



From left to right, Julián García Vargas at FEINDEF's opening ceremony; the Defence Minister visiting the Oesia Group stand; mock-up of the Spanish

INTERNATIONAL SHOWCASE FOR SPAIN'S INDUSTRY

With over 500 exhibitors and 25,000 visitors, FEINDEF 23 consolidates its position as one of the most significant events in the defence and security sector

DURING the opening day of the International Defence and Security Exhibition, FEINDEF Foundation President Julián García Vargas highlighted that the exhibition had brought together over 500 exhibitors, primarily representing Spain's industry, while also featuring prominent firms from 24 other countries. "This third edition will consolidate itself as an international event and will become part of the circuit of major global events in the sector".

The affirmation made by this former Defence Minister was proven right by the presence of over 25,000 professionals from around the world who attended the event on 17, 18 and 19 May 2023 at Madrid's international trade fair centre (IFEMA).

"FEINDEF 23 has reached maturity", stated Amparo Valcarce, the Secretary of State for Defence (SEDEF), referring to the exhibition's evident external impact and its aspiration to be on a par with France's Eurosatory and the UK's Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI).

**FEINDEF receives
 the institutional
 backing of the
 Ministry of
 Defence**

The number of visitors at the show has doubled compared to the inaugural edition in 2019. Since its inception, this exhibition, held biannually, has aimed to afford Spain "the opportunity to explore the latest advancements in military technology and promote cutting-edge research projects with potential applications in the civilian sector as well", emphasised Julián García Vargas regarding the exhibition's purpose as "a meeting point for key industry players, both foreign and domestic". This year's edition witnessed a 150% surge in the number of exhibitors compared to the inaugural edition, and an increase of 200 exhibitors compared to the second edition held in 2021. The majority of the large, small and medium-sized enterprises present at FEINDEF 23 were Spanish, while



Air and Space Force's MQ9 Predator B; and mock-up of the prototype for a remotely operated submarine developed by Navantia, SAES and Perseo.

26% hailed from other countries: 17 from the United States, 12 from Germany, 10 from France, 5 from the United Kingdom and 4 from Italy. The stands showcasing their state-of-the-art technological solutions were presented in two halls spanning 40,000 square metres, marking an increase of 12,000 square metres compared to 2021. Exhibitors were also visited by some one hundred delegations from 52 countries and representatives from 16 agencies associated with the United Nations, the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTION

“Investing in defence and security is an investment in peace, progress, values and democracy”, said Defence Minister Margarita Robles during her address at the event’s opening ceremony. She highlighted the 26% increase in the defence budget and her Ministry’s goal of reaching 2% of the GDP by 2029. Amparo Valcarce highlighted the budgetary effort by emphasising its impact on the national defence industry, elevating it to the status of “state policy”. “This aims to foster an industrial fabric that drives economic growth, job creation and, ultimately, the well-being of our society”. In this context, she

underscored that the sector “contributed over €17 billion to Spain’s GDP in 2021, accounting for 1.4 per cent of the total, in addition to generating 50,000 direct jobs”. These companies are further distinguished “by their substantial capacity as a driving force in various sectors, generating high-quality, highly skilled employment and making significant investments in R&D&I, which translates into 13% of the GDP”.

In addition to the stands of the business segment, the event featured those of the Ministries of Defence; the Interior; Industry, Trade and Tourism; and Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, as supporters of the security and defence programmes. Other participating entities included the General Defence Staff; the Army;

the Navy; the Air and Space Force; the Military Emergency Unit; and the National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA), all of which, “as end users of the means presented, are the exhibition’s core stakeholders”, the SEDEF indicated.

Following the opening ceremony, Margarita Robles proceeded to halls 8 and 10 of IFEMA, where she visited a number of these institutional stands, as well as those of companies such as Airbus, Grupo 20, Indra, ITP Aero, Navantia, Palantir, Santa Bárbara and Thales-Grupo Oesia, among others. The minister showed a keen interest in the development of the projects that her Department collaborates on with the city councils of Córdoba and Jaén —the Technological Centre for Development and Experimentation and the Army’s Logistics Base, respectively— which had dedicated spaces at the exhibition.

Prior to leaving IFEMA, the Defence Minister met with her Gabonese counterpart, Félicité Ongouori. The delegation from Gabon, which holds growing significance in the maritime security field in the Gulf of Guinea region, was one of the four delegations led by their respective heads of defence that attended the exhibition. The others were Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Dominican Republic.



Proposal by Spanish companies Expal, Escribano and GMV and Israeli company Elbit for the High Mobility Rocket Launcher System programme.



The Ministry of Defence had a spacious area on two floors to welcome visitors and showcase its action plans.

EXPERIENCE AND RECOGNITION

During her speech, the SEDEF emphasised that the Spanish industry in the sector “enjoys extensive experience and international recognition”, reiterating “Spain’s steadfast commitment to special modernisation programmes”. Regarding the land sector, she mentioned the 8x8 Dragon Wheeled Combat Vehicle (VCR), which was showcased in its advanced artillery and infantry observer versions at the exhibition. This vehicle is developed by the Tess Defence consortium, consisting of Escribano Mechanical and Engineering, Indra, General Dynamics European Land Systems-Santa Bárbara Sistemas (GDELS-SBS) and Sapa Placencia. The SEDEF also highlighted Expal’s *Eimos* 120 mm on-board mortar programme, designed for the Army and Navy. The launch of this programme was announced by the Secretary of State for Defence on the final day of the exhibition.

