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## ***Interview: Defense Minister Alberto Oliart***

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# **The NATO question: 'We must have command of our own territory'**

*Spanish Defense Minister Alberto Oliart granted this interview to EIR in Madrid on June 23.*

**EIR:** After the Malvinas crisis, does Spain plan to integrate itself militarily into NATO, or to play a more limited role like that of France?

**Oliart:** We plan integration into the military organization of NATO in a way which of course must be worked out with the actual components of the alliance; but we do not intend to remain in a position like that of France.

**EIR:** [NATO Secretary-General] Joseph Luns in an interview with the Madrid daily newspaper *Ya* on June 20 speaks of the possibility of interventions into the Third World by NATO members as something perfectly natural in the future. What do you think?

**Oliart:** I have not read this interview with Luns. I imagine that, given the special nature of the NATO alliance, and the independence maintained by the countries within the alliance, to determine their own foreign and military policy, that Secretary-General Luns has probably simply justified the fact that some countries within the alliance have intervened, obviously, in the past and at certain points, in various Third World areas like Africa.

I insist that this corresponds to the sovereign decision of each of the member countries of NATO to act in matters of foreign policy or military policy as they think opportune, without prejudice to the ultimate aim of the alliance, which is the defense of territory vital in interest to all the alliance members, which includes Spain today. As members of the Atlantic alliance, we have committed ourselves to the sphere geographically within the terms of the treaty, not to any other. This does not affect our decision to continue our foreign policy just as we consider it should be carried forward, as a sovereign and independent nation.

**EIR:** What do you think of the proposal that Gibraltar could be a NATO base jointly governed by Spain and Great Britain?

**Oliart:** We have clearly put forward the fact that it is a priority, a vital strategic interest for our nation. I mean that zone defined by the points of the Balearic Islands, the Straits of Gibraltar, the Canaries. We have clearly expressed the concept that in this zone, the Spanish command is not subject to debate.

**EIR:** A debate is presently raging in NATO about the future of armaments: Whether one should opt for conventional forces, or else develop, as the Soviets are now doing, new strategic arms based on space-age warfare—laser beam weapons and so on. What do you think, taking into account the very distinct implications of the two alternatives in terms of world economic growth, about this debate?

**Oliart:** In my country's situation, at our industrial, economic, and technological level, I believe we can develop an army by land, by sea, by air, which in conventional terms will be on a par with the others in the Atlantic alliance. The other arms systems you refer to do not enter the immediate horizon. I do not mean to say that we are not paying careful attention to this advance, nor that we are not gaining the means to handle these technologies in the event we should possess them. However, the present modernization project we have for the armed forces' materiel still does not include these levels of high technology, for budget, economic, and technical reasons.

**EIR:** But on what side do you stand in the debate?

**Oliart:** It is hard to answer this, but I would say that each country must do the utmost to attain the highest possible defense level. The Atlantic alliance is a defensive alliance, faced with what appeared to be a decisive Soviet menace against Europe in 1945. This potential threat still exists in spite of all the diplomatic, political, and cultural relations between us. I do think therefore that anything those countries in the alliance which can develop the absolutely highest technologies can do to defend the free world, should be done, because this helps to maintain the character of a true shield, which the Atlantic alliance is



supposed to be. These countries should develop the type of technology you referred to.

**EIR:** What do you think about technological interdependence in military terms?

**Oliart:** We have many of our own technologies, and we are working on others. I think we should pursue this path.

However, arms systems today are numerous, complex, and varied. We do not have a national technology for some of these systems, so we should acquire them. I think a cost-efficiency analysis must be made. Efficiency means not only yield from a certain system, but what you gain in terms of national independence.

If you take the French example, they do have French weapons systems, but many of these include other nations' technologies. Apart from the superpowers today, almost no one else has the dimensions, be it in terms of space, economics, etc., to entirely develop the technologies for themselves which they may require.

**EIR:** What do you think about the European Rapid Deployment Force?

**Oliart:** This already exists. Each country in the alliance has contributed to it. This force is necessary, and Spain is disposed to contribute units, and to discuss the size of the units. This Rapid Deployment Force of the Atlantic alliance of course is not the same as the North American

Rapid Deployment Force.

**EIR:** Could you elaborate a little more on the question of out-of-area deployments?

**Oliart:** I cannot imagine under what conditions my country could have an interest in intervening militarily in countries which you have called Third World countries, and which are not included in the geographically delimited area of the North Atlantic treaty. For a great many years now, my country has not had an expansionist policy outside its own territory. Spain is concerned and involved in defending and developing its own national territory and population. I do not see reasons why at this point we should find motivations to intervene in other countries.

**EIR:** In your opinion must the NATO mandate for Spain be under Spanish control or could you accept integration of other commands?

**Oliart:** More detailed discussion will be required on this topic. But, as you know, Spain is a country between southern Europe and northern Africa. The Straits of Gibraltar are not an abyss separating us from Africa, but rather a means of communication.

Furthermore, we are a nation between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This poses so many problems that if you take the NATO commands as they presently stand, you could come up with Naples, just as you could come up with Norfolk. Perhaps the first priority from which we move is a Spanish command, as now already exists. This is justified precisely by the fact of our complex situation, and by the enormous importance, in my eyes, which my country has strategically for NATO as a nation, and as a reserve territory, a last bastion. It is not inconceivable that there must be a single command for this territory which is so special.

**EIR:** You mean a single Spanish mandate?

**Oliart:** Yes, naturally. Dependent or integrated of course, as is the English, as is any other mandate, on the alliance as a whole. This is what we plan to discuss with our allies. We wish to see whether this is possible or not. We think that they too must work through the question in depth, i.e., whether, given our complex situation, we must fit into the pre-conceived schemes of NATO, which has been around for 35 years. This alliance was constituted by agreement between the countries which composed it at the time of its creation. But a new entity is entering the alliance, which has its own peculiarities, unlike those of any other European country.

**EIR:** But will this be a *sine qua non* condition?

**Oliart:** I would not go so far as to say that it is a *sine qua non* condition, but it is a priority which we want examined very thoroughly indeed.