

COASTLINE

August 13, 2026 / Volume 36, Issue 10

U.S. Naval Activities Spain



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Capt. Kelechi R. Ndukwe



**Commodore, Destroyer Squadron
60 / Task Force 65**

This summer has been a reminder of why this base exists. Over the past several months, several of our Rota-based destroyers have deployed to patrol the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa area of operations, standing watch alongside joint, Allied, and partner forces. But no ship gets underway on its own. Behind every deployment is a base full of people who made it possible - port services who turned the ship around, aviation crews who kept eyes overhead, Marines who surged forward on embassy reinforcement and security augmentation across the region, hospital staff who kept families healthy while a spouse was gone, the DoWEA teachers who kept a student's school year normal when everything else wasn't. Readiness at Rota isn't a ship metric, it's a whole-base metric, and this year every part of this community carried some of that weight.

Whatever your role here - in a duty section, behind a desk, at home holding a household together during a deployment - a

Leadership Corner - Steady in the Surge

few things this season were reinforced to me about leadership:

Clarity beats motivation. When tempo spikes and plans change overnight - a homecoming that slips, a school schedule upended, a work center suddenly short-handed - people don't need a pep talk: They need to know what's actually happening and what's expected of them today. The best leaders I watched this year, in uniform and out, over-communicated instead of under-communicating, even when the details were still forming. Uncertainty is heavier than hard work, and silence makes it heavier still.

Take care of the person, not just the position. Deployments and high-tempo stretches strain more than watchbills: They strain marriages, single parents, first-tour families a long way from home, and the friend who quietly picks up the slack. The teams and households that came through this year strongest weren't the ones that toughed it out silently. They were the ones where someone felt safe enough to say "I need help" before it became a crisis. If you're in any kind of leadership role - command, sponsor, coach, parent - we must make that trust worth having.

Competence is a form of respect. The training we didn't skip, the standard we didn't lower, the extra rep we put in when no one was watching - it showed up in real time this spring, for the ships underway and for everyone supporting them from here. Standards aren't bureaucracy. They're a promise to the person next to us, at work or at home, that we'll be ready when it counts.

Rest is not the opposite of readiness. Some of the best decisions we saw made under pressure this year came from people who'd actually gotten to sleep the night before, and some of the roughest days came when that wasn't the case. Protect our own recovery time, and our families, as fiercely as we protect the mission. Burned-out people make worse decisions - that's true on the bridge and true at the kitchen table.

To every Sailor, Marine, civilian, contractor, local national, and family member who carried extra weight this year - duty days, deployments extended, holidays missed, moves delayed - thank you.

Stay ready. Look out for each other. That's the job - for all of us.

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On The Front Cover



Capt. Jeremy Wheat, outgoing commodore of Commander, Task Force 68, salutes during a change of command and retirement ceremony onboard Naval Station Rota, July 10, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Brandie Nuzzi)

Do You Like to Write or Take Photos?

The Coastline is always looking for guest writers and story ideas. Are you traveling some place fun, attending a sporting event, participating in a workshop or cooking class or leading special training in your office or community? If so, we want to hear from you! Please send story and photo submissions or story ideas to The Coastline at rotacoastline@gmail.com.

Publication is subject to approval.



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- The pharmacy orders medications weekly and monitors supply daily. Due to our overseas location, deliveries typically take 14 business days to arrive. Unforeseen supply chain issues, including weather or transportation delays, may impact this timeline.

2. What happens if my medication is on backorder or unavailable?

- Sometimes medications are on backorder or are otherwise unavailable for refill. If this happens, we will work with you and your provider to try and achieve the best outcome possible. For medications that treat chronic health concerns (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure, infections), the pharmacy will work with your provider to find a suitable alternative to ensure your treatment continues uninterrupted.
- In some cases, we may recommend filling your prescription in a host-nation pharmacy. In those instances, our pharmacy will help you navigate obtaining your prescription at a Spanish pharmacy. Please check with your insurance provider in advance to confirm reimbursement eligibility.

3. Are any medications currently in short supply?

- Yes. The manufacturer may say that there is not a national shortage of GLP-1 medications, especially Zepbound; however, the demand far outweighs the supply. We are competing with other pharmacies for the medication. The pharmacy gets allocated a number of units per week set by the vendor or manufacturer. We appreciate your patience as we work to refill our supply.

