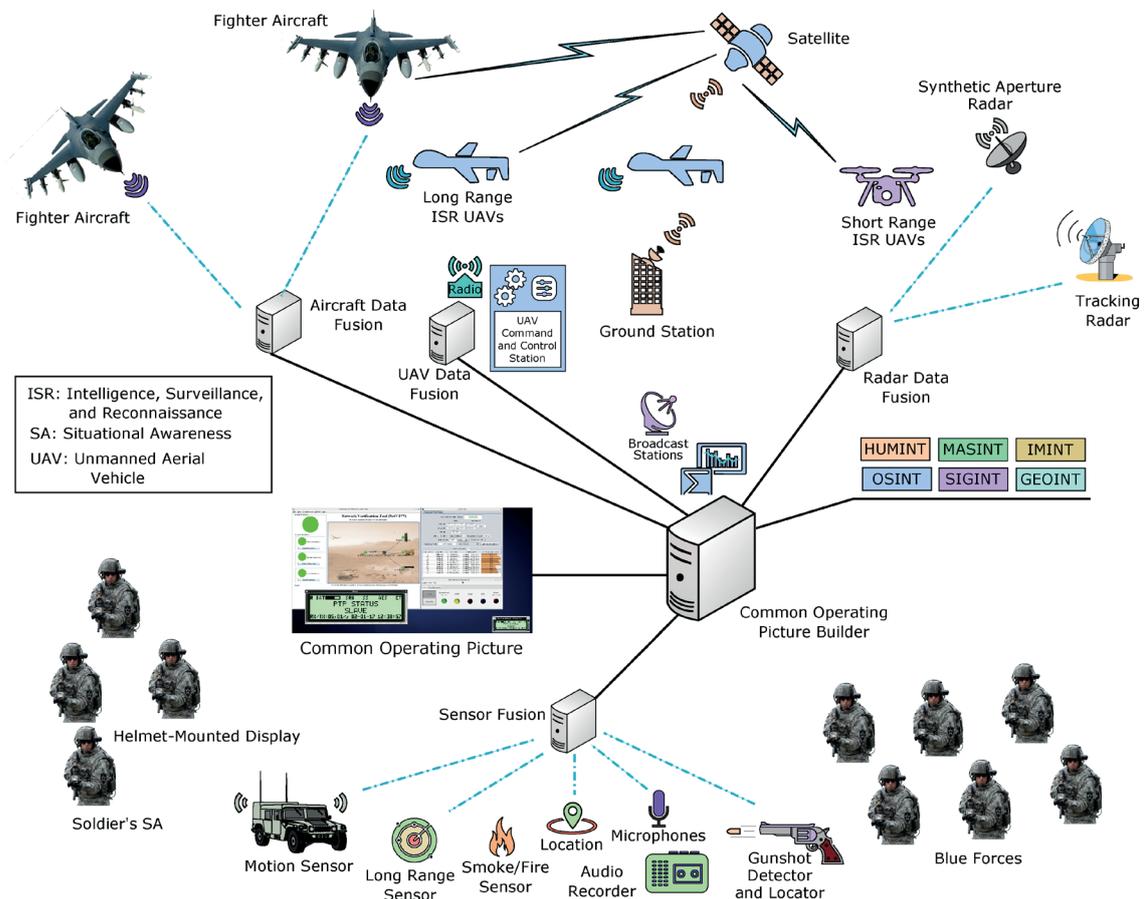
#### 4. ADAPTIVE RESILIENCE IN DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS & DYNAMIC ROUTE PLANNING:

Military operations often unfold in unpredictable and dynamic environments. AI's ability to adapt and learn from changing conditions is a significant asset in ensuring resilience in military logistics. One of the applications of AI in this area is the dynamic route planning where it can optimize route planning by considering real-time data such as traffic, weather, and potential threats. This not only saves

time but also reduces the vulnerability of convoys to enemy attacks.

#### 5. COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEMS:

AI-powered C2<sup>7</sup> systems enhance decision-making processes in military logistics. These systems analyze data from various sources, including sensors, satellites, and intelligence reports, to provide commanders with a comprehensive understanding of the logistical landscape.



Of the utmost importance for the logisticians, is the timely production of the RLP<sup>8</sup> being a part of the COP<sup>9</sup>, and containing comprehensive information for effective decision-making in military logistics and ensuring that resources are efficiently allocated and operational needs met. One of the experimentations on this domain would be the automated production of the RLP along with a realistic CE<sup>10</sup> through an advanced R2<sup>11</sup> system by using AI algorithms that could create a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the operational environment, allowing commanders to make informed decisions based on real-time intelligence<sup>12</sup>.

