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DOCTORADO EN ESTADO DE DERECHO Y GOBERNANZA

DOCTORAL THESIS

**EVALUATION OF CARTEIA AND CERES: GUARDIA CIVILS'
RESPONSE TO ORGANIZED CRIME.**

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PREFACE

As a *Grupo de Acción Rápida (GAR)* Officer and an active player in the fight against organized crime within the Carteia Plan, my involvement in this initiative has transcended the purely professional to become an academic concern as well. With more than 5 years of direct involvement in this plan, this experience has cemented not only my understanding of the complexities of organized crime, but also my firm commitment to the creation of a fighting model that bears the Guardia Civil brand.

With the elaboration of this thesis, my interest goes beyond the local sphere, seeking to develop a model that can be extrapolated to international scenarios and thus contribute to the positioning of the Guardia Civil as a reference police force in Europe and worldwide. Specifically, the ambition to establish standards that transcend borders is motivated by the conviction that sharing our knowledge and best practices can strengthen the global fight against organized crime.

Likewise, I would like to use this preface to express my deep gratitude to my colleagues, whose tireless commitment has been the cornerstone of the success of the Carteia Plan. Special recognition goes to those who, unfortunately, have lost their lives in this arduous battle. Their sacrifice not only remains in our memory, but also acts as a constant inspiration that drives us to persevere in the struggle for a safer world.

It is also essential to pay homage and recognition to those brave comrades who, in the tireless struggle of the Carteia Plan, have faced direct threats to themselves and their families. Their courage and dedication in the midst of challenging circumstances are an eloquent testimony of their unwavering commitment to the cause. This recognition goes beyond words; it is a sincere tribute to their courage and determination in preserving security and justice for all.

I would also like to highlight the invaluable collaboration of all those Guardia Civil officers and colleagues who have not hesitated to share their time and experience in responding to my interviews. This act reflects the Guardia Civils' ability to engage in constructive self-criticism, demonstrating a genuine commitment to continuous improvement and the provision of quality service to the public. Together, we aspire not only

to confront organized crime, but to do so with a global perspective that contributes to the well-being of society as a whole.

I highlight the support that I have received from the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) project "Organized Crime in Spain: Challenges and Responses" commissioned by the directorate general of Police and Security Regions of the Ministry of Justice and Security of the Kingdom of The Netherlands.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to my two thesis directors, Professors Andrés De Castro García and Pedro Tomás Nevado-Batalla Moreno, whose expert guidance and direction have been fundamental in the gestation and development of this research. Their valuable indications, both in terms of methodology and content, have contributed significantly to the construction of this thesis. The expertise of both professors has been crucial in delineating and structuring the key aspects of the research, providing clear and enriching direction.

I also wish to express my deep appreciation to my wife, Mónica Sanz, for her unwavering support and understanding during the process of conducting this research. Her patience and sacrifice in allowing me to be absent countless hours and work trips away from home have been critical to the success of this work. Monica's dedication has been an integral part of my ability to contribute to the fight against drug trafficking within the framework of the Carteia Plan, and her support has been a fundamental pillar in this arduous journey. I sincerely thank her for her invaluable contribution to this collective effort in the search for a safer and more just world.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Every object is determined by its absolute destiny to a certain degree and direction of its motion."

Hume (Ferguson, N. 1997 p.26)

In recent decades, Spain has undergone a socio-political and economic transformation that, while bringing with it significant advances, has also led to the emergence and consolidation of transnational criminal phenomena (Blanco, Fleury, & Subirats, 2012). Among these, organized crime has emerged as a complex and multifaceted challenge that produces damage on three levels: "on individuals, communities and on democracy and institutions", in turn compromising the integrity of the social order and national security (Sampó, 2016, p. 3). A clear example of this is the increase in the number of criminal gangs operating in certain Spanish regions or the strengthening of criminal groups dedicated to drug trafficking in the south of the country (Paños, 2021; Estiarte et al., 2021; i Oliver, 2021).

In light of the deterioration of objective security conditions, and from the triple European, Atlantic and Mediterranean vocation of our country, with what this entails in this aspect, the National Strategy against Organized Crime and Serious Crime (2019-2023) endorses these postulates, entrusting this urgent matter to the General Directorates of the Police and the Civil Guard to draw up their corresponding Operational Action Plans (Presidency of the Government, 2019, p. 71).

In the exercise of this responsibility, the Guardia Civil has implemented specific plans aimed at combating organized crime, such as the CERES Plan and the Carteia Plan. Specifically, in the case of the CERES Plan, it is configured as a high impact operational program whose main purpose is to provide an effective response to a type of crime that was proliferating in the region of La Sagra (Toledo) whose crimes against property and other related offenses represented 37% of the criminality of the province. On the other hand, with

the implementation of the Carteia Plan, the Guardia Civil deploys a multidimensional regional work system as a cross-cutting, joint and coordinated response to drug trafficking in the Strait of Gibraltar (Castrejón, 2022).

