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**SPAIN FOR PEACE IN CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

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SPAIN FOR PEACE IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Abstract:

In Central African Republic, reprisals against civilians and clashes between anti balaka and Seleka groups worsen, and instability threatens the entire region. "We can't be blind to this humanitarian disaster," said Spanish Minister of Defence Pedro Morenés in his appearance before the National Congress on 19 March. After receiving the approval of the vast majority of parliamentary groups, 85 Spanish people —60 soldiers and 25 civil guards— will be deployed in the capital, Bangui, within the European mission EUFOR RCA. Chaos and violence continue drowning the Central African population, and only a stronger international effort may give some hope to this devastated country.

Resumen:

En la República Centroafricana, las represalias contra la población civil, los enfrentamientos entre los "anti balaka" y los Seleka se agravan, y la inestabilidad amenaza a toda la región. «No podemos permanecer ciegos ante este desastre humanitario», señaló el ministro de Defensa Pedro Morenés en su comparecencia ante el Pleno del Congreso el 19 de marzo. Tras recibir la autorización de la amplia mayoría de los grupos parlamentarios, 60 militares y 25 guardias civiles desplegarán en la capital Bangui, dentro de la misión europea EUFOR RCA. El caos y la violencia siguen ahogando a la población centroafricana, y solo un mayor esfuerzo internacional podrá dar alguna esperanza a este desolado país.

Keywords:

Central African Republic, Seleka, anti balaka, EUFOR RCA, Morenés, special operations and civil guards.

Palabras clave:

República Centroafricana, Seleka, antibalaka, EUFOR RCA, Morenés, operaciones especiales y guardias civiles.

Since March 2013, when Seleka rebel groups —led by Djotodia— took power by the use of armed forces, the Central African Republic has been immersed in an unceasing cycle of violence. Now, as pointed out by Minister of Defence Pedro Morenés before the Congress of Deputies last 19 March, the State does not have the capacity needed to manage the country, the Administration is missing and the police forces lack the basic equipment to exercise their functions.

Taking into account the national inability to stop this conflict, the UN Security Council authorized, last 5 December, the deployment of an African mission —called MISCA— and of French troops under the framework of Operation Sangaris. In a few

weeks, a military force from the European Union —called EUFOR RCA¹— will reinforce security in the capital, Bangui. After the appearance of Minister Morenés, the Congressed approved, with the support of all Parliamentarian groups with the exception of *Izquierda Unida*, the Spanish military participation in this European mission. Surely, a new strong and determined commitment supporting peace in Central Africa places Spain as a solid allied committed to the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union. As highlighted by the Minister, we cannot stay blind before such a humanitarian disaster that has already caused more than 10,000 deaths and almost one million displaced people and refugees. He has also stated that the

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Area 622,984 km²

Population 5.16 millions (2013)

Current conflict victims (UN): 10,000 deaths and one million displaced people and refugees.

EUFOR RCA AND THE SPANISH CONTRIBUTION

1. The European mission EUFOR RCA was established 10th February and will contribute to the stabilization of the capital, Bangui.

2. The contribution of member states with forces is turning out to be more complicated than thought: the deployment will be delayed until end of March.

3. EUFOR RCA will have between 800 and 1000 troops and the operations plan and the training rules are already approved.

4. In Spain, 19th March, the Congress of Deputies authorized, by a large majority, the participation of a Spanish military force in the EUFOR RCA.

5. The Spanish contingent is made up by 50 soldiers from special operations, 10 soldiers from the headquarters, and 22 civil guards.

6. The Minister of Defence Morenés said that we cannot stay blind before such a humanitarian disaster. He highlighted that even if the conflict is far away, it poses a threat to national security.

¹ Official web page of the European Union Force for the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA) http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-rca/index_en.htm

situation is turning complex and unstable and that it may affect illegal immigration and trafficking. In the Central African Republic, reprisals against civilians, as well as conflicts between “anti balaka” (anti-machete) and ancient *Seleka* forces (*Alliance*), are worsening and predict an alarming increase of instability in the entire region. A far away conflict, located 4,588 km away from Spain, yet that —as proclaimed by the Minister of Defence— is also a threat to national security and defence.

During almost the whole year of 2013, ancient *Seleka* forces, mostly made up by Muslim rebels, spread chaos over the capital, Bangui, and other Northern and Eastern regions in the country. On December 5, “anti-balaka” attacks against *Seleka* —weakened after the flight of militia from Chad and Sudan— inverted the conflict’s dynamic and trigger a wave of criminal violence that is culminating with an ethnic and religious division.