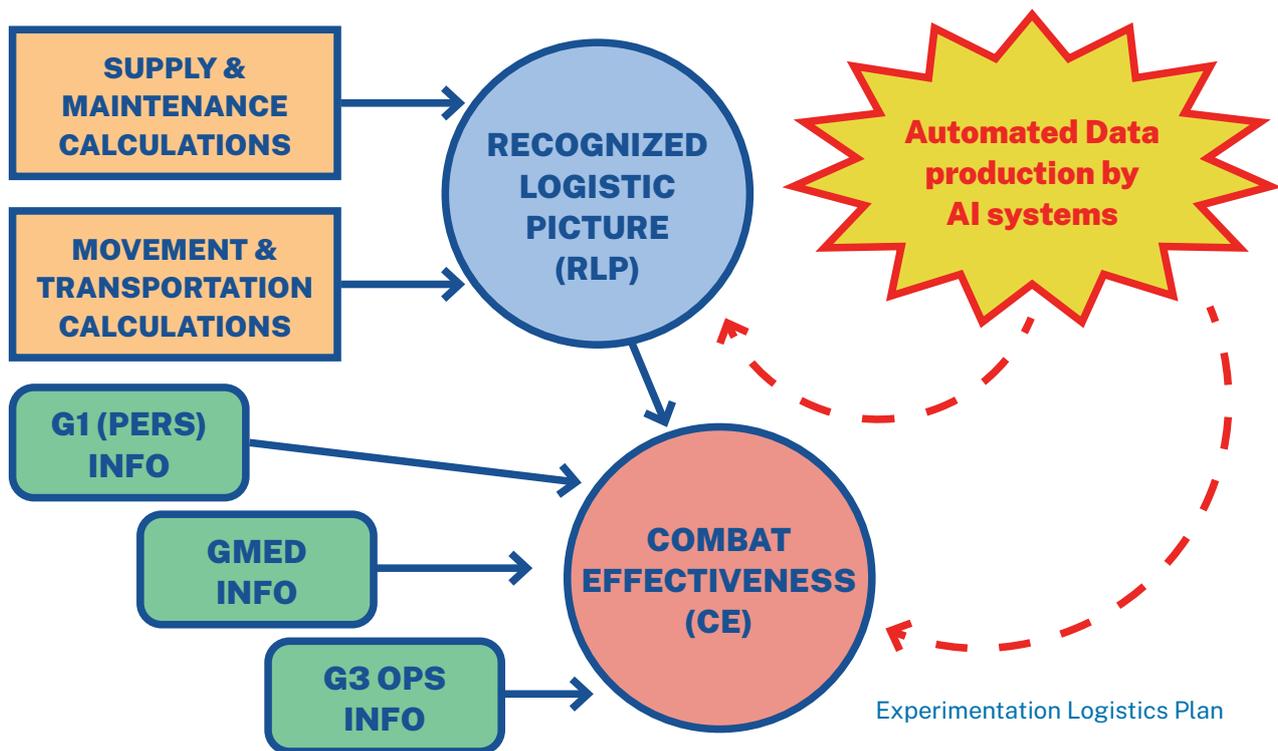
## CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While the integration of AI into military logistics brings numerous benefits, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Concerns related to data security and how to prevent an unauthorized expansion of them, ethical considerations in autonomous systems<sup>13</sup>, and the potential for adversaries to exploit vulnerabilities in AI systems need to

be addressed. Moreover, AI does not intend to replace human decision-making but to enhance it. Human operators remain essential for interpreting complex situations, making strategic decisions, and ensuring that AI systems align with ethical and legal guidelines. Additionally, the need for ongoing training and adaptation to rapidly evolving AI technologies poses a continuous challenge for military personnel.

## CONCLUSION

AI has the potential to revolutionize the execution of sustainment during MDO. Sustainers in the MDO environment of 2028 and beyond can leverage AI and intelligent automation to forecast the needs of the customer unit for future operations based on the pattern of supply requests or through pre-requested supply inquiries. This improved process would allow units to get their supplies on time and ahead of schedule ensuring that armed forces are better equipped to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>14</sup>.



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- [9] Common Operating Picture.
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**HQ N**





# IRDC-ESP



# Uses of Emerging Disruptive Technology in HQ NRDC-ESP

Major Jaime Lapuente Bru (ESP-A)  
HQ NRDC-ESP G6 CEMA INFOASSURANCE

## INTRODUCTION

Technology has always been in a close relationship with the military. Innovative technologies or Emerging Disruptive Technologies (EDTs) are providing new opportunities for NATO militaries in multidomain operations, helping them become more effective, resilient, cost-efficient and sustainable. These technologies are also having a profound impact on security.

Some words like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud Computing, Cybersecurity, or Extended Reality, which are starting to sound familiar nowadays, will actually be implemented in this HQ.

This article explains those uses of technology and their impact at our HQ, which would allow some operational benefits to be achieved, such as:

**Capability:** Artificial Intelligence and Extended Reality will enhance the quality and speed of decision-making, outpacing the enemy's decision cycle.

**Resilience:** Cloud Computing and Cybersecurity will provide redundancy, and permanent availability of information to authorized users while denying access to our adversaries.

**Mobility:** These new technologies, supported by a broadband and secure communications network, will allow access to information from any point of the network, providing the user's mobility that the current high-tempo operations demand from a Warfighting Corps.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Computer systems designed to perform tasks that would typically require human intelligence, such as learning, problem-solving, and language understanding.

There are several key applications of AI in the military, including target recognition, surveillance, homeland security, cybersecurity, transportation and logistics, autonomous vehicles, and combat training that can bring potential benefits including increased efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making capabilities.

HQ NRDC-ESP is working together with the Spanish CIS Directorate (JCISAT) in order to achieve some objectives related to:

**Automation:** Using technology or software on different platforms to perform tasks without human intervention. Some of these uses could be implemented to identify and reject some threats in the HQ network.

**Machine Learning:** A subset of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that involves the development of algorithms and statistical models that enable computers to learn from and make predictions or decisions based on data.

Two fields in which such methods have been famously applied are **image recognition** and **speech recognition** which, used at a command post, could serve as powerful assistant for the commanders.

In this HQ such Artificial Intelligence applications like, for instance WarGaming, could be implemented just to practice and accelerate the decision process.

## CLOUD COMPUTING

Storing and accessing data and programs over the network instead of on the computer's hard drive. Examples in civilian life include Google Drive, Dropbox, and Microsoft OneDrive.

This HQ has been working on implementing the DSAN (Deployable System Anchor Node) and a SSAN (Secondary System Anchor Node) working with VDi (Virtual Desktop infrastructure) in our Mission Secret Network.

Military clouds have the potential of improving network centric capabilities, increasing situational awareness on the battlefield and facilitating the settlement of information superiority.

