

## **Intervention in the presentation of the Seminar “NATO after Madrid: The Ukraine Lesson”**

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Ministers, Ambassadors, Excellencies,

Good morning.

I would like to start by thanking the main organiser of the Seminar, the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, for having the stamina to go through all the preparations precisely in a period when everyone who is relevant to this topic is extremely busy. The first ideas about this started well before the war in Ukraine started, back in November. The situation was starting to becoming tense between Ukraine and Russia, but nothing led to thinking that a war was going to break out. And then February came, and you all know the rest. So again, thank you, Solomon Passy, ambassador Biserka Benisheva and the rest of the team at the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria for these preparations in spite of all the difficulties.

I would also like to thank the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Diplomatic Institute for participating in the organization of this Seminar. Thank you, Mr. Geissler and Ms. Mihaylova, for your work at the helm of your organizations and for all those years of commitment to European and Atlantic ideals.

In addition to the pitiful circumstances in Eastern Europe, this year of 2022 marks two events of significance for NATO and for Spain. On the one hand, the NATO Summit in Madrid next month. Throughout this Seminar, several experts will comment on the opportunities stemming from this encounter. The Madrid Summit has great potential as a milestone in NATO history, given that the war in Ukraine and the lessons thereof will for sure cause the Alliance to evolve. And Madrid will embody that need and that will to evolve and adapt.

But this year of 2022 is also important for NATO and for Spain because it marks the fortieth anniversary of the adhesion of Spain to the Alliance. Indeed, Spain joined NATO in 1982, first only the civilian structure, and later on the integrated military structure. After a few initial years during which Spain had to determine its model of

participation in NATO, Spain has proved to be a reliable member, by committing in the internal functioning of NATO (let us remember Mr. Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General from 1995 to 1999) and by participating in most NATO operations.

In particular, Spain has shown its commitment to NATO by participating along these four decades since 1982 in sea, land and air missions in a variety of areas: the Mediterranean, Bosnia, Kosovo, the Indian Ocean, Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, Turkey, the Baltic countries, Rumania and, more recently, Bulgaria [*lista de misiones al final*].

In Bulgaria, the Spanish “Destacamento Aerotáctico Strela”, with four Eurofighters and 130 staff, carried out a mission of joint air patrols and interceptions with Bulgarian forces in February-March 2022 from the Graf Ignatievo air base. I witnessed how this NATO operation in Bulgaria was an opportunity for our two countries to strengthen the bilateral relationship: on 21 February, Defence Minister Margarita Robles, in a visit to the Spanish contingent, met with Minister Yanev and shared their viewpoints on several defence topics, committing future cooperation in the military field. This is precisely one of the hidden positive effects of NATO operations: they lead member states to know each other well, to understand each other’s defence challenges and to consolidate bonds much more solidly than by just meeting in Brussels.

The Spanish commitment with NATO may be seen here today. We have up to six Spanish participants: Minister for Foreign Affairs Manuel Albares, former NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, Deputy Director General for Security Issues Manuel Selas, Permanent Representative in NATO Miguel Fdez.-Palacios, and the chairman of the NCI Agency Supervisory Board Dr. Luis Astorga. This shows how deeply invested in NATO Spain is.

Allow me to conclude by wishing the best for all participants in this Seminar, and by thanking, once more, the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Diplomatic Institute for their work.

Thank you very much.

### All NATO missions with Spanish participation

- NATO fleet STANAVFORMED (“Standing Naval Force Mediterranean”), to enforce the arms embargo in the context of the Balkan wars in 1992.
- IFOR/SFOR missions (“Implementation Force” / “Stabilization Force”) in Bosnia, from 1996.
- NATO operation “Allied Force”, whose goal was to force the regime of Slobodan Milosevic to stop the conflict in Kosovo.
- KFOR (“Kosovo Force”), sending a total of 22.000 Spanish troops from 1999 to 2009, for the pacification of the region, the safe return of almost a million refugees to their homes and the defusing of explosive devices.
- NATO naval operation “Active Endeavour” (2001-2016) to combat terrorism in the Mediterranean, and its successor “Sea Guardian” (since 2016, and still ongoing).
- NATO naval operation “Ocean Shield” (2008-2016), to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.
- The two NATO missions in Afghanistan, ISAF (“International Security Assistance Force”, from 2001 to 2014, in Western Afghanistan) and “Resolute Support” (from 2015 to 2021).
- NATO operation “Unified Protector” in 2011, to protect Libyan civilians from the rogue militias after Gaddafi's downfall.
- “NATO Mission Iraq”, since 2018 and still ongoing.
- NATO mission “Active Fence” in Turkey, with a Patriot missile battery since 2014, with the mandate to protect the Turkish population from ballistic missiles that could come from neighbouring Syria.
- NATO’s eFP (“Enhanced Forward Presence”) in the Baltic countries and Poland, with a mandate of land deterrence. Spain has been a part of it since 2017, with an armoured cavalry unit.
- NATO’s eAP (“Enhanced Air Policing”) in the Baltic, Romania and Bulgaria, with several Spanish Eurofighters, F-18 and Mirage F-1.