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Spain signs military agreement with US amid US-NATO war in Ukraine

Last month, Spain's PSOE (Socialist Party) Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez issued a joint statement with US President Joe Biden pledging to increase the number of US warships and soldiers stationed on Spanish territory. The declaration outlining the military plans was adopted at an hour-long meeting between the two leaders on June 28, during the NATO summit in Madrid at the end of that month.



Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sanchez speaks to Spanish troops during his visit to Adazi Military base in Kadaga, Latvia, Tuesday, March 8, 2022. (AP Photo/Roman Koksarov)

The agreement will increase the number of US destroyers stationed at the southern Spanish naval base of Rota in Cádiz by 50 percent, from four to six destroyers. It also provides for the garrisoning of an additional 600 American Marines at this base, taking the

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total number up to 1,800. The four destroyers currently stationed at Rota are part of NATO's "antimissile shield," as well as taking part in unilateral US missions, and regularly patrol the Black Sea.

The meeting between Biden and Sánchez comes amid the US-led proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. Having goaded Russia into an invasion of its Eastern European neighbour, the NATO powers seek to use the conflict to escalate tensions with Moscow and to push for regime change and the dismemberment of Russia's vast landmass.

Sánchez's coalition government of the PSOE and the pseudo-left Podemos has fully signed up to the warmongering of the NATO alliance in Ukraine, sending warships, jet fighters and soldiers to Eastern Europe and funnelling tanks, ammunition and rocket launchers to NATO's Ukrainian proxies for use against Russia. The Biden-Sánchez pact signals the Spanish government's intention to continue and escalate its imperialist aggression in conjunction with the US.

Speaking to the press after his meeting with Biden, Sánchez declared: "Spain and the United States are allies, we share the will to promote democracy, freedom, human rights." Biden, for his part, told Sánchez: "I want to thank you for your leadership, Pedro."

He continued: "We are together with Ukraine giving it everything it needs to defend itself. ... This makes us strong allies. The United States and Spain are also working in Latin America to strengthen democracies and strengthen our immigration policies. The joint statement reflects the great breadth of our cooperation."

The document also lays out plans to escalate the campaign of violence and intimidation against migrants and refugees seeking to enter the European Union through Spain and the US from Latin America by "promoting safe, ordered and regular migration.

"Both countries intend to collaborate in a comprehensive approach to manage the flow of irregular migration that guarantees a fair and humane treatment of migrants," the document dishonestly claims. "Both countries plan to coordinate efforts to tackle the root causes of irregular migration and work to strengthen the legal routes, with particular emphasis on the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Spain and the United States also recognise the importance of a permanent cooperation with respect to the challenges of irregular migration in the region of North Africa,” it adds.

This comes in response to the PSOE-Podemos government’s demand at the end of June that NATO consider migration as well as food insecurity and terrorism to be “hybrid threats,” a reference to NATO denunciations of Russian “hybrid warfare” before the war in Ukraine. NATO must strengthen its “southern flank”—i.e., the Sahel and Maghreb—PSOE Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares had also told Reuters.

Not coincidentally, the PSOE-Podemos government’s demands came just days after at least 37 migrants were killed and 150 more injured on the border between Spain’s North African enclave of Melilla and Morocco. Spanish and Moroccan police collaborated to systematically entrap, beat and tear gas refugees as they tried to climb the border fence, causing many to be suffocated or crushed to death.

On June 30, Spain’s Congress also voted in favour of doubling its military spending to 2 percent of GDP, reaffirming a pledge made by the PSOE-Podemos government to this effect in February. The motion on military spending, brought by the conservative People’s Party (PP), was passed in parliament with the votes of the PSOE, PP, the right-wing Citizens and a number of other deputies. Podemos, the pseudo-left junior partner in the Spanish government, voted against the bill, knowing full well that it would win a majority regardless of its support.

In an interview with TV talk show “La Hora de La 1,” Prime Minister Sánchez defended plans to increase the defense budget, stating, “NATO is an alliance of democracies in defence of democracy, and we must defend democracy by increasing our dissuasive capabilities.”

He continued, “We have to be very conscious of the fact that, beyond Europe and NATO, the world is very complicated, very difficult, it’s getting cold and it is important to defend our way of life and situate ourselves on the basis of an internal order.”

Podemos tried to distance itself from the warmongering of the Biden administration and the Spanish government, issuing mild criticisms of the Spain-US military agreement.

“We don’t like this pact,” Jaume Asens, president of Podemos’ parliamentary group, told the media inside Spain’s Congress building. “It means more soldiers, more North American destroyers and, therefore, a greater dependence on or submission to the USA when at times our interests are not the same.

“We defend European autonomy in terms of security, and this [the pact] goes in the opposite direction,” Asens added. But asked explicitly whether Podemos would vote against the military agreement when it reaches the Spanish Congress, Asens refused to commit his party to opposing it.

“We still have to decide about the vote, but it is evident that our position is different,” Asens declared. “We have always insisted that the solution is not greater military investment.”

Podemos’ criticisms of the policies of a government of which it is itself a part of have nothing to do with principled opposition to imperialist war. Podemos is aligning itself with a faction of the European bourgeoisie that wishes to develop greater military autonomy under the aegis of the EU. These calls aim to arm and prepare the European powers to pursue their own imperialist interests around the world, independently of or even in opposition to the military policies of the United States.

As the war in Ukraine progresses, the tensions between the countries that make up the NATO bloc will only increase, as each imperialist power seeks to pursue its own aggressive interests in dividing up the world’s resources and territories.

No faction of the governing Spanish bourgeoisie or the European ruling class has anything to offer workers other than continued imperialist war abroad, crackdowns on refugees at their borders and repression against workers’ opposition at home. The decisive issue is to build an anti-war movement in the working class, in irreconcilable opposition to pseudo-left parties like Podemos, to end the drive towards catastrophic imperialist conflict and defend migrants, as part of the struggle for socialism in Spain and internationally.

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