## CYBER DEFENCE

The practice of protecting systems, networks and programs from different digital attacks mitigating their impact.

Cyber Defence specialists are responsible for protecting military networks and the country against cyberattacks from enemy forces. These

specialists monitor, analyze, detect, and respond to unauthorized activity in the cyberspace domain.

It is very common in the HQs, that these specialists are located in a CEMA Cell (Cyber Electromagnetic Activities). This HQ has developed its own Security Operations Centers to protect our tactical networks that nowadays are exploited by 31 Electronic Warfare Regiment.

Apart from this, when HQ NRDC-ESP deploys in exercises or operations, CEMOC (Cyber Electromagnetic Operations Center) is activated. Cyber Defence specialists work together with other members from G2 or also G3 branch.

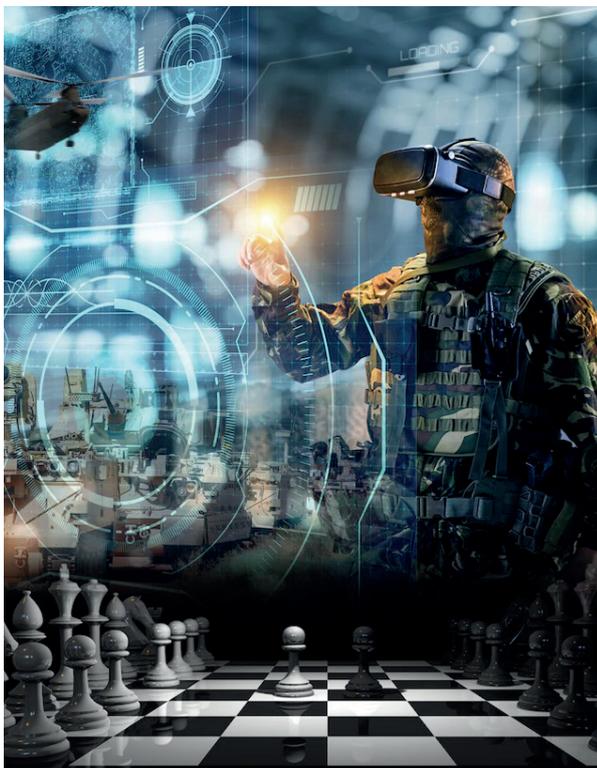


Photo credit: [www.militarytimes.com](http://www.militarytimes.com)

## EXTENDED REALITY (XR)

Overlays digital information, such as images, 3D models, or data, onto the real world in real-time. It aims to enhance the user's experience by providing additional, contextually relevant information.

**Key Components of XR:** Real-world Environment: The physical space where the user is present.

**XR Device:** A device that displays digital content, like smartphones, tablets, smart glasses, or headsets.

**Sensors and Cameras:** XR devices use sensors and cameras to understand the user's environment and track their movements.

**Digital Content:** Virtual elements, such as images, text, or 3D models that are superimposed onto the real-world view.

The benefits of using extended and virtual reality in military training have already been recognized. XR and VR technologies save money, create a much safer environment for trainees, and help soldiers develop cognitive skills.

Apart from this, these capabilities will benefit the commanders. For example, without the need to travel around the area of operations, the commander will be able to quickly "visit" distant places virtually. This technology will create the opportunity for distributed and dispersed command posts, bolstering increased resilience in this vital C2 supporting construct.

## EXTENDED REALITY COMMAND POST



During Valiant Lynx 23 Exercise, a project of Command Post based on XR (Extended Reality) was experimented. It represents a solution to provide an immersive environment, based on that technology, to:

1. Mitigate the effects generated by the dispersion of the Modular CP providing better communications.
2. Support the decision-making process by gathering information from many different sources in real time, including the use of drones. HQ NRDC-ESP is working on the implementation of different planning tools, like PROMETEO in the XR Command Post.

The whole system is wrapped with a 5G tactical infrastructure allowing the XR environment to reach anywhere on the field where a commander or a Command Post is located.

# Collaboration between the Political Advisor (POLAD) and the Universities of Valencia in HQ NRDC-ESP

**Colonel (R) Juan José Babío Urquidi (ESP-A)**  
**POLAD COM HQ NRDC ESP**

## INTRODUCTION

Several Universities of Valencia regularly collaborate with HQ NRDC-ESP. This teamwork is part of a specific agreement between the Spanish Ministry of Defence and the Universities; it covers different areas like research, teaching, development cooperation and can eventually include any other field of mutual interest. And, of course, the POLAD is part of that cooperation.

One of his most important tasks is keeping the Commander up to date on the political/strategic environment related to the mission. This role is more relevant than ever, since today's modern, multi-domain operations are subject to an increased political accountability.



## COLLABORATIVE WORK

The comprehensive understanding of the operating environment (CUOE) is the primary and continuous process through which the staff of a joint task force manages the analysis and development of products in order to understand the operating environment. This understanding is increasingly challenging, since the three levels of operations, strategic, operational and tactical, are becoming more and more compressed by the day.

One key part of the CUOE is the Information Environment Analysis/Assessment (IEA), which is developed at the tactical level in HQ NRDC-ESP by a specific IEA Hub. The political analysis and assessment are a relevant part of it.

The University of Valencia, the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the CEU Cardenal Herrera University and the Catholic University of Valencia, are taking an active role in this Hub; their knowledge and expertise in all the related areas: political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information (PMESII) is very much appreciated. They definitely add value to that process, especially when it comes to managing and analysing the big data associated with the different PMESII areas.

The POLAD collaborates directly with the personnel of those universities and incorporates the necessary COM HQ NRDC-ESP's direction and guidance to the overall political assessment.



