Beat: Politics

More than 3,000 soldiers, 150 vehicles and 70 aircraft celebrate Army's Day

With a parade before the Kings of Spain

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USPA NEWS - The city of Granada, in southern Spain, with 228,682 inhabitants and one of the eight provinces of Andalusia, hosted this Saturday the central event of the week that each year is dedicated to bringing the Armed Forces closer to the Spanish population. Presided over by King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia, a grand parade was held with the participation of the Air Force, the Navy and the Army, in which more than 3,100 soldiers, 150 vehicles and 70 aircraft took part.

This year, for the first time, it was a woman who jumped with a parachute carrying the great flag of Spain which, after being hoisted, welcomed the tribute to the fallen and presided over the ground parade. She is a corporal of the Parachuting Acrobatic Patrol of the Air and Space Army (PAPEA in its acronym in Spanish). This year 2023, the centenary of the first aeromedical evacuation in Spain is celebrated; the 35th anniversary of the incorporation of women into the Armed Forces, and the 50th anniversary of the Army Aviation Academy and the Civil Guard Air Service.

At noon, Spanish time, the Kings arrived at the place where the tribune from which they were going to attend the parade was installed. Accompanied by the Escort and Honors Squad of the Royal Guard, the procession carrying the monarchs was received by the Minister of Defense, Margarita Robles; the president of the regional government of Andalusia, Juan Manuel Moreno; and the acting mayor of Granada. The King wore a Navy dress uniform and was greeted with cheers by the large audience. 20,000 people, according to sources from the Ministry of Defense, attended the air-naval exhibition held in Motril on Friday. A figure widely exceeded in the capital, Granada, whose inhabitants took to the streets to witness the military parade.

After receiving honours, King Felipe VI reviewed the troops. A bit later, the parachutist carrying the national flag was launched, which was hoisted on a mast installed in front of the royal tribune. The monarch paid homage to the fallen by placing a laurel wreath at the base of the banner, where a plaque paid "honor and glory to those who gave their lives for Spain." 29 Spanish soldiers, whose names were read, have died in the last year in the line of duty.

The parade began with the passing of the aircraft: Eurofighter; F18; Harriers; F-5 teaching; E-27 Pilatus; A-400; A-330; A-310; Falcon 900; Cessna Citation; CN-235 for surveillance and maritime rescue; CN-295; Canadian fire fighting; H.21 and HD.29 helicopters; HE.25 helicopters; HT.17 training; HA.28 Tiger; HT.29; HE-26; Navy AB-212, SH-60B and SH-60F helicopters; Hughes 500; Civil Guard helicopters AS.365 and EC-135; and E.25 planes from the Águila Patrol.

The land parade began with the passage of the mechanized units of the Army and motorized units of the Navy and the Air Force. Behind them, the troops on foot: companies of the Royal Guard, the Marine Infantry, the Air and Space Army, the Civil Guard, the Land Army, the Legion and Regulars, the latter two deployed in the North African cities of Ceuta and Melilla, on the border with Morocco. These units parade with their own cadence: the Legion, at 160 steps per minute, and the Regulars at 90 steps per minute. The last Units on horseback closed the parade: the Royal Battery of the Escort Group of the Royal Guard, and the Saber Squadron of the Civil Guard.

Before the parade, in statements to public television in Spain, the Minister of Defense, Margarita Robles, defended defense spending by noting that "investing in defense is investing in peace." The minister reiterated Spain's commitment to NATO to dedicate 2 percent of GDP to defense, and also reiterated Spain's commitment to Ukraine. “There are already six Leopard [tanks] in Ukraine and there are another four that are about to arrive,” recalled the minister, who added that “within our capabilities, we are going to continue helping Ukraine.” However, the minister explained that Spain does not have the fighters demanded by the Ukrainian president, Volodímir Zelenski.

The minister also referred to the advancement of the legislative elections in Spain to July 23 and she trusted that it would not interfere in the projects and investments in her department. “The Armed Forces belong to all Spaniards, they do not belong to any political party,” said Margarita Robles. “Investing in defense is investing in peace, security, jobs and Spanish industry,” she added.

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