



## **Admiral Manuel Rebollo García. Chief of Staff of Spanish Navy**

The sea has a deep strategic significance for Spain. Our coasts are skirted by major sea lines of communications that link Europe with America and Africa through the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Moreover, our economy is highly dependent on maritime trade – in particular as far as fossil fuels are concerned, our maritime interests are widespread across the world, and the current geostrategic situation is bringing about a number of maritime related issues which are yet to be addressed from a comprehensive perspective.

The international arena is presently dominated by fast developing crises and conflicts in which nations are not always the main actors, and therefore their ability to prevent, or even to have an effect on them, is limited. Furthermore, globalisation makes the consequences of those conflicts, most of them in distant locations, be felt all around the world in a way never seen before. This has drawn defence and security closer than ever, thus the need to coordinate activities in both areas has been widely acknowledged. It is true that, at the moment, the perception could be that those crises are fundamentally land-centric, and that the navy's traditional roles don't seem to have a relevant part to play. However, thinking more broadly, we should be able to realise that the sea, and the navies operating in it, may certainly be key contributors to the international peace and stability in the near future.

The sea constitutes in itself a challenge and an opportunity. It is a global geographic feature that extends across the whole surface of the Earth; its vastness, confronted with the limited ability of the nations to police it, brings about a governance problem whose consequences the international community has just started to understand. In fact, the use of maritime spaces for illicit purposes is a growing concern, as drug smuggling, weapon proliferation, piracy, international terrorism and human trafficking activities blend into the background of legal mariners to pursue their illegal aims. The lack in many countries of meaningful means of their own to cope with these activities adds to the problem. Local or regional problems with global consequences may exist, but the governance of the sea is in itself a real global issue which needs to be dealt with; undoubtedly, navies have a major role to play not only by contributing to prevent and disrupt those illegal activities, but also by fostering a common understanding of the problem, both nationally and internationally.

The sea also affords opportunities to tackle emerging crisis in distant theatres. The sea can be used to deploy forces in order to show determination with a graduated commitment according to national and international political requirements; also, the sea may be the access point through which to project initial entry (intervention) and follow-on (stabilisation) forces, to sustain them and to redeploy them when they are



no longer required. In a conventional deterrence or prevention scenario, the sea is an open access area where forces can operate demonstrating presence and posture commensurate with the political direction, ready to apply rapid and decisive force as the situation evolves.

In this context, the Spanish Navy, jointly with the other Services, has the mission to militarily contribute to the security and defence of Spain and her allies, as well as to protect the lives and welfare of Spanish citizens. Additionally, Spain has an enduring commitment with international peace and stability through its participation in numerous Peace Support Operations.

Moreover, the Spanish Navy has a specific task based on its traditional role of conducting maritime presence and surveillance to protect the Spanish maritime interests where necessary. To fulfil all these tasks, the Spanish Navy is fully involved in a joint transformation process aimed to have modern, rapid deployable and versatile forces able to successfully operate in this new environment. This process has driven us to adopt a capability-based force structure which addresses the challenges and exploits the opportunities presented by the sea in the new strategic scenario.

The capability-based force structure caters for a more efficient employment of forces, ensures a more streamlined force planning process, and facilitates a more sensible way of procuring future naval units and equipment. Our navy's two main capabilities are maritime expeditionary power projection - which is in turn enabled by other facilitating capabilities, namely protection, freedom of action and operational logistics - and maritime action.

At the core of the Spanish Navy's concept of operations is the ability to project, command, operate and sustain maritime forces in distant theatres of operation in order to apply our maritime power in the littoral. This expeditionary maritime power projection capability ties into the joint or combined expeditionary capability by providing a rapid deployable self-contained and self-sustained initial entry force to spearhead any national response to an emerging crisis. So far, the Navy's power projection capability is two-pronged, built around the carrier "Principe de Asturias" and her embarked strike aircraft "Harrier" AV8B Plus, together with the Marine Brigade and its associated amphibious shipping. In the short term, this capability will be reinforced by the commissioning in 2010 of the new multi-role LPH "Juan Carlos I", which will enhance the current troop lift and heliborne assault capabilities and will act as an alternative platform for the strike aircraft, as well as by the completion of the "Piranha III" armoured vehicles procurement programme. In the mid term, the Spanish Navy will have to face the challenge of replacing the current strike aircraft, assault helicopters and marine armour. Steps are being taken to identify the operational requirements and to establish the likely financial scenario. We also strive for the completion of our power projection triad by achieving a land attack missile capability in the mid to long term.



The ability to deploy, operate and sustain our power projection assets will be further enhanced in the short to mid term by the commissioning of a number of naval assets which will reinforce their overall operational capability. Those are the new combat logistic support ship "Cantabria", expected to join the Fleet in 2009, the fifth "Alvaro de Bazan" class frigate, to be commissioned by 2011, and the S-80 submarine programme, which will yield its first operational unit in 2012. Of particular interest is also to ensure that the projection forces have an appropriate organic ISTAR capability. For that purpose two areas are being explored, tactical UAVs and the evolution of the current AEW sensors towards airborne systems capable of supporting littoral operations, both at sea and overland. Power projection and its enablers are also the major contribution to the Spanish joint defence strategy, largely based on deterrence and conflict prevention.

The second core capability is maritime action, which encompasses several routine activities conducted by naval units and shore facilities in support of the overall action of the State at sea. Among those, maritime security activities are the ones onto which the Spanish Navy has presently placed the greatest effort.

Achieving a thorough maritime situational awareness is crucial to enable effective maritime security operations. The challenge here is to collate and fuse huge amounts of information, both from civilian and military sources, into a single recognised maritime picture in order to detect anomalous behaviours, which in turn may orientate the action of units at sea. The Spanish Navy is deeply involved in a number of allied and international projects and experiments aimed to achieve this capability. With this construct in mind, a new maritime coordination and surveillance centre is already operational at the Maritime Action Force HQ, and in the near future, by 2010, the Maritime Action Ship programme will provide a new generation of modular ships able to conduct maritime operations in different scenarios supported by helicopters and tactical UAVs.

However, surely the most important challenge in maritime security is that of coordinating the activities of the various agencies responsible for the security and safety at sea. This will require national and international coordination and, although the allied and European navies have undertaken a number of initiatives in this direction, there is still ample room for improvement.

Besides these two core capabilities, the Spanish Navy contributes to the joint operational effort with intelligence assets and the recently formed Naval Special Warfare Command, which materialises the naval contribution to the joint special operations. Additionally, the Navy has the ability to take part in activities of military cooperation as part of the national and international endeavour to extend the area of peace and stability well beyond the allied borders.



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To sum up, we aim to maintain a balanced and modern force, fully interoperable in the joint and combined environments, structured around a set of capabilities to provide a tailored rapid response and a credible deterrent, with the ability to conduct maritime power projection operations in distant littorals, but also capable of effectively contributing to the security of maritime spaces and lawful mariners in the national, regional and global domains.