In the framework of this mutual as well as fruitful collaboration environment, the HQ NRDC-ESP also supports the Universities; apart from giving lectures on requested subjects at the Universities or participating in seminars or panels, the POLAD regularly mentors selected students in their internships on International Relations/Organizations.

The first selected student for the internship this year was Mrs. Anna Bjørø, a Norwegian student at the European University of Valencia, who is in her fourth year of an International Relations Degree. Mentored by the POLAD, Mrs. Anna Bjørø spent 200 hours working at the HQ NRDC-ESP. Her duties were focused on security and defence organizations, mostly NATO, as well as geopolitics and the study of current conflicts.



## MRS. ANNA BJØRØ

As a Norwegian student of International Relations at the European University of Valencia, carrying out an internship at the HQ NRDC-ESP, under the guidance of the POLAD, has been incredibly rewarding. Throughout my studies, I have come to realize that security studies hold my greatest interest, and through my internship I have had the pleasure of exploring security politics from a whole new angle. Coming from a civilian background, I had little to no prior knowledge of the military system - a component that is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of security politics. During my time at the HQ, colleagues have shared insights, reflections, experiences and knowledge with me, for which I remain incredibly grateful. It has undoubtedly offered me new insights and understanding

of the geopolitical context in which we live, international relations and in-depth knowledge about NATO as an organization.

My experience as a young student intern at the HQ is a testimony to its commitment to the NATO Comprehensive Approach, whereas increased engagement with civil society actors can prove dually beneficial for the IEA. To this end, I have had the opportunity of participating in an IEA HUB meeting and was granted access to the Hubs collaborative tool. By fostering ties between the military and civil society actors, such as universities and students, NATO helps to cultivate a new generation of leaders who are knowledgeable about NATO and committed to its principles of collective defence and the promotion of peace and security.



The POLAD with the student Anna Bjørø in one of her practices.

# Civil Factor Analysis Initiative

Major Jorge Aurensanz Lamarca (ESP-A)  
HQ NRDC-ESP G9 CIMIC

## INTRODUCTION

Building up a comprehensive understanding of the civil environment, starting from peacetime in order to contribute to the planning and conduct of operations of the War Fighting Corps (WFC) constitutes/appears as one of the core objectives of the Civil-Military Cooperation domain.

An accurate assessment of the civil environment needs detailed analysis carried out/made by specialized personnel trained on dedicated procedures and techniques.

Moreover, at Strategic level the ability to analyze and assess the civil factors of the operating environment has been identified as a key capability by ACT in its “capability requirement brief for analysis and assessment” and was likewise addressed within the NFS during the last LANDCOM CIMIC Seminar.

Therefore, already conscious of the relevance of this capability within the framework of the agreement between the Spanish Ministry of Defense and the Cardenal Herrera University, two years ago HQ NRDC-ESP G9 launched a project named “Analyst HUB CIMIC” currently named “Civil Factor Analysis Initiative”.



Analysis techniques class with students.

The intention of this initiative is twofold:

- Teach and train students in analysis techniques, taking into account the respective areas of knowledge acquired during their studies (economics, law, political science, international relations, psychology, marketing and others);
- Use the acquired skills to contribute as analysts to the overall understanding of the civil environment in potential crisis areas of HQ NRDC-ESP.

## CIMIC ANALYSTS

Out of a large pool of outstanding applicants, the participating students are selected on their academic curriculum in conjunction with their area of expertise, their foreign language skills and of course their motivation to participate in the project.

The yearly training program of the Civil Factor Analysis Initiative is organized in theoretical and practical sessions delivered every month to the students. Students start to learn “how to look at and understand the civil environment as well as how it may affect a military operation and vice versa”. This approach is the basis for CIMIC Analysis and Assessment (A&A).

The Civil Factor Analysis Initiative activities include the learning of analysis techniques and the development of methods of multidisciplinary analysis of the civil environment in crisis, pre-crisis or armed conflict zones. These analyses are conducted from the civilian actors’ point of view, which brings added value to the military analysis. To go further into the analysis, students will also study alternative prevention or solving options to a given crisis.



Master class of Lieutenant Colonel Manuel González Hernández (School of War and Leadership ESP-A)

The learning sessions are accompanied by lectures and master classes carried out by civilian and military experts on relevant crises and issues (such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, international law in the Ukrainian war, the contribution of civilian personnel in military structures) as well as with workshops to develop complementary skills to be implemented in the analysis process.

Today’s complex strategic context, the increasing number of conflicts, the wide range of scenarios, as well as the changing factors affecting the civilian environment, each require specific and in-depth studies. For this reason, students choose to specialize in specific geographical areas on which they can focus their analysis.

In the medium term, the Civil Factor Analysis Initiative will provide the students with a better understanding of the different analysis techniques, which in turn will support HQ NRDC ESP by enhancing the knowledge of the civil environment in a given scenario.



Students from Civil Factor Analysis Initiative and G9-CIMIC Staff.

This project also provides additional opportunities beneficial for both parties such as:

- the participation of the students in HQ NRDC-ESP activities as CIMIC—or any other branch—analysts;
- the attendance of students at analyst courses at the CIMIC Center of Excellence;
- the possibility of creating CIMIC seminars;
- the activation of some of these students as volunteer reservists.

For the students, this program not only gives them the chance of being part of an exciting academic challenge but also represents a source of pride to work closely with the Armed Forces in an international environment. They all have a great passion for “military matters”. Thus, learning how a military organization works and supporting it with analysis based on their academic experience and skills appears to be very satisfactory.

## CONCLUSION

In contemporary, complex operating environments, the understanding of the civil environment and

its impact on friendly forces is critical to the Commander’s vision, directly contributing to the success of a mission. To properly support the military decision-making process, the clear understanding of the situation requires a sound analysis.

