

DIMENSIONS OF THE CATALAN DEFENCE FORCES III: THE ARMY

Preliminary considerations

This document is not a final blueprint on the dimensions and hardware of the future branches of the Catalan Defence Forces, but an outline proposal, flowing from previously published documents, in particular “A Strategic Analysis” and “Military Doctrine: Development of Our Own Model”. Since we do not want to speculate either on the outcome of the negotiations on defence assets to be inherited by Catalonia, or on the Spanish military personnel that may wish to join the Catalan Defence Forces, this document only takes into account the real estate assets owned by the Spanish Defence Ministry and located in the Principality of Catalonia. The text starts from scratch concerning hardware and personnel. Officer training will also be a factor having an impact on the process. Training soldiers and sailors, as well as junior officers (up to OF-3), may be a relatively easy goal if one has the suitable resources. However, it takes more time to fill certain MOS¹ slots and to train staff officers and higher-ranking leaders. It is not just a matter of passing a number of courses, but also of acquiring essential experience in the tasks pertaining to each rank and speciality. Given the wish to avoid duplicities and redundant capabilities, the Catalan Defence Forces will have a single Joint Chiefs of Staff, bringing together elements from the three forces (land army, air force, and navy). We will not refer to the support civilian personnel (administration and services), since it is difficult to discuss its volume in a document of this length and level.

The Army

First stage: building the force's backbone

In five years time the backbone of the Catalan Defence Forces' Army must be operational, comprising the General Staff, a military academy, and the first battalion-size combat unit with the necessary support units.

The **General Staff** is the corps of officers tasked with providing technical advice to the Army's higher officers, forward orders, and ensure their execution. In other words, planning and directing the work of the military organization.

The **Military Academy** will be responsible to first train all personnel joining the Army, soldiers as well as NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and officers. Its staff in charge of the higher courses will have to come from civilian experts in the field of strategic analysis, some of whom may be Catalan, but to a great extent it will be necessary to resort to the service of foreign advisors, both civilian and military (retired higher officers). In order to train troops it will be necessary to count on the services of foreign advisors, retired NCOs from prestigious units with operational experience.

Although this is not usually the rule in other countries, at first in order to optimize infrastructure and the available personal we believe that there is no objection, and it is even positive for the “esprit de corps”, to have all new personnel, both soldiers and officers, go through their basic military training together. Later each member of staff can move on to specialized instruction geared toward his role.

Anyway, in its first years of life, the military academy will be mainly devoted to training the officers and non-commissioned officers who will make up the backbone around which the Army's forces will gradually take shape.

1 Military Occupation Specialities.

As soon as the first core of officers, and above all NCOs, able to command it has been trained, it will be time to create the Army's first **combat battalion**. A battalion is the basic unit of manoeuvre able to operate autonomously. In this case, it should comprise four infantry companies, with a total strength of 600.

With a view toward the Army's growth, which we shall explain later, once they had gone through basic training, and despite their limited dimensions, each infantry company should begin to specialize in a different field. For example mechanized, aerial assault (with parachutes or helicopters), amphibious, and mountain operations. This would enable each company to constitute the core of a larger and more specialized unit, to be established later. Equipment should be in line with that of the Armed Forces of comparable countries. Furthermore, whether we belonged or not to the Atlantic Alliance, our equipment should comply with NATO standards in order to facilitate future combined operations with military forces from Allied countries, most of which belong to this organization.

With regard to hardware, the Army's needs would approximately be the following:

- **Mechanized infantry** company: 12 IFV², leaning towards multi-purpose versions, wheeled instead of tracked, with the capacity to transport a squad of riflemen (9 soldiers)³; 4 command vehicles, preferably a version of the same IFV; and 3-6 vehicles serving as weapons platforms (105 mm guns or 120 mm mortars) in support of the company itself, preferably a version of the same IFV.

- **Air assault infantry** company: given the Air Force's lack of transport aircraft able to deploy parachute units during this first stage, the company will only specialize in helicopter air assault operations. For this reason, no special hardware will be necessary. However, it should indeed be equipped with armoured⁴ or soft-skinned⁵ transport vehicles.

