

# Spanish government sends troops to Catalonia

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The Popular Party (PP) government in Spain has dispatched troops into Catalonia. The media reported that this was to provide support to the Civil Guard and national police in preparation for a declaration of independence by Catalan President Carles Puigdemont.

According to information leaked to *El Confidencial*, the Ministry of Defense has dispatched army units, including the Logistic Support Group 41 based in the Aragonese capital of Zaragoza, which lies 300 kilometres to the west of Barcelona.

At 19.00 hours on Tuesday, just one hour after it was known that King Felipe VI was going to address the nation in a speech denouncing the Catalan nationalist parties, army commanders told their subordinates to prepare to send to Barcelona two contingents in 20 trucks. The unit had already been in pre-alert for a week to ensure it could be relocated rapidly.

The troops left at night to arrive early in the morning at the barracks in Santa Eulalia de Sant Boi de Llobregat, a few kilometres from the city.

According to *El Confidencial's* sources, the main objective is to reinforce the supply of food, clothing and washing facilities for the Civil Guard and the National Police as a result of hotels refusing to house them following their brutal actions during the October 1 referendum vote.

However, it is clear the troops are specialised in preparing the ground for future troop deployment. *El Confidencial* explains that acting as an expeditionary logistics unit, they have the capacity to “project to any place of the world, in a short space of time, personnel and means before a possible contingency and to respond immediately and with total efficiency where its logistics services are needed.”

The unit has participated in missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

According to *Defensa.com*, Spain's Directorate of Naval Supply and Transport has also purchased riot

gear for different military units. The order included 295 aerosol sprays for personal defence, 253 tear-smoke cans, 1,500 cartridges, 1,500 rubber balls and 300 triple smoke grenades for 12-gauge shotguns and 1,000 tear gas grenades.

The stage is now being set for a violent provocation that can be used to justify intervention. Xavier García Albiol, the leader of the PP in Catalonia, has called for a “massive” demonstration this Sunday in Barcelona, declaring, “We call on the mobilization of the Catalans who feel Spanish... A democratic exercise to go out to defend democracy, institutions and dignity.”

Faced with such threats, last night Puigdemont made a TV broadcast appealing for mediation by the European Union.

He has stated that his government would submit the results of the October 1 referendum to the Catalan parliament and declare independence within 48 hours of all the official results being declared. The last votes from abroad are due to arrive by the end of the week and an “extraordinary regular plenary meeting” of the parliament is planned for Monday to be addressed by Puigdemont to “evaluate the results and their effects.”

But according to one parliamentarian from Puigdemont's PDeCat who is opposed to secession, “Puigdemont is desperately seeking international mediation... to be able to stop the declaration of independence.”

However, the European Parliament rejected his appeals yesterday, saying it was “an internal Spanish matter.” Russian President Vladimir Putin also said that Russia regards the Catalonia conflict as a “domestic affair,” which he hoped the country could overcome.

The bourgeois press in Spain has praised the king's speech, contrasting it with what is decried as vacillation by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and urging action to be taken.

In a de facto call for yet greater repression, the pro-

Socialist Party (PSOE) *El País* declared, “With harsh words, the King has pointed out that the Catalan authorities have violated the Constitution and the Statute of Catalonia and systematically violated the legally and democratically approved norms... it is the responsibility of the legitimate powers of the State to ensure the constitutional order and the normal functioning of institutions, the rule of law and self-government of Catalonia, based on the Constitution and its Statute of Autonomy.”

*El Mundo* declared, “The message that Spaniards needed, and which they might have expected from their political representatives, they received from the Head of State with diamond clarity, with a force far removed from all cold protocol.

“Those who are now in charge of the Catalan sedition... have observed a military discipline to impose their authoritarian project on the whole society, disobeying the courts, shredding the political rights of the opposition and finally relying on Jacobin control of the street for the success of its revolution.

“Yesterday we asked him [Rajoy] to apply article 155 [of the Constitution to restore legal order in Catalonia] to end the unpunished rebellion of Puigdemont and his partners. This urgency becomes more urgent today. The King’s message calls him to it.”

The *ABC* editorial decried Catalonia for “moving from the illegal referendum to the generalized insurrection.” It labelled Tuesday’s general strike “an internal coup” led by “the tiger of extreme left-wing separatism, which is out of control and aims to devour Catalan society in a revolutionary process in which the middle classes will not have the protection of a State worthy of such a name.”

*ABC* called for Article 155 to be invoked and warned that the longer the government takes, the more the “insurrection of the Generalitat” will necessitate the calling of a “state of emergency and siege” under article 116. Article 116 details how the states of alarm, exception and siege will be implemented.

The official “left” parties have mouthed only platitudes. The leader of the Stalinist United Left, Alberto Garzón, expressed disappointment that the speech by “citizen Felipe de Borbón” was not the “balanced and measured speech” he expected. Speaking as an advisor to the monarch, he continued, “I personally know the head of state. I have talked to him

several times and I know he thinks things through before he talks. Today, however, I fear he has been advised by his enemies.”

Iñigo Sáenz de Ugarte, writing in the pro-Podemos *El Diario*, complained that Felipe’s speech was “in practice a declaration of war” on the autonomous government of Catalonia and represented “an amendment to the whole of the positions held by Podemos in this crisis.”

This position consists of an appeal to the PSOE to work with Podemos to oust Rajoy and form a left government to rescue the Spanish state.

The PSOE has refused to countenance such an offer and the appeal was bitterly criticised by veteran PSOE leader and former vice-president of the PSOE government under Felipe González from 1982 to 1991, Alfonso Guerra.

Guerra called for the PSOE to openly support article 155 and defended the use of the army in Catalonia if the police could not control the situation, blaming it on a “pro-fascist” independence movement carrying out a coup. Expressing views previously the preserve of the far-right, he labelled the leader of the Catalan police, the Mossos d’Esquadra, Josep Lluís Traperó, a “traitor to democracy” and argued that “maybe the Mossos should be dissolved.”

On Friday, Traperó was ordered to appear in court along with the presidents of the Catalan National Assembly, Jordi Sánchez, and Omnium Cultural, Jordi Cuixart, as part of an investigation into charges of sedition relating to demonstrations on September 20.



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