By generating trained analysts in different techniques, the Civil Factor Analysis Initiative goes in that direction and this initiative also provides the opportunity for HQ NRDC-ESP to capitalize on the precious inputs coming from the surrounding experts, who in the future might be able to be fully integrated into the analysis processes of military structures and as potential reservists.

Last but not least, (Finally yet importantly), one should not forget the important contribution of this collaborative work to the culture of National Security within the framework of the “Culture of Defense”. Such a concept applies to the body of knowledge that allows people, the students in this case, to develop judgements or opinions about the instruments of power with which the Nations protects citizens from external threats and dangers, being the Armed Forces one of the most significant.



End of Academic Course 23-24 diplomas presentation.



## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Spanish Army NCO Military Academy

**Command Sergeant Major José Juan Ríos López (ESP-A)  
CSM HQ NRDC-ESP**

The first historical reference for the employment of the Sergeant is found in a document dated 2 May 1493, when the Catholic Monarchs created a corps of cavalry troops called the “Old Guards of Castile”, in which each Company, under the command of a Captain, included a Sergeant, which would be the first appearance of this rank. A year later in 1494, King Ferdinand “El Católico” signed his ordinances of what would be the first regular military units of the Spanish Army in which the figure of the Sergeant was already a part of the military organization. In 1534, Charles I included the Sergeant in an Infantry unit, when he created the “Tercios de Naples and Milan”, but it was not until the Ordinances of Charles III, in 1768, that it appeared firmly established as a hierarchical grade.

After more than five hundred years, a solid structure had emerged from what was once just a dream of having a unique identity: **The Spanish Army NCO Military Academy.**

In 1974, with the enactment of a Basic Law that organizes the Basic Scale of Non-commissioned Officers, a new period in history opened with a

definitive and legal support by the Royal Ordinances for the Armed Forces of 1978, legitimizing them as career military personnel with all the rights, duties and prerogatives that this entails.

It was at this time that the Basic General Academy for Non-commissioned Officers was born, located in the “General Martín Alonso” Camp, in Talarn (Lleida), where to date 50 promotions of the Army have been trained.



By the order of October 16, 1974, the use by the NCO Military Academy of the Gidon, of the diamond emblem, cadet cords, badges and students’ last name label was approved. Almost three and a half years later, on February 16, 1978, the badge to identify students was created and a month later, the coat of arms was published. The use of the first flag was granted to the

academy in 1975 and the second flag in October 1984, due to the modifications introduced in the National Coat of Arms.

The Basic Scale of Non-commissioned Officers consisted of the scale of command and the scale of specialists and within each of them the ranks of Sergeant, Sergeant First Class, Staff Sergeant and Sergeant Major. The rank of Command Sergeant

Major was created in 1988 and, during this year, the first women attended the Academy, although their attendance would only be for four months since they belonged to the Auxiliary Health Corps. Two years later, on September 3 1990, the first female students would join and then reach the rank of Sergeant on July 5 1993. Currently, military education, for those who join the NCO Corps, takes place over a period of three years.

The main objective of the NCO Military Academy is established in the Study Plans that govern this Academy (Order DEF 3066/2003) summarized in four sections:

- To empower non-commissioned officers to carry out executive actions specific to their specialty;
- To empower the command of units of their fundamental specialty or logistics units up to Section level;
- To instruct students in the attitudes of the non-commissioned officer;
- To provide general knowledge about national defense, the organization of the Armed Forces and international organizations;

The main activities carried out in the NCO Academy are:

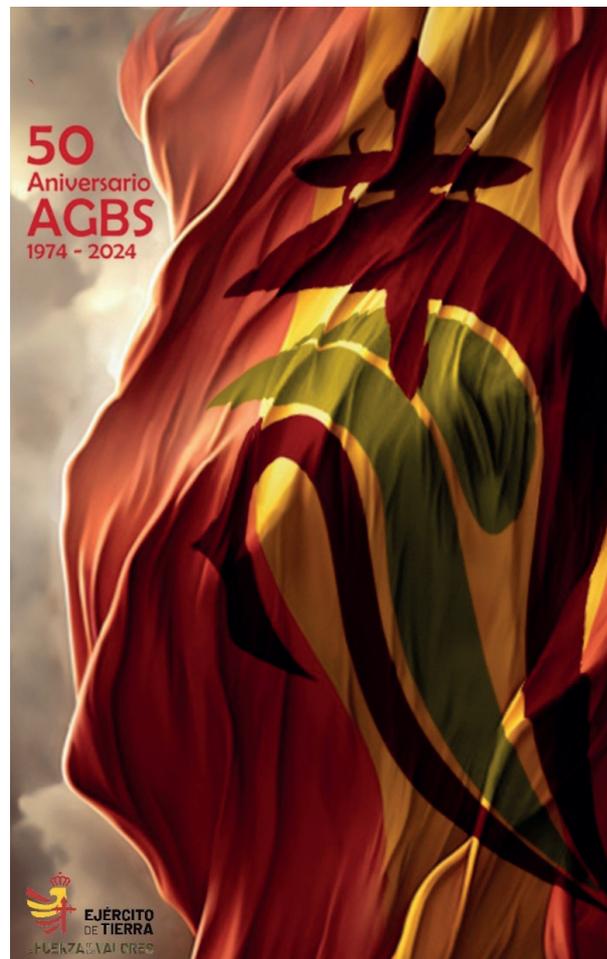
- Military training to join the Non-Commissioned Officer Scale (EMIES).
- Update and presential courses for promotion to Staff Sergeant of the General Corps of the Army (CAPABET).
- Refresher and face-to-face courses for Sergeant Majors selected for promotion to Command Sergeant Majors.
- Functional level English courses.
- Refresher courses for promotion to Corporal Major of the Army.

