

Spain, Princess Leonor completes a complex joint military training: three years in the Armed Forces, from Paratrooper badge to Military Aircraft Pilot license

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The Princess of Asturias Leonor de Borbón has completed the three-year training cycle in the Spanish Armed Forces, structured into one year at each of the country's three military branches.

The program, initiated in August 2023, included attendance at the General Military Academy of Zaragoza, the Naval Military School of Marín, and the General Air and Space Academy of San Javier.

Over the three years, the heir to the throne received land, naval, and aeronautical military training. She also participated in the Armada's training cruise on the training ship “Juan Sebastián de Elcano”, engaged in flight activities on the Pilatus PC-21, and completed the basic

military parachuting course.

The program does not equate to the normal full course required for the training of a career officer. It was designed to provide the future sovereign with direct knowledge of the organization, capabilities, and personnel of the Armed Forces, in relation to the constitutional role that the head of state holds in the Spanish system.

One year in each military branch

The Spanish royal household announced the program on March 14, 2023, outlining a progression over three academic years:

- 2023-2024: Army;
- 2024-2025: Navy;
- 2025-2026: Air and Space Force.

The planning follows, with appropriate updates, the path taken by King Felipe VI between 1985 and 1988.

The aim was not to specialize the princess in a single branch, but to provide her with joint forces training. Leonor thus followed different modules for organization, operational environment, and professional culture.

The training covered military discipline, field activities, navigation, life on board, aeronautical procedures, flight, and parachuting.

Training in the Army

Leonor began the first year on August 17, 2023, at the General Military Academy of Zaragoza, with the status of cadet lady.

The initial phase included basic military training, physical preparation, shooting, orientation, marches, field exercises, and learning the fundamental procedures of military life.

On October 7, 2023, she took the oath to the flag along with the other cadets of the Academy.

The program followed by the princess was adapted to the overall duration of her training cycle and did not coincide with the entire multi-year course intended for professional officers of the

Spanish Army.

The land component mainly served to introduce her to the structure of the Armed Force, the chain of command, and the conditions in which the units operate.

In July 2024, Leonor completed the first year and moved on to the naval phase.



Leonor de Borbón during a foot patrol, in the first year of military training at the Ejército de Tierra – Copyright Casa de Su Majestad el Rey

The year in the Navy

On August 29, 2024, the Princess of Asturias began training at the Naval Military School of Marín, in Galicia, joining the midshipmen's course.

The training included navigation, maneuvering, on-board safety, naval organization, seamanship procedures, and knowledge of the systems used by the Navy.

In January 2025, Leonor embarked on the training ship “Juan Sebastián de Elcano” to participate in the training cruise planned for the Spanish Navy's officer cadets.

During the navigation, she took part in watch shifts, maneuvers, on-board activities, and training modules conducted during the naval campaign.

The embarkation on the “Elcano” represented the main part of the year spent in the Navy. The activity allowed the princess to learn about the functioning of a crew, naval discipline, and the responsibilities associated with life at sea.

After the training cruise, Leonor completed further training periods on Navy units before moving on to the aeronautical phase.



Leonor de Borbón aboard the training ship *Juan Sebastián de Elcano*, during the naval training year with the Armada Española. – Copyright Casa de Su Majestad el Rey

Aeronautical training in San Javier

On September 1, 2025, Leonor began the third year at the General Air and Space Academy of San Javier, in the region of Murcia, with the status of student ensign.

The program included aeronautical subjects, navigation, meteorology, flight safety, emergency procedures, on-board systems, and simulator activities.

The practical phase was carried out on the Pilatus PC-21, the trainer used by the Air and Space Army for the initial training of pilots.

After flights with an instructor, Leonor also conducted solo flight activities. The ability to take off, conduct the training mission, and land without an instructor on board constitutes a significant milestone of the course.

On June 19, 2026, the princess also conducted a flight activity together with King Felipe VI, who is also trained as a military pilot.