On January 10, and forced by the international community, the self-proclaimed President Djotodia left the country. Only ten days after such event, the appointment of the Interim President Catalina Samba-Panza fostered a new opportunity to further the political process, yet before that it is essential to stop violence. However, and as constantly heightened by her, dismantling “anti-balaka” is an impossible challenge: it is not international forces’ responsibility, and we do not have the capacity of doing it. Nowadays, the most execrable crimes, killings and plunders continue to devastate the Central African Republic, and thousands of Muslims have run away to Cameroon and Chad, forced by “anit-balaka” violence, or are sheltered by Christian missions.

In view of this context, and determined to contribute to the stability of Bangui, Spain will provide 85 soldiers (60 soldiers and 25 civil guards) to the mission EUFOR CAR, whose final objective is to allow the deployment of African mission MISCA or —as already expected— support a UN peacekeeping operation². Within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy, the definitive launching of EUFOR CAR, expected soon, will mean the confirmation of the European commitment to peace, democracy and development in Africa. For Spain, and as appointed by Minister Morenés before the Senate by the end of January, once again the personal risk that the country is assuming, and above all in the current economic situation, only makes sense if we are convinced that the task we are carrying out abroad is essential for the collective action to seek global peace and security, shared with our partners and allies, and to defend Spanish interests and welfare³.

EUFOR RCA: EUROPEAN UNION'S MISSION

From the beginning of the Central African Republic crisis, in March 2013, the European Union (UE) showed its firmed condemnation of the violent institutional coup performed by Djotodia. Together with international and regional efforts, the EU worked actively at a diplomatic level in order to stabilize the crisis and to restore a stronger national government. Nevertheless, after the widespread outbreak, few options were left to find a political solution, and the High Representative Catherine Ashton emphasized that the current situation is alarming and that the twenty eight —referring to EU member states— and the international community must work harder and more decisively and do more⁴. On December

² In his report S/2014/142, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon recommends the deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation that substitutes the African mission MISCA. This new mission, according to the Secretary-General, requires the adoption of a unique and integrated perspective, translated in the deployment of a multidimensional UN peacekeeping operation, in which civil protection becomes the principal priority. Available in <https://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/2014/142>. Accessed: 10/03/14

³ Appearance of Spanish Minister of Defence before the Senate to inform about the evolution of Armed Forces abroad, as well as about the Spanish presidency in the 5+5 Defence. Spanish General Courts (Parliament). Senate, 29/01/14. Available in <http://www.senado.es/web/actividadparlamentaria/sesionescomision/detallecomisiones/sesionescomision/sesioncelebrada/index.html?id=S011004&idConv=1&idSes=14&legis=10&celebrada=S&fecha=29%2f01%2f2014>. Accessed 02/03/14.

⁴ Ashton califica de "alarmante" la situación en la República Centroafricana. Agencia EFE, 18/12/13. Available in <http://www.lasprovincias.es/agencias/20131218/mas-actualidad/mundo/ashton-califica-alarmante-situacion->

5, the international response was endorsed by Resolution 2127/2013⁵ of the Security Council, approving the deployment of the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) and authorizing French military support (Operation Sangaris). Furthermore, and concerning the European Union (EU), the United Nations welcomed the deliberations taking place about a possible additional European support. Finally, EU Foreign Affairs Council approved, on January 20, 2014, the crisis management concept of military operation EUFOR RCA, which was supposed to be established quickly and was subject to a new Council decision⁶.



A few days after that, on 28 January, the UN Security Council backed up EU's decision through the Resolution 2134/2014⁷, highlighting its willingness to consider the establishment of a temporary operation to support MISCA. Within this framework, European military forces will be able to adopt all measures needed within its capacity and areas of deployment, for a six-month period from the declaration of its full operational capability⁸. EUFOR RCA was established on 10 February 2014 and will mean the European contribution

[republica_201312182027.html](http://www.republica.es/2013/12/18/2027.html). Accessed: 22/12/13.

⁵ Resolution 2127(2013), passed by the Security Council in its 2127th meeting, celebrated December 5. Available in <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2127%282013%29>

⁶ *Council conclusions on the Central African Republic*. Foreign Affairs Council meeting. Brussels, 20/01/2014. Available in http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/140666.pdf. Accessed: 11/03/14.

⁷ Resolution 2134 /2014), passed by the Security Council in its 7103rd meeting, celebrated 28 January 2014. Available in <http://www.un.org/es/sc/documents/resolutions/2014.shtml>. Accessed: 29/01/14.

⁸ Díez Alcalde, J. *Naciones Unidas: Luz verde a la misión de la Unión Europea en la República Centroafricana*, IEEE, 03/02/14. Available in <http://www.ieeee.es/contenido/noticias/2014/02/DIEEEA09-2014.html> Accessed: 16/03/14.

to international efforts aimed at protecting most at risk populations. Moreover, the European force will maintain the required security conditions to guarantee humanitarian aid delivering in refugee camps in Bangui, where hundred of thousands Central African people are crammed into.

