

# Majorca Daily Bulletin

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## Spain's military In eastern Europe is focused on deterrence, says minister

Madrid—Spain's Defence Minister, Margarita Robles, said yesterday its warships and fighter jets deployed in eastern Europe are not offensive but are focused on stability and deterrence.

"These are permanent missions of stability and deterrence and in no way offensive," she said during an interview with



radio station SER. Spain has deployed fighter jets in Baltic countries to contribute to NATO's air surveillance programme for a number of years. Robles said last week Spain has also sent two warships to the Mediterranean and Black Sea and is considering sending more warplanes to Bulgaria.

# SPAIN BREAKS UP COVID PASSPORT FORGERY RING



Madrid.—Spanish police said yesterday they had detained seven suspected members of an international criminal gang that created and sold forged COVID-19 passports and negative tests.

The Spanish arm of the ring, which advertised its services on "anti-vax" instant message groups, fraudulently added at least 1,600 people to the national vaccination register with the help of health workers, the investiga-

tion found. European Union countries agreed last year to create a standardised COVID certificate with a QR code so vaccinated and tested people could travel and attend events.

That created a demand for forgeries. Police arrested six people in Madrid and one in Barcelona but did not provide further information on them.

They will be charged with docu-

ment forgery and offences against public health. "The investigation continues into the possible theft of passwords to (the register)," the national police added in a statement.

The gang divided customers into two groups based on income and charged either 200 euros (\$225) or 1,000 euros for a fake COVID vaccination certificate, which would be sent within two days of payment. A

negative PCR test cost 50 euros.

Police are now investigating the 1,600 people added to the register fraudulently.

The organisation's leaders operated from France where, unlike most of Spain, a vaccination passport is mandatory to enter public spaces like restaurants or movie theatres.

Spanish police passed all the information to French authorities.

## Police probe Downing Street parties

London.—British police said yesterday they had opened an investigation into possible COVID lockdown breaches at Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street residence after receiving evidence from an internal government probe into a series of gatherings.

Johnson is fighting for his political life after a series of claims that he and staff partied at the heart of the British state in breach of the rules they had themselves imposed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Revelations of revelry, including boozy parties

in Downing Street, suitcases of supermarket wine, a broken children's swing, a wine fridge and jokes by staff about how to present such parties to reporters, have hammered Johnson's ratings.

ITV reported on Monday that Johnson had attended a surprise party

on his birthday in 2020. Up to 30 people attended the event in the Cabinet Room of No. 10 Downing Street, his office and residence, the broadcaster said.

After initially refusing to investigate the gatherings at Downing Street, Britain's top police offi-

cer, Metropolitan Police chief Cressida Dick, said yesterday that an investigation had been opened. "I can confirm that the Met (Metropolitan Police) is now investigating a number of events that took place at Downing Street," she said yesterday.



Police probe.