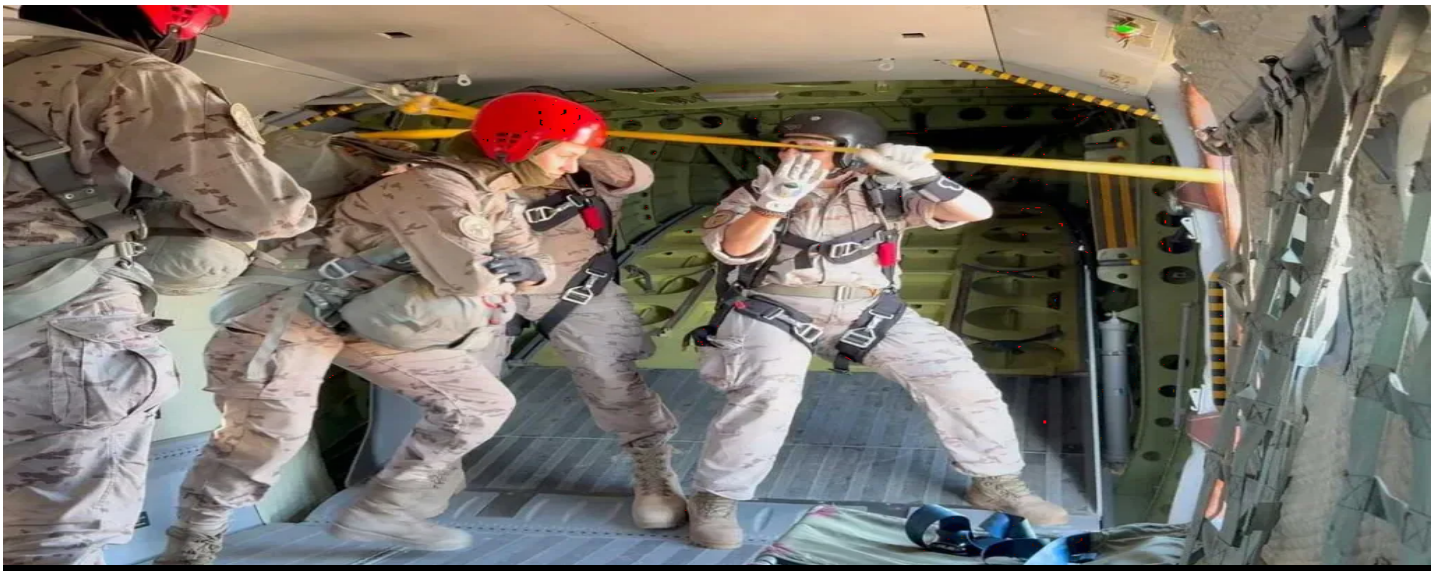
Leonor of Bourbon during a training phase on the Pilatus PC-21, an aircraft used by the Air and Space Army for the initial training of military pilots. – Copyright Casa de Su Majestad el Rey

The parachuting course

During the year spent at San Javier, Leonor also attended the basic course at the “Méndez Parada” Military Parachuting School, at the Alcantarilla Air Base.

The preparation included ground training, safety procedures, emergency management, aircraft exit, and the use of the automatic opening parachute.

The princess completed the jumps required by the course and on June 2, 2026, received the diploma and the badge of “Cazador Paracaidista”.



Leonor of Bourbon during a jump from a military aircraft, as part of the basic parachuting course. – Copyright Casa de Su Majestad el Rey

Training for the future head of state

The training in the three Armed Forces primarily responds to an institutional need.

The Spanish Constitution assigns the sovereign the supreme command of the Armed Forces. The role does not correspond to the direct operational command of the units, which remains embedded in the political-military structure and the state's chain of command.

However, the head of state performs a constitutional, representative, and symbolic function of the highest level in relation to Defense.

Leonor's program was therefore designed to provide her with a concrete understanding of the three military components before the future assumption of the functions of the Crown.