In order to develop the aforementioned activities, the EMIES Teaching modules are part of the existing departments:

- Humanistic Scientist: Modules of Command, Organization, Professional Guidance, Administration and Computer Science.
- Tactics and Weapon Systems: Tactics, Shooting, Surveying.
- Instruction and training.
- Language module.

In a nutshell, this Academy is the first and only training center that Non-commissioned Officers have had since the rank of First Sergeant was born, at the end of the fifteenth century, at the hands of the Catholic Monarchs.

The motto of the Academy will always be present in the minds of all Spanish NCO: **“To Spain, serve until death”**



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Major General Enrique Silvela is the current Chief of Staff, at NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Headquarters, Spain. Born in Madrid, he has lived in different Spanish garrisons following a career in Artillery.

As a junior officer, he commanded Air Defence Artillery units at platoon and battery level, alternating with military education as an instructor in the Artillery Academy in Segovia. After attending the Spanish General Staff course, he has been assigned to different staff positions for international relations and defence policy, again alternating with military education at the Spanish Army War College. As a full colonel he commanded the 73rd Air Defence Artillery Regiment. Upon promotion to Brigadier General, he again assumed the responsibility of the Spanish Air Defence Artillery Command.

MG Silvela is a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff Officers Course, having earned a Masters in Military Art and Science. He has attended different specialization courses in Spanish, EU and NATO institutions. His operational deployments include Bosnia i Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Lebanon in several general staff headquarters positions, under NATO, EU and UN mandates.

On the academic side, MG Silvela holds a PhD in International Security and has authored a number of publications, including the US Army Military Review and a first prize in the Spanish Army "Revista Ejército" amongst other monographs, professional and academic articles.

**Sir, a year and a half ago, you arrived in Valencia as Chief of Staff at a corps-level headquarters at NATO's disposal. What is your impression of this headquarters so far? Is it what you expected?**

In my last positions in Air Defence Artillery at regiment and brigade level, I had the frequent opportunity of contributing to the work of this HQ. I was really impressed with its proficiency and effectiveness, at that time not expecting to be later assigned here. When it became one of the possibilities upon promotion, I accepted it in the joy of knowing I would participate in the excellent working environment I had previously experienced. That is, my expectations were actually high. The real experience has more than fulfilled those expectations. I have entered this HQ at a very challenging moment, having received a real mission in the Eastern Flank.

**What values are most important for a staff in a multinational organization like HQ NRDC-ESP?**

First of all, a staff works for a commander. We do not work for our specialty, we are not developing or improving our field of expertise; we do our best for our COM, advising him, translating his decision into formal orders and controlling the execution. The commander sets the field, provides leadership and establishes his directions and guidance.

Therefore, staff work is teamwork. The key lies in frequent interaction between the different individuals, branches and divisions. The synergy between the different personalities and backgrounds amongst the staffers always generates the best solutions to any military problem. That is why I constantly insist on personal interaction, getting to know not only the personnel in our branch, but everyone in the HQ. Sharing experiences, talking frequently, in person, by phone, VTC or by whatever means. Paying attention to who you select as To or Cc in your emails, so as not to overload everybody while making sure that the required people receive your ideas or proposals. Interaction is the key to teamwork.

**HQ NRDC-ESP is currently implementing a new CP concept based on new technologies, with new tools, constantly adapting to new threats. What would you like to highlight?**

The war in Ukraine has brought us back to industrial warfare. Industry in the 21st century does not look like it did in WWII. Today the technological development has a deeper impact, increasing the number of specific tools used to coordinate. The emergence of new technologies has not ruled out the use of artillery and tanks; it has added new challenges, from communications to Electronic Warfare, from Air Defence Artillery to uncrewed systems, from Cyber to Space. Therefore, current staff have to coordinate and synchronize the use of much more complex new systems in a shortened decision cycle. It requires a solid professionalism and a constant update of our knowledge and preparation. At the tip of the spear of our professional development, we must continue to keep pace.



**At the moment, this headquarters has a CFE (Corps Forward Element) deployed in Slovakia to contribute to NATO's Deterrence and Defence plans on the Eastern flank. How important is this commitment for the HQ NRDC-ESP?**

Most NATO Response Corps which receive the responsibility for an Area of Operations are already in place in their own area. HQ NRDC-ESP is the exception, as our HQ is in Valencia, while our AOR is in the Eastern Flank. In order to keep the required comprehensive understanding of the situation, to liaise with the relevant defence institutions, to contribute to the indicators and warnings system, a physical presence in the area is paramount. Current technology permits the action of operational command regardless of the distance, provided there is frequent interaction with the stakeholders. There is a clear complementarity of distant communications technology with real presence, just what HQ NRDC-ESP is doing.

**Bosnia, Afghanistan, Lebanon... not exactly quiet missions you have participated in during your military career. What would you highlight from all of them?**

Having been deployed in those widely different scenarios, under different mandates, as NATO for BiH or Afghanistan, EU in BiH again, UN in Lebanon, has provided real experience in adaptability. I have learned that some traits are common, some others not. You have to study each scenario in detail, know the environment,

the human terrain, as well as your mandating institution. Rules learned in one precise circumstance do not apply for a different location or structure. We cannot bring our experience as it is, we must supplement that experience with a detailed understanding of each situation. This requires a lot of reading, interacting and boldness. Learning procedures is never enough. Maybe we can be faster when applying standard procedures, but the key to success lies not in how fast we react, but in choosing the right action. I have learned to think, not to act/proceed. Maybe at platoon level mechanical procedures are relevant but, at Warfighting Corps level, understanding is key.

