

## **The Government makes the military to "agents of authority" during the state of alarm**

### **Members of the Armed Forces fighting the pandemic will be able to give orders to civilians**

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Members of the Armed Forces involved in support tasks in the context of the coronavirus crisis will have the status of agents of authority. This measure is included in an additional provision of the decree declaring the state of alarm, approved this Saturday by the Council of Ministers. It was introduced at the last minute, as it was not included in the draft circulated on Saturday afternoon.

The status of agents of authority implies that the military may give orders to civilians and that those who fail to comply with them or resist them may incur the crime of disobedience or resistance to authority.

Until now, only two groups within the Armed Forces, the military police and the members of the Military Emergency Unit (UME), had this character, precisely because in their task they could be forced to give orders to civilian personnel.

The Government envisages that military units may be deployed on the streets for control and surveillance tasks to ensure compliance with the rules limiting freedom of movement and, in such cases, they need to be considered as agents of authority or be accompanied by someone who is. The aim is to relieve members of the Security Forces and Corps of this task so that they can devote themselves to more complex missions.

The Minister of Defence, Margarita Robles, to whom the decree of declaration of the state of alarm gives the rank of "competent delegated authority" to ensure its application within the scope of its powers, will meet this Sunday morning with the top civilian officials of her department (such as the Undersecretary, Alejo de la Torre, who is responsible for Military Health) and with several military authorities; Among them, the Chief of Defense Staff, Miguel Ángel Villarroya; the head of the Military Emergency Unit (UME), Luis Manuel Martínez Meijide; and the Commander of the Operations Command, Fernando López del Pozo, on whom the contingents deployed abroad depend.

The Armed Forces have suspended all their exercises and maneuvers to avoid troop movements that contribute to the spread of the virus and to have all their capabilities available to collaborate in the fight against the pandemic.

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