- **Amphibious infantry** company: obviously at this stage it is not planned to acquire any kind of amphibious combat vehicle. Therefore, it would simply be a matter of equipping the Naval Force with some 10 light inflatable craft⁶ and 2-4 fast assault craft⁷, which together with their crews would be organically attached to this company. It would also be necessary to consider equipping this unit with its own transport vehicles, with the same characteristics as those mentioned in the previous paragraph.

- **Mountain infantry** company: in line with the previous units, we are not considering the acquisition of special vehicles. Therefore, it will be necessary to equip this unit with both transport vehicles (just like with the previous companies) and the necessary mountain gear to carry out its mission.

On the other hand, in order to provide the necessary support to the combat battalion we have just described, it will also be necessary to establish a combat support battalion comprising a support artillery battery⁸, an engineer company, a signals company, and an intelligence company.

2 IFV: Infantry Fighting Vehicle. Armoured vehicles able to transport a small infantry unit and also support it once dismounted.

3 For example Switzerland's MOWAG Piranha and Finland's Patria AMV.

4 For example MRAP (Mine Resistant, Ambush Protected) trucks, such as South Africa's RG-31 Nyala and Poland's AMZ Dzik.

5 Among them Switzerland's MOWAG Eagle, Russia's GAZ-2975 Tigr, and Spain's URO Vamtac.

6 For example France's Zodiac F470.

7 Such as Sweden's CB90.

8 A battery is an artillery unit of equivalent size to an infantry company or a cavalry squadron (or troop).

- **Artillery** battery: we will need to equip it with 6-8 pieces, which may be towed light⁹ or medium¹⁰ howitzers, or rather some modern self-propelled medium howitzer system¹¹.

- **Engineer** company: its main roles will be to enable our forces to be mobile, prevent the enemy's mobility, and handle explosives. At this first stage we are not considering the acquisition of specialized vehicles, instead it will be necessary to provide it with earthworks heavy equipment. However, certain specialized equipment will indeed be necessary in order to handle and defuse explosive devices. This includes bomb-defusing robots and explosive-sniffing dogs. It is possible to rely on the experience of the Mossos d'Esquadra's (Catalan Police) TEDAX-NRBQ Division in this field.

Organically under the Joint Chiefs of Staff (in order to ensure interoperability, and also because they correspond to shared needs by the three branches of the Catalan Defence Forces) but operationally attached to the Army, there will be:

- **Signals** company: tasked with guaranteeing the need, recognized by all military forces, for free and uninterrupted access to the electromagnetic spectrum and its use. That is, enabling all communications among Army units and with other units of the Catalan Defence Forces, as well as intercepting, interfering, and jamming enemy communications. With this purpose in mind, it will be necessary to provide this company with complex specialized material and equipment, for which reason advice from Allied countries will be essential¹². In spite of this, thanks for the expertise of Catalan universities and corporations in the telecommunications industry, the Army could take up these technologies relatively quickly.

- **Intelligence** company: it will be tasked with gathering, organizing, and analysing all necessary information in order to advise commanders in their decision making with regard to present and future operations. Hypothetical operations actually, for which reason this task will have a marked prospective side. For this reason it is necessary to have personnel specialized in strategic analysis (political scientists, economists, geographers, sociologists) developing predictive models, as well as specialists in cartography, meteorology, psychology, and linguistics, among others. This personnel will gather all sorts of data in the field.

To ensure the functioning of the whole of the Defence Forces, it will be necessary to set up a **combat support service corps**, directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff and comprising logistics, medical, maintenance, and administrative, personnel, and general services units. Since this corps will provide services to the three branches of the Catalan Defence Forces, not just the Army, and will have a large and complex structure, we shall describe it in a future document.

Second stage: laying down a structure in line with international standards

The structure outlined above is the core that we shall have to establish in a period of five years, as mentioned at the beginning of this document. From that core, we shall later build the rest of the professional forces, which in a further 10 to 15 years should roughly quadruple in size, with each of the initial combat companies (mechanized, air assault, amphibious, and mountain infantry) becoming a **battalion**¹³, brought together in a **combat brigade**. With regard to the **combat support** battalion and the

9 For example Great Britain's L118 and the United States' M119, with a 105 mm calibre.

10 Among them the United States' M777 and Israel's Soltam M-71, with a 155 mm calibre.

11 Such as France's CAESAR and Sweden's Archer, both with a 155 mm tube mounted on articulated all terrain trucks.

12 Having said that, in accordance with the doctrine explained in our document "Military Doctrine: Development of Our Own Model", Catalan Defence Forces units and in particular Army units should be able to operate autonomously without excessive reliance on equipment and technologies where, in a conventional conflict scenario, we would be in a clear position of inferiority.

