

- An Unconvenient Truth - by Ignasi Pascual, Engineer and Consultant.

Dear Citizens of the Baltic and Nordic States,

During this Summer we had different informations about the Air-to-Air incident in Estonia. A Spanish Typhoon jet triggered a Missile during a training exercise for still an unknown reason. Thanks God, no personal losses were caused, but Spanish Aircraft Command has been suspended until the incident is cleared up.

First of all, let me clarify my position about Nato operations in Baltic States. I do believe NATO and Nordic countries must reinforce collaboration, assistance and deterrence in the Area. As a catalan, I suffer daily what is to be threatened and bullied by a bigger state, Spain. I think NATO should quit its actual political and military position and it should be categorical on the defense of the Baltics : No interference or hybrid war against our allies will be tolerated. Against none of us.

That said, I want to bring you some context on what happened. Technology always ask for excellence. Otherwise, it is just a matter of time an accident occurs.

Let's start by the basics. Why are Spanish Troops on the Baltics? The standard version it is because Spain is member of the NATO, therefore Spain must assist its allies in case of threat or attack. But, let's face it. Geopolitics are based on a synthesis of complex interests. As you may know, during the last years Catalonia has been pushing for its independence using politics, major demonstrations, peacefully acts and voting. I must say your history on emancipation has been a mirror to us, even if we still couldn't complete our dream.

We even have our own Baltic way (for us, it was a Catalan Way). But, what has all this to do with the Baltics? The inconvenient truth is because our historical similarities, our mutual admiration, Spain was afraid that the Baltic States would be the first to recognize the Catalan Republic. Therefore, our intuition and experience with Spain tell us that the silence and neutrality of your government was bought in exchange of Spanish military deployment. Neutrality is a strong word. What would you think if Germany declared its neutrality during an invasion of your country?

The importance and consequences of that deal were depth. The second semester of 2017, Estonia was in charge to lead the European Union. During its presidency, Catalan websites were closed, people were detained without judiciary order, free speech was limited to none. Journalist were threatened. Peaceful Activists sent to jail. Politicians, as well. The main governmental catalan structures and administration were taken by the Spanish State, two ships filled with Spanish National police arrived into Barcelona and Tarragona harbours, more than 1000 voters were badly injured by the police on the 1th October Referendum. Peaceful Demonstrations were suppressed by force. Our democratic Parliament was dismantled and their own elections, with their own rules proclaimed. Yes, as you may know, if it looks, smells and feels like an occupation, it is an occupation. But we were alone, the Spanish-Baltic deal worked and we were left to our own.

From the Strategic point of view, we do not understand why did you accept a deal like that.

When you fight in a war, gear, weaponry and material are very important. But there is something even more important: the will to fight and defend the values which stands your society and your country. As an example of this, I recently read an article on politico, where Colonel Riho Utegi, commander of the Estonian Special Operations Force, reflected the passion and the will anyone would expect from a fellow allied army member. But, when your position does not depend on your values but on your interests, will you stay your ground?

My answer is no. Game's Theory show us that in long term, values prevails. With Colonel Riho Utegi values, he may lose or win. But we can be sure, under his orders no one will quit. Accepting the Spanish-Baltic deal, your government didn't take the path of the values, but instead, they followed the path of interests. Spanish military are not there because their values, so surrendering after the firsts fights in case of occupation, without any opposition, it is a high probable option.

On the other hand, how much can hold an army without the will to fight? Just, because a salary, just because it's your home state interest. It happened in Vietnam, it happened also in Iraq, where Isis defeated a much better equipped and supplied army. But it happened in Iraq Invasion(2003) as well. When a change of interests in Spanish deep State caused by the Atocha Jihadi attacks and the further government change, they decided that Spanish Army should not be anymore on the invasion ground on the formed "Coalition of the Willing". And they were retreated in the middle of the heat of the War. We do still remember how the Polish and US forces heading to the fight in the middle of the Iraq turmoil, throwed eggs and insulted Spanish troops, because they felt betrayed. So, it has already happened before.