**I understand that you are very keen on golf. I guess that it must not be easy to combine the position of HQ Chief of Staff with your passion for golf...**

I hope I will improve my golf skills when I retire, for sure. Whenever I can, and it is not often, I love to escape with my wife to the golf course to relax. Golf improves with constant practice, which is not possible in our case. Therefore, sometimes we are forced to have creative interpretations of the golf rules on where to place a ball that's landed in a difficult place, but we do really enjoy the moment the ball ends up inside the hole. It allows us, to spend time together, away from the stresses of daily life, and to reload our batteries for the upcoming challenges. It may be better not to count our strokes yet. That may come in the future sometime ... but for now there are other priorities.



Sergeant Major Katharina Bott has been a member of the German army since 2011.

Specialized in personnel management and cyber defense, she was stationed at Command Support Battalion 281 in Gerolstein and at the Bundeswehr Cyber Command in Bonn, before coming to this HQ, where her main role focused on operations and plans in the Personnel Division. Also, she was deployed on a mission in Mali in 2019.

She has been married to a German Ministry of Defense official since 2020. She loves traveling and is passionate about beach volleyball, a sport she has been practicing regularly since she has been living in Valencia, and for which she has won three medals in various tournaments.

Since August 2021, she has been stationed at this Headquarters and is part of this great team.

**Where does your military vocation come from? Do you come from a military family in (your country) Germany?**

My family hasn't been involved with the military very much. But my uncle and my half-brother are both police officers and my sister joined the air force, which certainly influenced my decision to become a soldier.

**What motivated you to specialize in personnel management within the military, and what has your experience been like in this area so far?**

Before I joined the Bundeswehr, I worked as an office clerk and wanted to continue with a similar job. However, I didn't just want to sit in the office, I also wanted to have variety. I liked the specialization in personnel management, because I wanted to work with my comrades, see how they develop, follow promotions, careers and help to find the best opportunities for them.

**What are some of your key responsibilities in terms of personnel and force tracking at the HQ NRDC-ESP?**

My tasks at the HQ are very different to the tasks I do in Germany. Here I evaluate and collect data. I am POC for International Evaluation Reports of all allied forces and keep their CVs up to date. During the last exercise, I collected data for the PERSREP and the CPERSREP and was TASO for G1 Branch.

**Could you describe your deployment experience in Mali with the German army? What were some of the challenges you faced and lessons you learned during your four-month mission?**

The environment in Mali was completely different from Germany. It was hot, dusty and dry. For me, it was very interesting to see how all servicemen of the Bundeswehr (Airforce, Army and Navy) worked together and I discovered many different weapon systems (HERON, MANTIS, etc.) which I usually wouldn't have any contact with in my normal day-to-day work.

I was a welfare officer in my contingent. For that, the hardest task was to keep morale of the troops high, which was not easy under the circumstances provided by a country like Mali and with limited resources.

The greatest lesson I learned in Mali is to be grateful for the way we live in our home countries. A regular life, an assured income, family, friends, and basic supplies like water, food etc.

I have learned to appreciate all the little things that are normally taken for granted even more.

**How do you combine the demands of your military career, your married life with your husband in Bonn and your daily volleyball training, along with participation in tournaments on weekends?**



My husband is a civil servant within the Bundeswehr. He grew up in a military family (father and grandfather, both in the army). He's familiar with the concept of "separation" over a long period of time.

Fortunately, today in 2024 it is possible to communicate in many ways (WhatsApp, etc.) There is also a good flight connection between Valencia and Bonn. Therefore, we try to see each other every 2 to 3 months.

As far as beach volleyball is concerned, I train every day and play at the weekends or participate in tournaments, because the guys I play with have become somewhat my second family here in Spain. They accepted me immediately as one of them and, on top of this, there's nothing better than being at the beach every day, surrounded by friends.

**What are some of your long-term career goals within the military, and what about your medium-term future after you complete your posting to HQ NRDC-ESP?**

My long-term goal in the Bundeswehr is to change my career to that of an officer and achieve the rank of a captain.

For the medium-term, my plan is to work one or two years in a command in Germany and go on a mission again, maybe in Lithuania.

However, another stay abroad is definitely an option for me. Maybe in the USA, Italy or once more in Spain.

**Lastly, what would you highlight about your life in Spain in general, and Valencia in particular?**

Spain is a great country! I learned to love the people and especially Valencia. I have never experienced the helpfulness and friendliness shown to me here in any other country. The beautiful weather all year around, the landscape and the good food round up my positive impression of Spain.

It's very nice to see the country not just as a tourist, but as a local.



Private José Linares Martínez (Valencia, 1980) is a specialist in signals, and he joined the Spanish Army in 2005.

Since then, he has been posted to the HQ NRDC-ESP Support Battalion in Bétera (Valencia), where he has occupied different posts. He has served in the NBC section, in the company office as an administrator, even as a driver.

He was also actively involved during the COVID-19 pandemic in Operation Balmis carried out in Spain by the Spanish Armed Forces.

Outside the army and among his comrades, he stands out both for his dedication and his love of football. He is the coach of a women's football team and president of an amateur club in Valencia.

**After almost two decades in the HQ NRDC-ESP Support Battalion, what moment or situation would you like to highlight from your military career?**

I have many unforgettable moments, but I would like to highlight Operation Balmis during the COVID pandemic. We did numerous patrols supporting the citizens, we were disinfecting day after day, and I was even a tracer helping many people by phone. I think it was a commendable job, and I was very proud of my colleagues, because we made a great team. In those moments of uncertainty, we gave our all and I think we did a great job.

**Your unit has very specific missions, very specific capabilities and materials, and works in a multinational environment. What does it mean to you to belong to such a unique unit as the Support Battalion?**

The battalion does its work in the shadows. Let's say it is a player who is rarely seen, but is always there. A "Busquets", a midfielder in a football team. And that's because behind it there is the very important work of its members done on a daily basis. I would like to highlight the comradeship with which they live; working together and supporting each other in all kinds of situations, both personal and professional. I am proud to belong to the Support Battalion!