With regard to command and control, the Operation Headquarters (OHQ) are located in the Greek city of Larissa, while the Force Headquarters (FHQ) and the military units will be deployed in Bangui, particularly in the international airport M’Poko. Under the command of French Major General Philippe Pontières, EUFOR RCA —with a total entity of between 800 and 1,000 troops and whose common costs are estimated to be of about 25.9 million euros (three months of preparation and six of deployment)— already has the operation plan and rules of engagement, but has not concluded the force generation process, which consists on the last requirement for the Foreign Affairs Council to approve the definitive launching of the mission.

As of yet, force contribution by member states —unlike Spain, who has already made official its participation thanks to the parliamentary authorization— is proving to be slower than what was needed and still presents some deficiencies: 200 soldiers to make up four infantry companies, one gendarmerie company and the required logistical support. In this respect, the EU Foreign Affairs Council, that took place on 17 March⁹, emphasized the need of accelerate EUFOR RCA’s preparation, with the goal of guaranteeing the quick deployment, according to European Union’s commitments.

Days before, and due to the delay suffered by the deployment of the mission after four force generation meetings, the High Representative Catherin Ashton appealed to the twenty eight member states to provide the needed capacities that were left in order to preserve the image and credibility of the Union: General Ponties had pointed out that it still does not have enough troops to carry out the operation and that there was a lack of logistical

⁹ *Conclusions du Conseil sur la République Centrafricaine. Conseil AFFAIRES ETRA_GERES, 17/03/ 2014.* Available in www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/FR/foraff/141583.pdf. Accessed: 18/03/14.

equipment, headquarters staff and infantry units¹⁰. For the time being, and although the required force is expected to be completed during the next days, the Headquarters in Larisse are already planning the initial deployment, which will quickly verify EU's commitment towards the Central African Republic.

On the ground, end of violence and re-establishing public order remain the immediate priorities to stabilize the capital, which is EU's main objective. Until minimum security conditions are reached, a new reconstruction of infrastructure cannot begin —as agreed by the Foreign Affairs Council last 17 March— and it would be impossible to pay attention to the commitment of examining future participation modalities in the field related to the rule of law and to the reform of the security sector. Considering this premise, once the deployment of the military mission begins meeting its targets, the determination of the European Union to support political and social reconstruction of the African country seems to be solid and clear, who should start by reinstating constitutional order after democratic elections, expected to take place February 2015.

However, in spite of the political and diplomatic effort made up to now, the launching of the mission will be delayed one month, which means a new sign of the difficulties faced by the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). As appointed by General Miguel Ángel Ballesteros¹¹ when referring to last December Council, the CSDP has lowered its weight inside the Union, and it has also diminished its relevance regarding the European politics concerning resolution of regional conflicts, as it is happening right now with EUFOR RCA.

Among the general reasons alleged by General Ballesteros, in addition to the hard task of reaching consensus to define European interests in the defence and security fields, he claimed the lack of a real system for financing operations funded by the European Union. Moreover, and more importantly, it is essential to support any European civil and military

¹⁰ *La misión de la UE se retrasa por falta de tropas y sobre todo equipos logísticos. EFE, 14/03/14.* Available in <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-mision-ue-retrasa-falta-tropas-todo-equipos-logisticos-20140314121206.html>. Accessed: 16/03/14.

¹¹ Ballesteros Martín, M. *La Política Común de Seguridad y Defensa tras el Consejo Europeo de diciembre 2013.* IEEE, 08/01/14. Available in <http://www.ieee.es/contenido/noticias/2014/01/DIEEEA03-2014.html> Accessed: 12/03/14.

operation with public opinion. However, thanks to the solidarity and the own security of the Old Continent, the European Union and its population should be aware, through acknowledging conflicts such as the one faced by the Central African Republic, of the fact that actions within the CSDP are a consubstantial part of the integration and Community solidarity process and are the main European compromise with global peace and security.

SPANISH CONTRIBUTION TO EUFOR CAR: A STEP FORWARD

The need of strengthening European Security and Defence Policy was also claimed by Ministry of Defence Morenés, last 19 March, before the Congress: if Europe wants to hold a significant position in the world and maintain its actual democratic and welfare status and export the intrinsic values of this model we have created, it must develop a credible Common Security and Defence Policy. To become a respected international actor and to complete the global foreign policy model, it is essential to be able to contribute with these capacities to the creation of stability scenario. Such a thought, in line with the broad consensus that backed up Spanish military participation in EUFOR RCA, is shared by national deputies that, with their majority support in the Parliament, has placed Spain as a solid a trustworthy member, and also strongly committed to bringing peace to the African continent.