But more. NATO's weaponry, R+D and investment plans have goals for certain programs. Every country must have a certain number of tanks, planes, ships with NATO standards. Due to the economical crisis, Spain suffered financial and treasury tensions, still in place today. Some programs were abandoned, some delayed and some budgetary cuts were done. One of the main complaints of soldiers and officials are the cuts on maintenance. So, some

planes are not kept as they should be. The same happens with ships and army gear. The problems is when you have a faulty tank in a middle of an exercise, things can be done. But those cuts on maintenance on high tech jets have fatal consequences like the 12th October 2017, where a Spanish Eurofighter crashed due to technical failures. Unfortunately, it's captain Borja Aybar died in the accident. Later, it was reported that the pilot asked not to fly in the state of that plane, but that his complains were revoked. So for us, the missile incident it is not a surprise. It surprises me, that didn't happen before. Some of the programs that are not dismissed, are submarines S-80 development program, with repeated flaws and design failures, with decades of delay, burning unnecessary billions of euros for a submarine that still today cannot float and its too big for his actual harbour. Material that will never help NATO, because a lack of perspective, good work and planning. You can increase your % of PIB on defense, but with such a development processes, you will be constantly feeding a black hole. Of course, faulty material has always higher priority to be send abroad, like Baltics missions.

But that's not all. Spanish Army officer, Luis Gonzalo Segura was expelled from the army because he published several books: *Step Forward*, *Red Code* and *The Black Book* of the Spanish Army. On those books, he denounced the systemic and permanent corruption on the Spanish army. During years, he denounced it from inside the army, until he was uncommunicated and expelled. I do not wish to extend myself about the content of the book, I will just recommend to read them. The consequences are that troops are not well trained.

A couple examples, some officers and troops did not make planned exercises, in order to sell the fuel and get the money. Or officers sending troops early at home to "recover", in order to save the meals and get the money of them. The result of corruption is always bad training and expulsion of the A players and honest soldiers. But most important, would you trust the defense of Suwalki Gap or any streets of your country to such a people? Make no mistake, corruption is everywhere, in all sectors. Also, in all the armies. The differences are the armies who has processes to get out the bad apples and the armies who do not. So, this concludes to the fact that Spanish soldiers on the Baltic are not prepared for the conditions combat on that geography may cause. As an example, their winter training was a short month-exercise near Zaragoza, which weather conditions are far from the Baltic Winter. What can they do against an Army, for example, well trained in Siberian Winter?

Finally, the elephant in the room: Russian and Spanish Relationships.

Spain has been for decades a member of Nato. But, as well as Turkey, those three countries they share a common cultural and historical background. Natural borders of continents, former empires and fragile liberal democracies, they share from the cultural and political point of view how the world should be ruled or how they see it. A lot of literature about this subject has been already published. As an example, when most of western allies were sanctioning Russia because of the Ukraine Conflict, Russian fleet were being re-supplied and allowed to dock into Ceuta and Melilla's Spanish North African ports. Those operations were capital, because Russia needed the fleet to be operational in Syria, where they had

another front. That produced the irony that Spain was a key partner for a Syrian operations which NATO allies were against. Would you trust your border to a State that could create an intentional *casus belli*? Especially if that State has shown perfect relationships with the State willing to invade you.

I consider myself a friend to Baltic States, but also Nordic States. You are all a reference for us. But real friends tell the truth, even when it hurts. I believe this deal was a great mistake. You can never send the Fox to keep the chicken. I think however, Baltic protection should be reinforced with reliable partners inside Nato, but also to involve Sweden and Finland. Things must be done, but not anything can be done.

We need more Colonels Riho Utegi, and we need to equip them properly and give them all the tools they need. But right now, the deals done by your governments with Spain, places the citizens of your country in a dangerous position

So the inconvenient truth being said, your catalan friends cannot help you no further than just telling you all the info apparently you don't have, while your government remains dangerously into interest and not into values.

We have one of the biggest industrial zones in Europe, a powerful agricultural sector and a blooming services and startup sector. And the most important, we have the will to help you to defend your roots, your state, what you are, your culture, your freedom and everything you have been fighting for.

Unfortunately, we remain an occupied country by Spain with our administration into exile.

Your government still supports Spanish Regime.

Our Catalan Republic is still not recognized by your government.

But when they do, we will be the first one to join your civilians and your troops and willingly help you as much as we can to defend your freedom, our most beloved value.

Barcelona, 11th September 2018