4. Is there a waitlist for GLP-1 medications?

- Yes. GLP-1 medications are waitlisted. You will receive an "Out of Stock" form with an email address to check your status. Please send an email in 14 days to request a status update.

5. Is Express Scripts (Home Delivery) still available?

- Yes, Express Scripts is a great option that can ship to APO/FPO/DPO addresses and to U.S. embassy/consulate addresses overseas.
- Note: Refrigerated medications and pressurized devices (inhalers) cannot be shipped to APO/FPO/DPO addresses.

6. How much medication can I refill or stock up on?

- While TRICARE does regulate the amount of medication prescribed at one time, we recommend speaking with your provider about the possibility of increasing your medication supply, in most circumstances we are limited to filling to a 90-day supply.

7. Do controlled substances take longer to receive?

- Yes. Controlled substances (e.g., Concerta, Adderall, Ativan, Xanax, Ambien, opiates) require significantly more time because they require additional clearances from customs.
- To avoid running out of your medications, contact the Pharmacy to request a refill 14 days before your last dose.

8. Can I request an early refill?

- You can check the Medication Refill tab in the MHS Genesis Patient Portal to see when your prescription is ready for refill. Typically, most medications can be refilled when you've used 75% of your supply, while controlled substances are restricted to refill after using 90% of your supply. Please contact the pharmacy if you have questions.

9. Can I fill my U.S. Naval Hospital Rota prescriptions at Spanish community pharmacies?

- Yes, but you'll need to take extra steps to do so.
- You will need:
 - A Spanish-licensed physician's prescription. A local Rota physician can rewrite your prescription for a fee.
 - Your military Identification/Common Access Card (CAC).
 - You'll pay the full amount for your medication when you pick it up from the pharmacy, and then you can submit a reimbursement claim to International SOS.
 - The quickest and most convenient way to submit a claim is through the Express Scripts website. Go to the Express Scripts website and log in to your account. If you don't have an account, you will need to register.
 - Please stop by the Tricare Office in the hospital to get more detailed instructions.

Please ensure your contact information is up to date in MHS GENESIS.
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CTF 68 Holds Change of Command and Retirement Ceremony

By Petty Officer 1st Class Brandie Nuzzi
Commander, Task Force 68

Commander, Task Force (CTF) 68 held a combined change of command and retirement ceremony at Naval Station Rota, July 10, 2026, which marked the transfer of leadership from Capt. Jeremy Wheat to Capt. Leslie Sloodmaker and celebrated Wheat's retirement after 26 years of naval service.

"It's been an honor to serve alongside the women and men of CTF 68," said Wheat. "They stepped up when their country needed them most with dedication, conviction, resilience, and flexibility – the core characteristics of an outstanding expeditionary force."

While commanding CTF 68, Wheat led 900 Sailors and Marines who operated throughout Europe and Africa, continuing to strengthen key naval relationships with NATO allies and partners. His leadership has been a driving force behind CTF 68 that continually evolved the command to a superior posture of readiness for high-end, sustained combat through the execution of more than 120 distinct joint and combined exercises.

During a time of competing priorities and reallocation of forces from the European and African theaters, Wheat led his expeditionary team to maintain a near continuous presence throughout both areas of responsibility, reassuring allies and partners, while also deterring adversaries.

Vice Adm. Jeffrey T. Anderson, commander, U.S. 6th Fleet, commander,

Task Force SIX, and commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, provided keynote remarks during the ceremony.

"It is an honor to join you as we celebrate two significant events: a change of command and the retirement of a dedicated leader, Capt. Jeremy Wheat, as he concludes a remarkable 26-year career of naval service," said Anderson. "I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Capt. Leslie Sloodmaker. Leslie, we are thrilled to have you lead this exceptional team. Your reputation precedes you, and we look forward to the energy and expertise you will bring to Task Force 68."

Anderson also thanked Spanish naval officers in attendance and acknowledged the U.S. Navy and Spanish navy's extensive partnership.