**20 years ago, did you imagine that one day you could become a football coach of a women's team?**

No, not at all. I wanted to take the step to the bench, and I was given the opportunity to do so when I least expected it. At the beginning, they didn't have the support they have today, neither from society nor from their families. The club made it easy for me to organise the team and get the sports equipment. When it came to managing, I had to be very left-handed, because the players have their own character and personality. In the end, like everything else, you have to listen and understand. That's the only way to learn how to manage a team. I am very grateful to the team.

**How have you managed to balance your passion for football with your military responsibilities over the years?**

Well, by being quite organised, committed and having a lot of support, both from my workmates and the football team. When I have needed something from them, they have always been there to help me. In the football team, I have an excellent and very professional coaching staff, who are up to the task at all times, both when I am with them and when I have been absent due to my military duties.

**How do you apply the leadership skills you learned in the military to your work as a football coach?**

Football does not understand gender. Girls today are trained from a very young age, just like boys, so there is no distinction. In the past, there were very few girls who started so early, which is why many amateur players did not have the technical and tactical level they have



now. Going back to the question, leadership in a team is won by example and professionalism. I consider it more important to train than to compete, because it helps you to be more patient and also to learn from your players. Experience and listening help you to improve. That's what I learnt from my direct superiors.

**Discipline, comradeship, teamwork, respect, commitment, etc. These are some of the values inherent in the military profession. Do they also apply to the work of a coach?**

Yes, of course. It is fundamental for a team to function well. A football team without practicing these values would probably not finish a season. And in order to instil these values, you have to be an example for them.

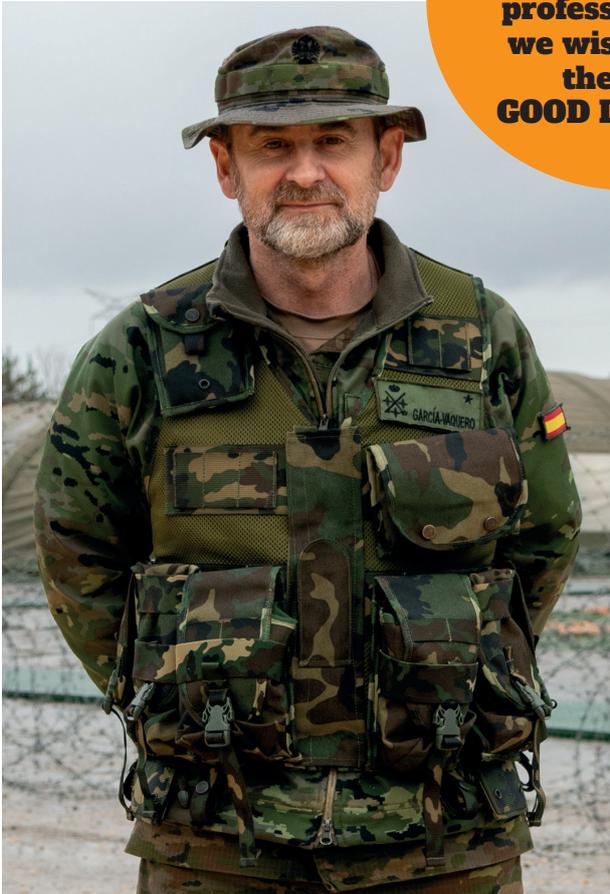
**What are your plans and expectations when you leave the army in a year's time?**

To use what I learned as a military man and trainer to be able to manage my own business, to be the boss of my time.





**Proud of the challenges we have faced and grateful for your professionalism, we wish you all the best. GOOD LUCK SIR!**





## Deployment of Corps Forward Element to Slovakia.

The personnel being deployed are part of the Corps Forward Element (CFE) of the Warfighting Corps HQ offered by Spain as the framework nation, on the Eastern flank.

A first group of military personnel from the HQ NRDC-ESP has started its deployment in Slovakia, putting the boots on the area of responsibility of the Warfighting Corps (WFC) foreseen in the operational plans of the Alliance, as part of the WFC Forward Element on the Eastern flank.

During the second week of March, the first rotation of the CFE departed from Madrid airport for Slovakia, its main task in Slovakia being to contribute to the development of NATO's Deterrence and Defense plans on the Eastern flank.

Given that the CFE is still a part of the Staff that provides situational awareness and understanding to the Commander of HQ NRDC-ESP, from the first days of deployment, the CFE has been participating in various planning and meetings in its area of responsibility, liaising with both the national defence forces and other NATO military agencies, where the novel concept that this element represents was explained. Initial contacts have also been established with non-governmental organisations. All these actions constitute the first step in a mission that will be strengthened and consolidated over the coming months.

This deployment demonstrates once again the firm commitment of Spain and its Armed Forces with our allies and the determined Spanish contribution to the Alliance's deterrence efforts.





**TEN YEARS OF REIGN OF HIS MAJESTY FELIPE VI, TEN YEARS  
AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES.**



On 19 June 2014, His Majesty Don Felipe de Borbón y Grecia was proclaimed King of Spain before the Cortes Generales under the name of Felipe VI. This occurred after he had taken an oath to faithfully perform his duties, to keep and uphold the Constitution and the laws, and to respect the rights of citizens and the Autonomous Communities.

In accordance with the provisions of Article 62 of the Spanish Constitution, he was appointed Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces on that date. He was granted the rank of Captain General of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Space, the highest military rank that corresponds to him exclusively.



**HEADQUARTERS NATO RAPID  
DEPLOYABLE CORPS - SPAIN**