Currently, Spanish contribution to Central African peace takes the form of the plane C-130 Hercules, which has its base in Libreville (Gabon) from today 21 March. Spain has also contributed through an air contingent with an authorized ceiling of 60 troops. The objective of this military contribution —called *Alfa-Charlie mission* and approved by the Parliament last 13 December— is to provide support to the deployment and support of French forces within the Operation Sangaris and, therefore, the African Mission MISCA. As authorized by Congress, from the definitive launching of European mission EUFOR RCA, a contingent made up of special operation forces of about 50 soldiers, as well as staff for the General Headquarters (OHQ) of Larissa —where there are already Spanish officials planning the mission— and for the Force of Bangui (FHQ), will be deployed. In addition, Spain will contribute with a section from the Civil Guard, with a ceiling of 25 people, to the European Gendarmerie Force. Spanish units that, preparing for the upcoming deployment in the

Central African Republic, are reinforcing its training and setting up its equipment in order to ensure the highest efficiency from the arrival in the Country.

As stated by Lieutenant Colonel Javier Lucas de Soto, chief of Special operations component of EUFOR RCA —so far formed by 50 Spanish soldiers from the Special Operations Command (*Mando de Operaciones Especiales, MOE*) of the Spanish Army—: our units from Special Operations are always available to fulfil their tasks and the plan requires us an exhaustive training six month before the deployment in any area of operations, now located in Central African Republic.

In spite of the fact that MOE members have deployed in almost every scenario, this will be the first time that a Spanish force will lead special operations in a mission within the framework of a multinational structure, the European Union in this case. Lieutenant Colonel Javier Lucas de Soto highlights that they are conscious about the relevance of their mission, as the current situation in the country is highly complex and turbulent, and violence has not stopped yet. For this reason, the presence of a force able to re-establish a secure environment that brings back stability in the country is necessary, and they will assume such responsibility in Bangui.

For their part, acting under the command of Chief of the National Defence Staff, Civil Guard's troops will integrate in the Integrated Policy Unit (IPU), part of EUFOR RCA. Counting with 120 people, out of which 22 will be Spanish civil guards, their mission —as affirmed by Lieutenant Colonel Miguel Sánchez Gerrero, Chief of the Peacekeeping Operations Area of the Directorate General of the Civil Guard— will be to contribute to the establishment of a stable environment in their operational area and to ensure the security of the population and the public order together with other international forces, as well as local authorities and security forces. Spain formalized its commitment immediately and, since then, it has participated in the planning in the Headquarters of Larissa.

Since the proposal of the launching of this European mission, the European External Action Service asked for a police unit made up by European Gendarmerie Forces. Spain, together with the Civil Guard, is a founding partner of such initiative that gathers military EU national

and police forces. In Bangui, as claimed by Lieutenant Colonel Sánchez Gerrero, a section from the Quick Action Group (QAG), with its base in Logroño, will perform, among others, public safety missions and will be constituted as a reserve with special operations' capacities of the police unit. Together with the Spanish force, France, Portugal, Poland and Lithuania will make up the Integrated Police Unit in Bangui, which is already fully constituted and ready to start the mission.

FINAL THOUGHTS: WITHOUT COOPERATION, THERE IS NO WAY OUT

Safety of population in Central African Republic, as well as stabilization and the political transition process in the country, require stronger international cooperation. Moreover, this violent and turbulent conflict has a negative impact not only within its border, but there is also a real risk that it may spread over the region. The lack of official security forces increases the risk of the country becoming safe for criminal and armed groups in neighbour countries. A country that, before this serious crisis, was already an example of a “Failed State” and that today faces total collapse in its law and order regime and the falling of its national institutions.

Nothing will be possible in the Central African Republic if, before, the level of security is not consolidated, in the medium and in the long run, in such a way that it allows the re-foundation of the country. Such an action must be based on the strengthening of its democratic institutions, national reconciliation and fostering urgent development. Now, its authorities have international support; a cooperation that it should not, for the common good, waste. Thanks to the presence of the African mission MISCA —still questioned— and the French Operation Sangaris, situation in Bangui and in other capitals in the North of the country has relatively improved, yet there still are unstable and uncontrolled places all over the territory. There is no doubt that this responsibility should be taken by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and by its Gendarmerie, but, until that moment comes, international support is the only guarantee to eradicate the violence that is now affecting Central African people.

In the future, everything suggests that MISCA will be substituted by a UN mission. In the short run, in a few weeks, EUFOR RCA mission will become a fundamental support, as the population of Bangui expect, for the creation of —in the districts closest to the M’Poko airport— “oasis of safety” that become a model to the rest of the capital. For the sake of Central African and European security, the launching of this mission should to be delayed, since, among other reasons, the credibility of the European Union as in international actor in a strategic environment too uncertain is at stake. In this scenario, last 19 december, Spain has proved to the European Union its strong determination and its commitment with the Central African Republic, as another example —as appointed by Minister Morenés last January— that shows that all Spanish foreign actions add peaceful and hopeful elements to the highly global complex reality and, selfishly, reduce the risks Spain faces.

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