"Thank you for your country's continued friendship and hospitality to the U.S. Navy," said Anderson. "Our countries' storied history and friendship even predates the birth of our nation ... It is notable that our first U.S. Naval presence in Europe, known as the Mediterranean Squadron, during the Barbary Wars in the early 1800s, was based in the Balearic island of Minorca. Appropriately enough, the birthplace of the elder Farragut. Today, this squadron is known as U.S. Sixth Fleet with five of its destroyers based here in Rota."

Anderson also highlighted significant achievements Wheat accomplished since taking command of CTF 68 in September 2024, earning him his second Legion of Merit medal.

"During a period of unprecedented theater volatility, Jeremy's steadfast leadership was tested and proven," said Anderson. "He provided poised and steady command through the compounding pressures of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and multiple Middle East escalations. When tragedy struck in Lithuania, his calm, confident, and empathetic coordination was instrumental in the successful recovery of a submerged U.S. Army vehicle and, most importantly, the dignified and respectful repatriation of four fallen U.S. Soldiers."

During Wheat's tenure, he ensured that the seven subordinate task groups could execute the full spectrum of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Forces



(NECF) mission across two combatant commands. The task force earned a landmark certification as 6th Fleet's Expeditionary Forward Command Element during BALTOPS 2025 that showcased the NECF's capability of expeditionary operations and logistics on a global stage.

During the ceremony, Wheat also imparted words of encouragement to Sloodmaker.

"It's always been about the Sailors and helping them develop a mindset to be 1% better every day," said Wheat. "I know each Sailor will continue to thrive under your leadership. There will continue to be challenges along the way, but at a time when autonomous self-driving systems are all the rage, it is this team of dedicated Sailors, civilians, and contractors, leveraging emerging technologies, that will become a nearly autonomous warfighting machine with your guidance, vision, and steady hand. I am confident this team will continue to build and reach the highest levels of military standards and achievements with your leadership."

Sloodmaker made her first remarks as the new commodore and emphasized the impact Task Force 68 has had since its establishment.

"As I assume command today, I recognize that Task Force 68 is far more than an operational headquarters," said Sloodmaker. "Through the dedication of this staff and our task groups, CTF 68 has synchronized operations, logistics, and expeditionary capabilities across Europe and Africa, strengthening enduring

partnerships while providing continuous support to ongoing maritime operations. Whether enabling 6th Fleet objectives, advancing interoperability with our NATO Allies and regional partners, or delivering ready naval forces on short notice, the men and women of this command have consistently demonstrated operational excellence, resilience, and flexibility."

As Sloodmaker begins her next chapter as commodore, Wheat bids farewell to the command and his naval career. For Wheat, the ceremony marked the culmination of his active-duty Navy career after completing his final assignment as commodore of CTF 68.

"It's been very gratifying to serve my country with some of the best professionals, leaders, mentors, and friends in our Armed Forces," said Wheat. "This is a bittersweet moment for my family and me. I could not have done it without their love and support, particularly my wife Summer's understanding and ability to command our homefront through long separations, dangerous missions, and missed holidays and birthdays. It feels right to spend more time with my family in this exciting new chapter, but I will also miss all the camaraderie the Navy brought me."

CTF 68, headquartered in Rota, Spain, is a part of the U.S. 6th Fleet and commands all Naval Expeditionary Combat Forces in U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility. Navy Expeditionary Combat Forces bridge the gap from sea to shore and provide expeditionary capabilities in remote, complex and austere environments.



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Readiness in Action: Navy Nurse Delivers Healthy Baby Outside Hospital

By Lt. Cmdr. Alicia Sacks
U.S. Naval Hospital Rota

Navy Lt. Kathleen Carter was working as a labor and delivery nurse in the multiservice ward at U.S. Naval Hospital Rota (USNH Rota) when an ordinary shift became a life-changing emergency.

Expectant mother Brianna Abney arrived at the hospital in active labor, accompanied by her husband, Quartermaster 1st Class John Abney, assigned to USS Oscar Austin (DDG 79). Their baby was coming too quickly for staff to move Brianna inside.

Carter rushed to the hospital parking lot and helped deliver the baby inside the family's vehicle. Drawing on her training and experience, she remained calm while caring for Brianna and her child.

Baby Keilah was born healthy.

