

## **Defense policy and natural resources**

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The defense of natural resources has been defined as a priority for the Armed Forces by the Argentine government.

The reality is that the deployment of the Army previously responded to this objective.

Starting with the interests in the South Atlantic –Falkland Islands, Antarctica and the extension of the underwater shelf-, they entail the prerequisite of effective sovereignty on the coast. Without a coastline, there can be no maritime sovereignty. If the coast is lost, the surrounding sea is lost.

The 21st century shows the advancement of maritime sovereignty in the Arctic, the Caspian Sea, the South China Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. The phenomenon is introduced in the South Atlantic with the Argentine-Chilean dispute over the demarcation of the underwater shelf.

In the south of the country, the land deployment is over the Atlantic. The Division 3 Command is in Bahía Blanca, next to the Naval Base in Belgrano Port. This Division is made up of the IX Brigade based in Comodoro Rivadavia and the XI Brigade that is in Río Gallegos. The bulk of the units is on the Atlantic coast. There are armored units in Santa Cruz Port, Deseado Port and Piedrabuena.

The units that are on the Andes mountain range are the lowest in number (Rospenteck and Río Mayo).

Armored Brigade I is deployed in the Province of Buenos Aires in a position to advance towards Patagonia.

Vaca Muerta field is the great gas and oil field (conventional and unconventional reserves) of Argentina that is in the province of Neuquén. The VI Mountain Brigade is located there.

Towards the north, in Mendoza and San Juan provinces, the VIII Mountain Brigade is based on the Andes mountain range, where the mining region of the country begins. La Rioja and Catamarca provinces, like the west of Salta province, continue the mining region. In the north of the country, there is the V Brigade with Command in Salta. It is the region where lithium is being exploited (Salta, Jujuy and Catamarca), a decisive resource for the electronics industry.

The Guaraní Aquifer is in the northeast and the Paraná-Paraguay Waterway is located in the same region. It is a region of geopolitical relevance, which includes Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia. As for Argentina, it encompasses the three provinces of Mesopotamia, Misiones, Corrientes and Entre Ríos, and to the west of Paraná, Santa Fe, Chaco and Formosa provinces.

The six provinces constitute the area of the First Division of the Army, with Command in Curuzú Cuatiá (Corrientes). The III Bush Brigade depends on it, with Command in Resistencia and units in Chaco, Formosa and the east of Salta. The XII Bush Brigade has the Command in Apóstoles (Misiones province) with the units in this province. The II Armored Brigade is also part of this Division, with Command in Paraná and its units in the province of Entre Ríos.

The IV Airborne Brigade is based in the center of the country, with Command and units in Córdoba where the Command companies are also located. These units are part of the Rapid Deployment Force whose Command is in Campo de Mayo, where there is also a Heliborne Battalion. It also integrates the RDF, the Mechanized X Brigade with Command and units in La Pampa.

The RDF is thus in a central geographical place of our continental territory, ready to be used towards Patagonia to protect the coast of the Argentine Sea, towards the west to protect Vaca Muerta, towards the north-east where the mining region is, the north where the lithium is and towards the waterway.

This deployment is a matter of adjustments. The Command of the Army Second Division is expected to be stationed in the province of San Luis. The three Mountain Brigades would depend on it: VI (Neuquén), VIII (Mendoza) and V (Salta). It would thus cover the areas of hydrocarbons, mining and lithium.

The Command of the First Division, which is in Curuzú Cuatia, and on which all of the units that are in the six provinces of the coastline depend, would go to Santa Fe or Rosario, in the area with the heaviest traffic on the waterway.

This deployment is a consequence of the "conflict hypotheses" based on which military planning was determined during the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the Falkland war, but the new priority in the defense of natural resources coincides with the current willingness of the units.

It should be noted that the Pandemic entailed an enormous deployment throughout the national territory, carried out through the 14 joint

Commands, which operated under the Operational Command of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The effectiveness of the deployment was once again evident in the custody of the national elections in 2021. Polling stations increased 30% due to the Pandemic, reaching 17,000. They were covered simultaneously by 90,000 men from the Armed Forces and the Federal Security Forces, under the orders of the Electoral Command that operates within the scope of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In conclusion, the priority of the defense of natural resources for the Argentine Armed Forces and in particular the Army, gives meaning to the traditional deployment based on borders, which has been criticized many times in recent decades.

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