13 Possibly, in line with recent moves by the British Army in many of its units, it would be possible to establish single-

combat support service corps, they would undergo a transformation of the same dimensions, given that they would have to provide support to combat units four times their previous size.

In addition, as laid down in the document “**Military Doctrine: Development of Our Own Model**”, we need to plan for the creation of **reserve units**. After all, it is a matter of connecting with genuinely Catalan self-defence institutions such as *Princeps namque*,¹⁴ the “Sagramentals”¹⁵ and the “Sometent”¹⁶, in order to provide military capabilities to a significant sector of **citizens committed** to safeguarding the life, liberty, and civil rights, of their fellow citizens, as well as to defend the existence of the state itself.

Also, current military doctrine in most Western democracies is geared towards a contraction of standing forces and an expansion of the reserves, given the need to make defence structures flexible¹⁷: around a core of full-time professionals, with very specialized jobs, one establishes a force of part-time volunteers who may be mobilized and demobilized in response to a wide range of needs in a changing scenario.

A brief note about the reserve forces

Although the matter of reservists and standing forces¹⁸, recruitment policy, careers ... deserves to be treated in a separate document, we do wish to briefly outline a number of issues.

We believe that it is necessary to bring back the idea, belonging to the most genuine Republicanism, of the **right of citizens to defend themselves**. It is an idea born in Ancient Greece in parallel with democracy, and which the French and above all the American Revolution in the late XVIII Century brought back. Actually, until the 1714 defeat of Catalonia and ensuing 1716 “Nueva Planta” Decree laying down her annexation, the Catalan Constitution contained the right of Catalans to bear and openly carry arms, as a symbol that they were free men, that is that they were citizens, as opposed to serfs or slaves, subject to a master. The fact that citizens can defend themselves is the ultimate guarantee that no government, domestic or foreign, will be able to prevail against their will¹⁹.

battalion regiments, recovering the historical name of some Catalan units from different eras, with the goal of reinforcing their personality and esprit de corps.

- 14 Constitutional principle first developed in the XI Century, regulating national defence and whereby all able-bodied men could be called upon to defend king and country and therefore had a right (later a duty) to keep arms. The name comes from the first two words, in Latin, of chapter 68 of the Customs of Barcelona (“Usatges de Barcelona”).
- 15 Local self-defence militias, first documented in 1257, covering a group of adjacent towns. Its members swore to keep arms ready and assemble when called upon, by sound of horns, bells or trumpets, or the sight of fires on watchtowers at night. The name came from their members' oath, it was gradually superseded as an institution by the “Sometent”.
- 16 Part-time militia, with policing and military duties, which evolved from the “Sagramental”. In accordance with the *Princeps namque* constitutional principle, it played an important role in the defence of Catalonia. See our document “War and Society: Defence Structures in Catalan history” for more details.
- 17 This is, needless to say, also due to financial considerations, since it is very expensive to maintain a large standing force which remains inactive most of the time.
- 18 Because they have to operate complex systems, the Naval Force and the Air Force will have a much lower proportion of reservists than the Army. The latter can have a significant number of reservists, in particular in an infantry role. With regard to the combat support service corps, a joint outfit of the three forces, work in logistics and also in other very specialized areas such as equipment maintenance and medicine may be done by a sizeable number of reservists, combining their civilian and military jobs.
- 19 This is precisely Switzerland's doctrine in defence of neutrality and sovereignty.



This duality, of a significant portion of citizens who combine their civilian life with military duties²⁰, makes defence forces permeable to social changes, turning them into an image of the society which they serve. This prevents the compartmentalization and isolation of the military class from society, something which ends up giving rise to a “warrior caste” characteristic of non-democratic societies and prone to, among others, coups.

Societat d'Estudis Militars – Military Studies Society

20 Which will be yet another component of the wide range of voluntary activities in our country.