In military medicine, clinicians like Carter are trained to quickly assess situations and make decisions that prioritize the safety and wellbeing of patients, even when they aren't in a traditional clinical setting. Her ability to adapt, remain calm under pressure, and trust her training ensured a safe, if unexpected, birth story that Carter and the Abney family will never forget.

"I am so grateful for the care my baby and I received at U.S. Naval Hospital Rota," Brianna said. "During a very scary moment, the team made me feel safe and cared for. I am so thankful for everything they did for us."

For warfighters, readiness means more than preparing for scheduled missions or deployments. It means having the skills and confidence to respond when circumstances change without warning.

Carter's actions helped ensure a safe outcome for Keilah and her mother. Their story is a reminder that the call to serve can come at any time and in any place, even in a hospital parking lot.

Strategically positioned on the Iberian Peninsula, U.S. Naval Hospital Rota plays a critical role in defending, restoring and elevating the health of warfighters and their families. USNH Rota provides ready, reliable care to approximately 8,700 service members and their families.

For more information about USNH Rota and its mission, visit www.rotatricare.mil.



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The well known Chipiona Chiringuito “Tucaneando” shares the same ownership and dedication to service as Chiringuito Playa Virgen.

Please see their ad in the newspaper for more information.



USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) returns to Naval Station Rota

Photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class Jett Morgan and Christina Brewer

USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) returned to homeport at Naval Station Rota, Spain after a 6-and-a-half-month deployment, July 27. Family members and friends of the deployed Sailors gathered to welcome their loved ones home.







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NAVFAC EURAFCENT announces the 2025 Construction Hard Hats of the Year

Story by Petty Officer 2nd Class Keyly Santizo
Courtesy Photos
Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Europe Africa Central

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Europe, Africa, Central (EURAFCENT), announced its 2025 Construction Hard Hats of the Year, Naples, Italy, July 13, 2025.

NAVFAC EURAFCENT awarded Kenneth Gould, assigned to Resident Officer in Charge (ROICC), Rota, Spain in the Construction Engineer Category and Builder 2nd Class Chance Freeman, assigned to ROICC Naples, Italy in the Construction Engineering Tech Category.

Presented annually, the Hard Hat of the Year program recognizes construction technical staff for exceptional support on construction projects, emphasizing readiness, decision-making, teamwork, collaboration, project performance, leadership, community, and service to NAVFAC.

"The Hard Hat of the Year award recognizes the true backbone of our construction operations—the field office technical staff who drive our projects to completion every single day," said Capt. Andrew Olsen, commanding officer, NAVFAC EURAFCENT. "Ken and BU2 Freeman have demonstrated exceptional leadership and technical prowess. Their ability to deliver critical infrastructure under complex, high-pressure conditions directly enables our warfighters to execute their missions across the region. I could not be prouder to have them representing our team."

Gould, a native of Texas, was recognized for his exceptional leadership in managing two highly complex construction projects with a combined work-in-progress value of over \$31 million. Gould expertly coordinated the efforts of five separate contractors across projects supporting the U.S. Air Force, Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM), and other vital air operations tenants.

"My approach is grounded in collaborative problem-solving," said Gould. "When faced with an on-the-spot decision, I immediately engage all stakeholders—the contractor, end-user, designers, and our contract staff—to

brainstorm a range of viable alternatives. The key is to balance cost, schedule, and quality without ever losing sight of the project's original intent."

This collaborative approach was essential in managing the challenging P-313 HSM Hangar project, which required navigating over \$5 million in modifications due to design changes and unforeseen site conditions. His leadership was also pivotal in the successful execution of airfield improvements, which directly enhanced warfighter readiness at a key logistical hub.

"These projects are a direct investment in warfighter readiness," Gould stated. "Our team's coordination was so effective that we were able to complete construction ahead of schedule, even facilitating an unplanned, 24-hour reopening of the full airfield during Operation Epic Fury—a testament to the incredible partnership between U.S. and Spanish forces, public works, and our construction team."

Gould emphasized the collective effort behind these achievements. "While I am honored by this nomination, this award is truly a reflection of an outstanding team. I am just the tip of the spear. Their ability to react and perform on short timelines is the reason for our success."

