



## "OUR STRENGTH IS INTELLIGENCE: The 20th anniversary of the National Intelligence Center

Patricia de la Hoz

Nowadays, intelligence is the best defense of a country. That is why, on the occasion of its 20th anniversary, the CNI (Centro Nacional de Inteligencia in Spanish) has launched a video forwarding its constant work with which they aim to protect the future and the way of life of all Spaniards. The release coincides in the middle of the Russian invasion of Ukraine with which we have been able to acknowledge the important role played by the intelligence services.

However, many people before the release of the video and even after it, did not know exactly what the CNI and its modus operandi is beyond obtaining information. That is why the aim of this article is to give a deeper understanding of this organism as well as its work.

What is the CNI?

The CNI or Centro Nacional de Inteligencia (National Center of Intelligence) formerly known as the Superior Center of Defense Information (CESID), is the Intelligence Service of Spain, as its name indicates.

This service, which is integrated within the public body of the Ministry of Defense, has functional autonomy and its own legal personality with full capacity to act and collaborate with different agencies of the Administration such as the different State security forces ("Centro Nacional de Inteligencia", n.d.). The mission of this body is to provide the Government with sufficient and truthful information so that it can make the necessary decisions in the field of security in order to protect the future and the way of life of the Spanish people, as they emphasize in the video, avoiding and preventing any danger, threat or aggression against the independence and territorial integrity of Spain. Thus, its main function is to be the maximum advisor of the Executive Power in security and intelligence matters through the information gathered.

An important name is Paz Esteban López, current director of the CNI since 1983, the year in which women were allowed to enter the center.

How does the CNI work?

As previously mentioned, the Center oversees gathering necessary information in security and intelligence matters but following some guidelines, that is to say, they cannot investigate whatever they want and whoever they want. That is why every year the Government provides them with a document called "Intelligence Directive" in which they are told on what topics the Executive needs the CNI to obtain intelligence (Mantas, 2022).

Moreover, it should be noted that this is a very delicate institution due to the sensitivity of its work since it has to maintain a low profile to keep secret not only its workers but also the methods in which it obtains information.

"Our strength is intelligence"

As for the video, the CNI reindicates the importance of the 3.500 personnel working in it, and the importance of their work in a world that is in constant change where normality is not guaranteed. We have been able to witness this with the Russian invasion of Ukraine last month, or this week Jeddah's attack. We have to consider that even though, events that might take place far away from where we have worldwide repercussion without taking into account nation's borders as we live in a highly interconnected world due to globalization.

Another objective the Center has with the launch of the video is to raise public awareness of its work and the value it has in their day-to-day lifestyle.

Of the 3,500 people who work at the center, 70% of them are from civil society and come from all university backgrounds, providing diverse knowledge and points of view, making the CNI a very rich institution, as Alejandro Entrambasaguas comments.

---

## Sources

Centro Nacional de Inteligencia. (2022). Nuestra fuerza es la inteligencia [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZk0IBp9k8g>

Centro Nacional de Inteligencia. Retrieved 26 March 2022, from <https://www.cni.es>

Mantas, C. (2022). Alejandro Entrambasaguas: "El CNI es uno de los mejores servicios secretos del mundo" - Periodista Digital. Retrieved 26 March 2022, from <https://www.periodistadigital.com/periodismo/20220323/alejandro-entrambasaguas-cni-mejores-servicios-secretos-mundo-video-689404631361/>

Parra, E. (2022). El CNI reivindica en un vídeo su trabajo "discreto": "La normalidad no está garantizada." Retrieved 27 March 2022, from <https://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-cni-reivindica-video-trabajo-discreto-normalidad-no-garantizada-20220309121614.html>