As for the land sector, Spanish companies Expal, Escribano and GMV, along with Israeli company Elbit, showcased —mounted on an 8x8 truck— the Spanish industry’s joint

proposal for the Army’s High Mobility Rocket Launcher System (SILAM), addressing the absence of artillery capability that arose a decade ago when the *Teruel* system was decommissioned. GDELS-SBS, meanwhile, unveiled two new developments at FEINDEF: the LT105 light tank and the recovery vehicle. These two variants, “made in Spain” as a design authority, are based on the *Ascod* armoured tracked vehicle, which is the export version of the VCI *Pizarro*.

Also based on the *Ascod*, the company showcased the first serial unit of the *Castor Sapper* Combat Vehicle, which will soon enter into service. Additionally, it displayed a conceptual first version of the multipurpose platform for the future Tracked Combat Support Vehicle (CSV), which will replace the M-113 Armoured Tracked Transport (ATT). This CSV programme was also presented by the SEDEF and the Army Chief of Staff, General Amador Enseñat.

Another of the upcoming programmes planned by the Ministry of Defence for this year is the acquisition of *Spike* LR2 anti-tank missiles. The manufacturing of

these missiles in Spain is spearheaded by Pap Tecnos, with the collaboration of Escribano, Expal, Tecnobit, FMG (Granada Ammunition Factory) and Rafale. This initiative aims to replace the TOW missiles between 2023 and 2026.

As regards training systems, Indra showcased the new *Pizarro* simulator at the exhibition. Additionally, at the stand of the Oesia Group, which comprised Tecnobit, Cipher, UAV Navigation and Inster, the Army Chief of Staff was able to see first-hand, under the watchful eye of the Defence Minister, the capabilities offered by the Field Artillery Simulator (SIMACA) from the JTAC pilot station.

The exhibition also showcased the next-generation communications equipment on a High Mobility Tactical Vehicle (HMTV), a platform developed by Galician company URO. This corporation presented the new Special Operations model at the event, which is currently designated for export, featuring distinct modifications compared to the version already employed by the Spanish Special Operations Command (MOE).

The number of exhibitors has increased by 150% compared to the inaugural edition

NAVAL AND AIR SECTOR

As a prime example of a “cutting-edge, global Spanish company”, Amparo Valcarce specifically underscored Navantia’s leadership in special programmes for modernising the F-100 class frigates and the future F-110, as well as the S-80 submarines. These programmes showcased capabilities that stood out among the products presented at FEINDEF. The company also presented the Navantia simulator and an unmanned submarine prototype, designed in collaboration with Spanish companies SAES and Perseo.

As for the air sector, the Secretary of State highlighted programmes such as the *Euromale* drone, the *Eurofighter* aircraft, the *Tiger* MkIII attack helicopter and the NGWS/FCAS and said that these programmes reflect the strong commitment of Spain, Europe and some of our partners. Regarding the above-mentioned project for the future combat air system, Valcarce emphasised “the technological expertise contributed by Spanish industry to international programmes, owing to its export capabilities and global outlook”. In particular, she singled out Indra as the national coordinator for the FCAS programme. She also mentioned Airbus, ITP Aero and SATNUS, a consortium consisting of GMV, Sener, Tecnobit and the Oesia Group, which leads the remote operator pillar of the future European fighter aircraft.

During FEINDEF, industrial corporation Airbus presented scale models of its new platforms for the Armed Forces: the C-295 MSA (Maritime Surveillance Aircraft), the C95 MPA (Maritime Patrol Aircraft) and the C-295 ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare); the A-400M transport aircraft; the next-generation *Eurofighter* aircraft; the naval version of the NH-90 helicopter; and the Sirtap remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) for intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance missions. In the field of drones and fulfilling the same roles (some already operational and others undergoing testing by the Armed Forces), products from companies such as Aeronautic, Aertec, Avincis, GMV and Aurea Avionics, SCR and Sistem, among others, were also on display.

Also present were space companies with cutting-edge initiatives in the areas of Earth observation and satellite communications. Among them was Hisdesat, which presented its Paz and *Spainsat* NG satellites at the exhibition.

DISCUSSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

The Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD), Admiral General Teodoro López Calderón, said, in his presentation entitled “Challenges of the defence industry in the current context”, that the world is witnessing “a new geopolitical reality that is fuelling a new arms race”. This

All” shed light on the significant contributions of women to security and defence and examined gender equality within the Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies.

Among the speakers and exhibitors, Innova for Def&Sec found its place, “emerging as the seedbed of the defence and security entrepreneurial ecosystem, with a commitment to supporting young talent”, said Julián García Vargas during the opening day of the event. Aligned with this vision, Navantia presented *Monodon*, its open innovation cell created “to foster and expedite the integration of disruptive



The scheduled conferences and roundtable discussions featured around thirty expert meetings, including the session entitled “Disruptive technologies for the defence of the future” (pictured).

lecture opened a series of conferences and roundtable discussions scheduled by the event organisers, serving as a platform for bringing together civilian and military professionals and experts. During these sessions, participants had the opportunity to engage in discussions and analyse topics such as defence industrial strategy, disruptive technologies and the sector’s technological solutions in addressing the operational requirements of the Armed Forces across the land, naval, air, space and cyber domains. Furthermore, a forum inaugurated by the SEDEF entitled “Talent for

technologies such as photonics, quantum computing and soft robotics, which we are actively exploring”, said CEO Ricardo Domínguez.

For all these reasons, Amparo Valcarce stated, “Spain stands as an appealing investment destination, where we provide solutions that cater not only to the operational needs of our Armed Forces but also those of our partners and allies”. FEINDEF is now its best showcase, both at home and abroad.

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Photos: Pepe Díaz