Freeman, a native of Minnesota, was recognized for his outstanding oversight of seven construction projects valued at more than \$5 million in work-in-progress. Supporting critical commands including U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, U.S. Sixth Fleet, and Navy Region EURAFCENT.

"While my focus is always simply on delivering the best support possible to the mission, being named the NAVFAC EURAFCENT Hard Hat of the Year is a profound honor," said Freeman. "This recognition is incredibly rewarding, and it serves as a direct reflection of the outstanding team I am privileged to work alongside every day."

Freeman's aggressive schedule management, trade sequencing, and daily contractor coordination resulted in key project deliveries 21, 30, and 60 days ahead of schedule. He credits his forward-leaning approach to his prior operational experience.

"My experience serving as a Project Supervisor with Naval Mobile

Construction Battalion THREE taught me the critical importance of proactive management," Freeman explained. "My method is simple: identify potential bottlenecks early and address them before they impact construction progression. By actively searching for issues rather than waiting for them to surface, we maintain momentum."

This mindset was critical to his success as the Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (C4I) coordinator, where he seamlessly synchronized security escorts, utility outages, and contractor crews inside occupied, highly secure operational environments, ensuring vital Navy communication modernization projects progressed without mission interruption.

"Operating within highly secure SCIF and fleet environments demands relentless communication and extreme operational flexibility," said Freeman. "By synchronization of tenant requirements, security protocols, and utility outages ahead of time, we ensure that when the window opens, the team executes seamlessly without ever compromising the active mission."

Further cementing his technical expertise, Freeman also completed the rigorous NAVFAC Engineering Technician Qualification Standards program, making him the first Second Class Petty Officer in the EURAFCENT region to achieve this milestone. He advises other junior Seabees to embrace similar challenges.



"My mentors have consistently challenged me to never settle for the bare minimum, but to actively pursue every avenue for personal and professional growth," Freeman said. "My advice to junior Seabees is to adopt that same proactive mindset: never pass up an opportunity to better yourself or your craft."

Gould and Freeman will now advance to represent the EURAFCENT region in their respective categories at the NAVFAC enterprise-wide Hard Hat of the Year competition. Their selection highlights the high caliber of engineering and construction talent supporting operations across Europe, Africa, and the Central Command areas of responsibility.



Kenneth Gould, assigned to Resident Officer in Charge, Rota, Spain, was chosen as a 2025 Construction Hard Hat of the Year by NAVFAC EURAFCENT for the Construction Engineer Category.



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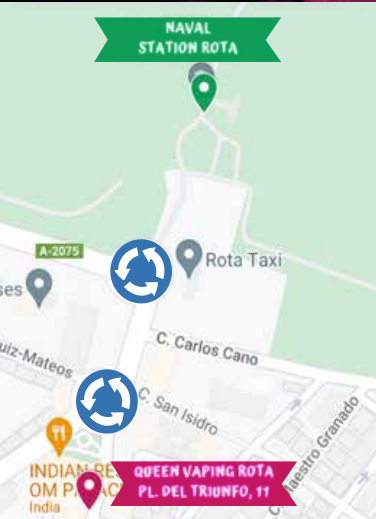


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Naval Station Rota service members play in Rota basketball tournament

By Lt. Jubbie Acutim
Naval Hospital Rota, Spain

The City of Rota hosted a one-day basketball tournament held on July 11 at Polideportivo Municipal Antonio Barriento "Chispa."

The event featured five Spanish clubs: Rota Basketball Club, Club Baloncesto Trebujena, Club Baloncesto Chipiona, Marianistas Jerez, and Asociación Deportiva Asunción. The team representing the installation, the Rota Warriors, was formed from multiple commands across Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force personnel. Despite being undersized, they demonstrated exceptional teamwork, discipline, and heart throughout the tournament. One moment in particular deserves special recognition. In our matchup against Marianistas, we were down 30 points to 32 points with only three seconds left in

regulation. Aviation Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Martavious Page delivered a confident pass to Information Systems Technician Seaman Ervin Johnson. Two Spanish defenders attempted to deflect the ball, but Johnson secured the pass, took one dribble, and hit a turnaround fadeaway to send the game into overtime.

