
BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANCISCO GERMÁN MARTÍNEZ LOZANO,
COMMANDER OF THE TOLEDO TRAINING COORDINATION CENTRE

“THE UKRAINIANS ARE CONSTANTLY EXPRESSING THEIR GRATITUDE”

General Martínez Lozano highlights the quality of the training, which has already been provided to more than 1,500 soldiers, as well as the “experience and exemplary nature” of the instructors

“ I T was a challenge for me to start a completely different mission from scratch”, stresses Brigadier General Francisco

Germán Martínez Lozano. He is the commander of the Toledo Training Coordination Centre (TTCC), the facility in charge of overseeing the training of the Ukrainian soldiers in Spain as part of the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA). It is indeed a personal challenge, but one in which he is not alone: “I have under my command”, he says, “exceptional professionals from very different units who are fully committed to their work”.

This 57-year-old general from Madrid feels that thanks to his team at the TTCC and the assistance received at all levels his job has been quite easy. According to General Martínez Lozano, military commander of Navarra and head of the Mountain Troops Command, made up of regiments *Galicja 64* (Jaca) and *America 66* (Berrioplano, near

Pamplona) under the command of the *San Marcial* Division in Burgos, “the Ukrainians are eager to learn, perhaps because they are aware that victory is at stake”.

— **What is your overall assessment of these months of training?**

—The Chief of Defence Staff’s top priority from the outset of the operation, in November 2022, was to meet effectively the Ukrainian armed forces’ requests for training while enhancing Spain’s standing within the European Union. To date, 32 training

“32 modules have been carried out to meet the needs expressed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces”

modules have been taught and more than 1,500 soldiers have received training in response to the needs stated by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Our country is the third largest contributor to this EU operation. Therefore, I think the overall assessment of our Armed Forces is clearly positive, aside from the extraordinary personal experience for each of the instructors and the challenge it represents for the units involved.

The training module programmes are being taught in a flexible way, but without straying from the intended objectives and while completing the required standards. For instance, during the Operational Planning module at the Marine Corps School in Cartagena, Ukrainian students, some of whom were colonels, told me that they had never had tactics explained as thoroughly as in Spain.

— **Has daily practice forced you to modify exercises and activities?**

—The programmes can be changed to meet the needs of the participants,



whose skills and knowledge are usually not the same as when they started. The module leaders meet with the most senior Ukrainian soldier each day to review what has been done, determine which exercises should be repeated, and plan the activities for the following day. Since they are our “customers”, this exchange of ideas is crucial.

—Have the Ukrainian Armed Forces considered making any changes given how the conflict is changing their requirements?

—What has changed are their priorities more so than the training modules. As a result, new modules are being taught and others have been cancelled.

—What is the procedure?

—It is quite simple. The Ukrainian authorities inform us of their training needs; the Spanish Army and Navy are asked whether they can meet those needs; if they accept the challenge, they propose the module programme and designate the unit in charge of

teaching that module. So far, we have only provided training to individuals and crews, but we have not trained any unit.

—What is the profile of the staff who serve as trainers?

—They are selected by the units that develop those modules. The profile depends on the module. It goes without saying that the profile required for a battalion’s operational planning differs greatly from that of sappers. In any case, experience, subject-matter expertise and, of course, exemplary behaviour are always essential.

—The Combat Training Unit in Toledo was specifically established for this task. Is it working properly?

—When the operation started, we didn’t know the specifics of the training or how long it would last. As a result, it was initially planned that Toledo would serve as the training centre for all five modules, including basic training (recruits), demining, improvised explosive devices, combat medical care guidelines, and select marksmanship. To this end, the Combat Training Unit was established, which groups and coordinates these modules and streamlines communication with the Infantry Academy. But it soon became clear that other modules, such as sappers, forest warfare, planning, etc., had to be taught elsewhere, outside the sphere of control of this unit. Due to its experience and permanence over time, the unit in Toledo is and will continue to be a leading unit in the training of Ukrainian soldiers.

—Some crews have been trained on self-defence systems donated by Spain to combat the invader. Have they been able to use them on the battlefield when they return to Ukraine?

—We really don’t have any information from the Ukrainians once they leave our country.

All we have is what they say after finishing the courses, and they are consistently complimentary of the training they receive. For instance, the trainers’ dedication, the availability of resources (such as simulators, fuel, ammunition

“Throughout this six-month mission, there have been no incidents involving the safety of the troops or the facilities”

and the training area), and, of course, the effort and motivation of the Ukrainian soldiers, allowed them to achieve an excellent level in the tank crew module.

—Are they eager to learn?

—Yes, this is something that has surprised all the instructors. A good example of this is the *Hawk* anti-missile system module, which was mainly attended by command staff posted in Soviet-equipped air-defence units. Despite the module's high complexity and intensity, they often spent a lot of time each day talking to the trainers or asking them questions, trying to learn more about the system. And this was the case in most modules.

—Do the Ukrainian soldiers and their Spanish instructors build an emotional bond?

—Of course, although it might not be the most advisable thing to do. We, the Spaniards, have an unparalleled capacity for empathy and closeness, which has been demonstrated in all the operations we have participated in and has always worked in our favour. The instructors work with the Ukrainian soldiers from dawn till dusk for periods of two to five weeks. That means they spend a lot of time together. And even though the language barrier might seem a huge obstacle at first, they somehow manage to overcome it.

—Do you think the training received in Spain will help them save lives and improve their effectiveness in operations?

—Certainly. Otherwise, we would be wasting our time and money, or

even worse, putting the lives of the Ukrainian soldiers at unnecessary risk. Some of them arrived with an attitude of “What are they going to teach me?” However, a few days later and after seeing the seriousness, rigour and coherence of the training provided, they completely changed their perception and were more open to learning and improving.



“With their will to win and the necessary resources and training, victory will be within Ukraine's reach”, says General Martínez Lozano.

—Are the Ukrainian soldiers satisfied with the training they have received in our country?

—They constantly express their gratitude every time we talk to them. They often mention the difference with the training received in other countries, always in our favour, and appreciate how we treat them. They are particularly grateful for our empathy and closeness, which sets us apart from the other armed forces they have interacted with, and for the quality of life in the barracks they live in. They also appreciate the few field trips they make outside the barracks. On numerous occasions, the

Ukrainian military attaché has officially expressed his satisfaction with the modules taught.

—Have there been any incidents?

—Not a single one in terms of the safety of the troops or the facilities. We have been carrying out this mission for over six months and although it is physically and psychologically very demanding, especially for new recruits, so far the only injury among the Ukrainians has been a dislocated shoulder.

—Spain is responsible for the logistical support of the Ukrainian personnel: transport, food, accommodation, life in our country, etc. How have these aspects been dealt with?

—The Army, Navy and Air Force, underpinned by the Defence Staff Headquarters and the entire Ministry of Defence, have been extremely generous in their support. Although the European Union is expected to cover some of the costs incurred, so far the effort has only been borne by the Ministry of Defence.

—Do you think the training of the units is more decisive in this war than the assets used?

—Personnel, assets and resources, procedures, organisation and training are all part of a system in which everything has to work perfectly in order to be effective. Everything is decisive and everything is interrelated. Given the Ukrainian people's constant will to win, victory will be within their reach if they have the necessary resources and training.

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Photos: Pepe Díaz