Both plans have in common the design of an innovative and versatile operational structure that coordinates various regional and multifunctional units in order to provide, on the one hand, analysis and investigation, and on the other, intervention and operational support. Through a redefinition of its structure, the Guardia Civil aims to combat both scenarios, recover the principle of authority in the area and deny impunity to criminal groups.

However, despite the relevance and breadth of both projects, there is a notable lack of independent scientific evaluation to support their impacts. In this context, the lack of external academic literature, beyond the reports provided by the Guardia Civil, raises the imperative need for a comprehensive evaluation of these programs. This conclusion becomes even more significant, especially when considering the possibility of extending these approaches to other areas of organized crime.

The lack of an external evaluation supported by the academic community reinforces the importance of undertaking an objective and systematic analysis of the CERES and Carteia programs. Such an evaluation would not only be essential to measure the effectiveness of the initiatives implemented, but also to identify areas of opportunity. In addition, it would allow for the refinement of tactics and strategies, more effectively addressing the constantly evolving and sophisticated challenges present in these criminal phenomena.

Based on the above, the objective was to determine the actions taken to date, identify possible improvements and, if necessary, propose redefinition and restructuring processes. This decision was based on an initial exploratory phase, considering the theoretical framework and the potential contributions of the study of both plans. As a result, the unique combination of access to the field (Stake, 1995) and the methodological capabilities facilitated by the resources provided by the University of Salamanca and UNED were highlighted.

The previous concern about the optimization of the practical applicability of the CERES and Carteia plans led to the formulation of the following research questions: Have

the CERES and Carteia plans achieved their intended objectives? In what way? Do both plans have a common operational structure to serve as a tool for the Guardia Civil in the fight against organized crime?

Faced with these questions, one of the fundamental elements of this research was the application of a rigorous approach to scaffolding (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994). Furthermore, the will of the thesis director focused on maintaining the replicability of the study. However, the study is carried out using an eminently qualitative methodology, trying to keep the data in their most vernacular form, in order to allow the reader to interpret them freely and to open the door to other researchers to carry out the same project, where results could be compared and analyzed.

Consequently, the methodological process begins with a first stage of synthesis and grouping of coincidences from the theoretical framework and the service orders of the CERES and Carteia plans in order to establish an "aprioristic category tree" (Cabrera, 2005, 65). The second phase then selects a panel of experts from the Guardia Civil and subjects them to several rounds of interviews based first on open-ended questions and then on specific questions. The information obtained is categorically classified in a third stage through the Delphi method giving rise to a final category tree that elicits multiple results. In addition, this phase includes a quantitative evaluation of the results obtained by both plans in order to test the effectiveness of both plans. Finally, the fourth phase involves a comparison of the information obtained in order to answer the questions posed which, by means of a comparative study, makes it possible to establish the bases of a Guardia Civil tool for the fight against organized crime.

Ultimately, it should be noted that the extension of the Carteia Plan and its eventual extrapolation to other contexts of the fight against organized crime provides fertile ground for further research into the effectiveness and adaptations needed to address the changing dynamics of criminal activities. The continuous evolution of strategies and tactics employed by criminal organizations requires constant reflection and adjustment of security approaches. Furthermore, it highlights the need to consider the transfer of lessons learned from the successful application of the Carteia Plan to international scenarios, thus consolidating the position of the Guardia Civil as a reference police force in the global fight against organized crime. The ability to adapt and continuously improve is presented as a

strategic imperative to effectively address persistent and emerging challenges in the field of organized crime, ensuring the security and welfare of society as a whole.

7. Conclusions

This work represents the first qualitative evaluation study of the Carteia and CERES plans as tools of the Guardia Civil in the context of the pressing scenario of drug trafficking in the Campo de Gibraltar and organized crime in Spain.

The analysis derived from it has revealed the operational complexity inherent in the fight against a threat that is flexible and variable in its forms, with agile and rapidly adaptable structures. A palpable example of this complexity can be seen in the intervention areas of both the Carteia and CERES plans, which differ from each other due to the regional and multi-domain nature of the threat, especially evident in the case of the Carteia Plan.

Faced with this combination of factors, the Guardia Civil has been forced to design a modular, versatile and adaptable impact program, based on four joint force axes: maneuver, intelligence, investigation and social impact. These axes are materialized through a transversal intelligence process that makes use of various functional tools, taking advantage of the multidisciplinary capacity of the Corps to offer a comprehensive response to the variable acquired by organized crime.

The innovative model of the Carteia Plan yields excellent results at the police level, being configured as an impact system of a continuous nature and adaptable to the changing dynamics of the threat. In addition, this distinctive tool of the Guardia Civil has proven to be extrapolated to other scenarios of the fight against organized crime, as is the case of the CERES Plan, being adjustable in terms of resources, areas and time as a derivative of the Carteia Plan.

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