The Warriors went on to win in overtime and remained undefeated for the entire tournament. These gentlemen represented what many at the event called the "American team" with pride, professionalism, and unity. Their combined effort showed that a joint force of Navy, Marine, and Air Force athletes is truly a team not to be taken lightly.

Below are the players who represented their commands with honor:

Martavious Page – Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota Fire Department
Alfred "Kato" Brandley - NAVSTA Rota

Ruben Feliciano – NAVSTA Rota
Nicholas Porter – USS Bulkeley (DDG 84)

Caleb Kinley – Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team Company Europe (FASTEUR)

Carlitos Cruz – Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Rota

Ervin Johnson – USS Bulkeley (DDG 84)

Jubbie Acutim – NMRTC Rota

Collin Bowers – FASTEUR

Nicholas Whyte – NMRTC Rota, Dependent

Khali Davis - Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 79

Marquez Wyatt – USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117)

Delaney John – USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117)

Edward Corinealdi – 725th Air Mobility Squadron

Xavier Williams – NMRTC Rota
Andrew Diaz - Moron Fire Department
Brandon Ayres - FASTEUR
Joel Ortiz – NMRTC Rota
Martin Romero-NMRTC Rota
Taylor Padilla – NMRTC Rota
Jacobe Flores – NMRTC Rota
Jad Acutim – NMRTC Rota, Dependent
Klark Inson - USS Arleigh Burke (DDG



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Naval Station Rota upgrades basketball courts under Barracks Task Force initiative

Courtesy Story
Naval Station Rota Public Affairs



Sailors residing in the barracks at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota now have access to fully renovated outdoor basketball courts following the completion of a major modernization project. Directed and coordinated by Naval Station Rota's Public Works Department and Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Europe, Africa, Central (EURAFCENT), workers constructed and installed brand-new, durable basketball backboards and completely overhauled the court surface, ensuring improved quality-of-life standards for Sailors living in the surrounding barracks.

Before the renovations, the courts had fallen into a state of disrepair, with degraded equipment and weathered playing surfaces that limited their utility.

The \$15,000 restoration included fresh paint and professional restriping, transforming the area into a modern athletic space.

"This project is a perfect example of our core mission at NAVFAC EURAFCENT," said Capt. Andrew Olsen, commanding officer of NAVFAC EURAFCENT. "By working together to replace aging infrastructure with high-quality facilities, we are delivering modernization that directly supports our warfighters. Every improvement we make to the shore enterprise is an investment in Fleet readiness."

The project is part of a broader, ongoing effort to address aging base infrastructure across Commander, Naval Installations Command's (CNIC) purview using approximately \$375 million of One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) funding allocated by the Barracks Task Force as part of the Sailors First initiative. CNIC is using this opportunity to take decisive, sustained action to improve Sailor quality of life and mission readiness through near-term fixes and long-term investments to housing infrastructure.

NAVSTA Rota also has begun upgrading barracks flooring from outdated carpets to modern tiling as part of an additional OBBB project totaling \$500,000. By delivering a safe and updated space for Sailors to gather and live, the installation continues to align its infrastructure with its mission

of supporting warfighter readiness and morale.

"As an installation, one of our top priorities is improving the day-to-day quality of life for our service members by providing comfortable, modern living spaces and welcoming social environments," said Naval Station Rota Commanding Officer Capt. Charles Chmielak. "With funding provided through the Barracks Task Force, we've been able to make meaningful enhancements that support the wellbeing, morale, and overall experience of those who live and work here."

NAVSTA Rota's strategic position at the gateway to the Mediterranean Sea makes it a critical hub for U.S. and NATO maritime operations. Infrastructure investments enhance the installation's ability to support maritime security,



logistics, and power projection in support of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and U.S. 6th Fleet.



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Juvenile owl saved at construction site

By Lt.j.g. Joshua Primeaux
NAVSTA Rota Public Works Department

A collaborative effort between Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota environmental staff, resident officer in-charge of construction (ROICC), construction contractors, and Spanish host-nation officials turned a potential construction delay into a heartwarming wildlife rescue this week onboard NAVSTA Rota.

Interestingly enough, the owl population on the base has expanded over the last year. Barn owls, European scops owls, and even the very large Eurasian eagle owls have been found nesting in some unlikely places on base. These raptors play an important role in keeping rodent and feline populations on base in-check.