The princess is not destined, at the end of the course, for a normal operational assignment. She will not assume permanent command of a land unit, a naval unit, or a squadron.

The preparation received, however, allows her to directly know the environment of the academies, the discipline, the hierarchical structure, the main military capabilities, and some of the activities carried out by the personnel.



Leonor of Bourbon together with her father, King Felipe VI, both in military uniform. – Copyright Casa de Su Majestad el Rey

The precedent of Felipe VI

The program followed by Leonor mirrors that undertaken by King Felipe VI during his own training.

The then Prince of Asturias attended the General Military Academy of Zaragoza, the Naval Military School of Marín, and the General Air Academy of San Javier between 1985 and 1988.

Felipe also participated in the training cruise on the “Juan Sebastián de Elcano” and received aeronautical training.

The Spanish model thus requires the heir to the throne to gain experience in the three Armed Forces rather than limiting themselves to a single academy or exclusively representative assignments.



A young Felipe of Bourbon during his training period at the General Military Academy of Zaragoza. – Copyright Casa de Su Majestad el Rey

European heirs and military training

Military training remains widespread among the heirs of European monarchies, but the paths differ significantly in duration and purpose.

Some members of royal families attend military academies, others perform conscription or spend periods with operational units. In other cases, the activity is limited to introductory courses and honorary assignments.

The Spanish program stands out for its joint approach and consecutive attendance at the three main military academies.

Belgium: Elisabeth at the Royal Military Academy

Princess Elisabeth, Duchess of Brabant and heir to the Belgian throne, began a year of training at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels in 2020.

She attended the Social and Military Sciences course, participating in physical preparation, tactical training, field exercises, and a period at the Commando Training Center in Marche-les-Dames.

In September 2023, she was sworn in as an officer.

Her path was shorter than Leonor's and did not include three separate phases in the land, naval, and air components.

The training received was nevertheless integrated into the Belgian military structures and included actual training activities.

Norway: Ingrid Alexandra in the Engineer Battalion

Princess Ingrid Alexandra of Norway began her military service in January 2024 with the Engineer Battalion of the Brigade Nord, at Skjold camp.

The princess was trained to operate an armored engineer vehicle CV90 and served a total of fifteen months.

The Norwegian model is less academic and less joint than the Spanish one, but it involves an extended stay with an Army unit.

Ingrid Alexandra shared training and unit life with other conscripts, gaining direct experience within an operational formation.

Denmark: Christian from conscription to officer course

Crown Prince Christian of Denmark began his military service in February 2025 with the Royal Life Guards Hussar Regiment.

After the initial phase as a conscript, he continued his preparation by attending the basic officer course of the Army.

The Danish path focuses on the land component and preparation for command of minor-level units.

Compared to Leonor's program, it has a lesser joint component but a more direct orientation towards command functions in the Army.

United Kingdom: from unit service to operations

In the United Kingdom, several members of the royal family have undertaken long-term professional military service.

Prince William attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, served in the Household Cavalry, and subsequently completed training as a helicopter pilot.

He operated as a search and rescue pilot for the Royal Air Force on Sea King helicopters.

Prince Harry served in the British Army for ten years, reaching the rank of captain. He participated in two missions in Afghanistan and operated as a co-pilot and weapons systems operator on Apache helicopters.

The British model shows the difference between institutional preparation for the heir to the throne and a professional military career with operational assignments.

The Spanish model

Among the current heirs of European monarchies, the Princess of Asturias has followed one of the most extensive joint paths.

The program combined land training, navigation, life on board, aeronautical training, solo flights, and military parachuting.

Other heirs have gained more extended experiences in units or have taken courses more oriented towards operational functions. The Spanish model, however, prioritizes knowledge of the three Armed Forces as a whole.

Leonor's training does not constitute the start of an ordinary military career. It represents the preparation of the future head of state to exercise the constitutional functions connected to the Crown and the supreme command of the Armed Forces.