

João Gomes Cravinho

Ministro da Defesa Nacional

**Intervenção do Ministro da Defesa Nacional, João Gomes Cravinho, na abertura das
Jornadas da Defesa Nacional sobre o Espaço**

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I would like to start by welcoming you to the National Defence Space Conference and to this beautiful Fort. If you were here at night I can tell you that the view of the night sky would be truly inspirational. Since we are here during daytime, I am afraid that we must take inspiration from our work.

Your participation today and tomorrow reflects the many very useful contributions that we have been gathering from different stakeholders, within and beyond the Ministry of National Defence, in order to build a shared defence policy for space, to which I attach great importance.

The question I would like to start with is the following: Why do we need a Portuguese defence strategy for space, and why do we need it now?

My immediate answer would be that we need it because it is in Portugal's strategic interest, and for two main reasons.

First, Portugal has important sovereignty and jurisdiction responsibilities in a vast area of the Atlantic. We are territorial discontinuous, with most of our land mass on the European continent, but with important island archipelagos in the Atlantic: the Azores and Madeira. Our challenge is to ensure freedom of action in all relevant operational domains, land, sea, air, space and cyberspace. It is also essential for us to secure the Portuguese and Euro-Atlantic maritime area from illicit criminal activities through the surveillance and control of these strategic areas, with a multidomain approach to defence.

Furthermore, satellites and space-based services are vital for our nation's economy and for our modern lifestyles, as they enable a wide range of civilian activities, from agriculture to transport, energy or communications. Any disruption of those services would have severe consequences for us all.

So, we must adapt to these changing circumstances and realities.

Secondly, Portugal and its partners and allies, in NATO and in the European Union, increasingly rely on space-based services and infrastructures for risk analysis and early warning, for the surveillance of critical infrastructures, and for the planning and conduct of their security.

The rapid increase in commercial and technological space activities, with more and more public and private actors active in this domain, only adds to the complexity of the space environment.

However, as we increasingly rely on Space to lead our daily lives, there is a growing awareness that critical assets in Space are not safe from attack and disruption. Space systems and infrastructures are both potential targets and a source of risks.

Hybrid threats and hostile strategies can hinder our access and our freedom of operation in this global common domain. At the same time, Space is becoming more and more congested, with a growing number of civilian and military objects in orbit, making it an increasingly competitive domain.

This context demands major changes in our strategies, our policies, our investments, our capabilities, and our understanding of this new strategic environment.

For some countries, Space has now become now a distinct domain for operations. Many of our Allies are adopting space policies and expanding their defence space programs. NATO recognized space as a new operational domain in 2019 and adopted a NATO Space Policy.

In the latest revision of our legislation on the Organisation of the Armed Forces we have established that the military aspects of the Portuguese defence space programme should be fully developed as a joint capability under the leadership of the Armed Forces General Staff.

At the same time, Portugal believes that collective security is one of the pillars of our own security. Secure access to Space for EU Member States and for NATO Allies must be promoted and defended as a priority for both organisations. This is vital for our collective credibility, and for our resilience and capacity to act in this domain.

So these are the main reasons why we adopted the Portuguese Defence Strategy for Space that we are presenting today. We cannot afford not to be present in this vital domain. This Strategy is one important part of the answer to the challenge of adapting and innovating at all levels: politically, in the Armed Forces, and in the defence industry ecosystem.

Our intention is that this document should work as an accelerator and multiplier of the Portuguese national Space Strategy adopted in 2020. While identifying specific priorities of vital importance for National Defence, we are actively contributing to the broader priorities of the Portuguese Government in this area.

The Strategy and the Action Plan will hopefully contribute decisively to:

- (i) enhance the effectiveness of the Armed Forces through the use of Space;
- (ii) build military capabilities in the space domain in an integrated manner, by ensuring joint command and control and joint operational management;
- (iii) ensure public funding for the development of the Defence space sector;
- (iv) and, strengthening cooperation at the national level and with our allies.

The essence of any Strategy is to strike the right balance between limited means and vital objectives. This is precisely what we are doing in the Ministry of Defence. Since 2019 the Ministry of National Defence has been actively engaged in the Portuguese Space Agency, as one of its founding members.

In this context we have been participating in several EU space initiatives, namely the European Space Surveillance Initiative and Tracking Programme, a Consortium in which we work closely with the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira through a dedicated program. In May this programme reached its first milestone when the Space Operations Centre became operational in Terceira Island in the Azores, becoming the first governmental operational program in Portugal in the space area with dual civil-military characteristics, managed by National Defence.

The partnership with the Portuguese Space Agency will continue to be strengthened with the recent creation of a Defence Division within the agency.

The Portuguese Defence Strategy for Space will be an important instrument not only for the ability of our Armed Forces to carry out their missions, but hopefully to build a stronger defence industry in Portugal. Apart from the defence and security reasons, there are also good economic reasons for this.

Developing new projects in these areas related to space systems and space technologies will contribute to the creation of qualified employment, to foster research, development and innovation and to develop new national skills. This will be critical not only for the defence economy cluster, but for post-pandemic recovery and growth of the Portuguese and European economies.

The Portuguese Defence Strategy for Space will also contribute to our resilience in responding to complex civil emergencies resulting from extreme weather events in the context of climate change. The Portuguese Armed Forces play a fundamental role supporting civilian authorities in the protection of populations from the disruptive impact of these types of emergencies and in the protection of critical infrastructures. Space technologies can be of great use in this regard and are therefore also a strategic investment at the service of civil protection and national security and defence.

The Portuguese Defence Strategy for Space is also a contribution to the European Union's Security and Defence Policy. We are currently in the process of drafting the EU Strategic Compass that will provide guidelines in security and defence for the 27 member states, and one of the issues that we have supported is the development of a specific space strategy for security and defence. The Compass should help to promote close synergies between civilian and defence space industries. Both of them are vital for our well-being.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The National Defence Strategy for Space is a natural product of our desire to think in a clear and articulated way about our investment priorities in Space. I would like to thank all of those who invested their energy in moving National Defence forward in this vital

area for our security. Our aim is to ensure that National Defence can work in space, to the benefit of our populations.

I hope that today's and tomorrow's discussions will help to illuminate the way along this path.

I wish you a good work.

Thank you