On Wednesday morning, contracted personnel for the P-811 Military Construction (MILCON) at the port operations site discovered a juvenile barn owl inside a building under construction. The young bird had fallen approximately 30 feet from an aperture in the wall near the ceiling. Because the owlet was still covered in down and had not yet fledged, it was unable to fly back up to its nesting area.

Recognizing the need for immediate action, ROICC's construction manager contacted environmental staff for quick mobilization. They coordinated seamlessly with the construction contractor, Spanish environmental personnel, and the

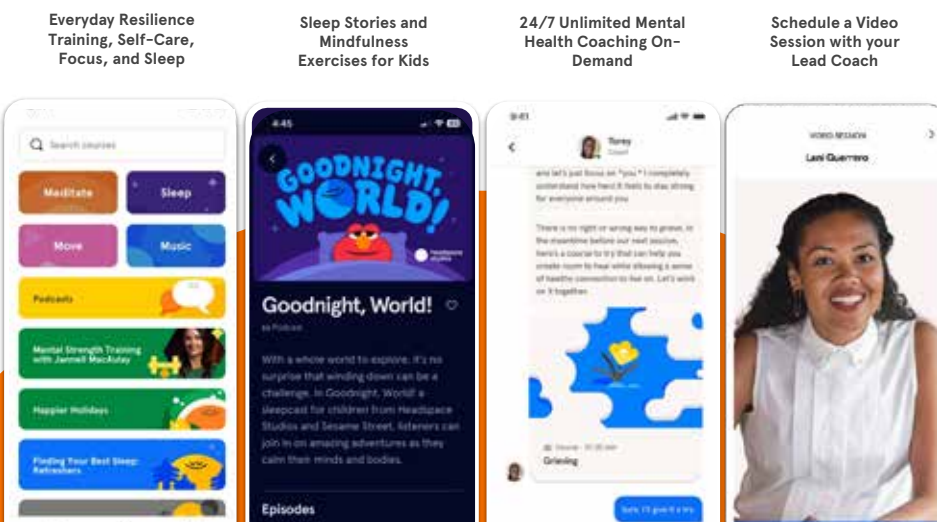
government of Andalucía to determine the safest course of action for both the animal and the project schedule.

"This collaborative effort protected a native species while avoiding a delay to the MILCON project," said naval environmental representatives. "It is a great example of a strong working relationship between environmental representatives, ROICC, contractors, and our Spanish host-nation counterparts."

Working together, the team safely captured the owl and placed it in a secure transport box. The contractor's Site and Safety Health Officer then transferred the juvenile bird to the Instalaciones Centros de Recuperación Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in El Puerto de Santa María. The owl will receive professional care at the center until it is ready to be released back into the wild. Thanks to swift coordination, the local wildlife remains protected, and the MILCON project continues to move forward on schedule.



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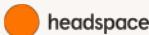
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Staff Sgt. Khadeisha Boone

Air Force Staff Sgt. Khadeisha Boone, from Indianapolis, is currently an executive assistant at the 521st Air Mobility Operations Group onboard Naval Station Rota, Spain. Beforehand, Boone was assigned to material management under the 725th Air Mobility Squadron.

“Working as an executive assistant, I have had to learn a whole new set of skills that differ from the more hands-on work I was used to while working in warehouses,” stated Boone. “I now have worked to refine my administration skills, and I work in a high paced environment alongside the Group’s senior enlisted leader to ensure mission objectives are getting accomplished in a timely manner.”

Boone has served in locations all around the world, including Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Kunsan Air Base in South Korea, and even Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. She stated that her favorite part of now being stationed in Spain is Spain itself.

“It is a dream come true,” Boone

prefaced. “I love the slow pace of life, the beaches, and the people of Spain.”

Alongside her usual job, Boone serves as the physical training leader for her unit as well as belonging to the “booster club,” a team dedicated to putting together morale building activities and events.

“My favorite thing about this job has been the new perspective it has given me on the greater Air Force mission outside of the warehouse that I have become accustomed to,” explained Boone. “I have been given the chance to see how other career fields under the Group operate, and how it all ties together. I can really appreciate how hard everyone works to make the mission happen.”

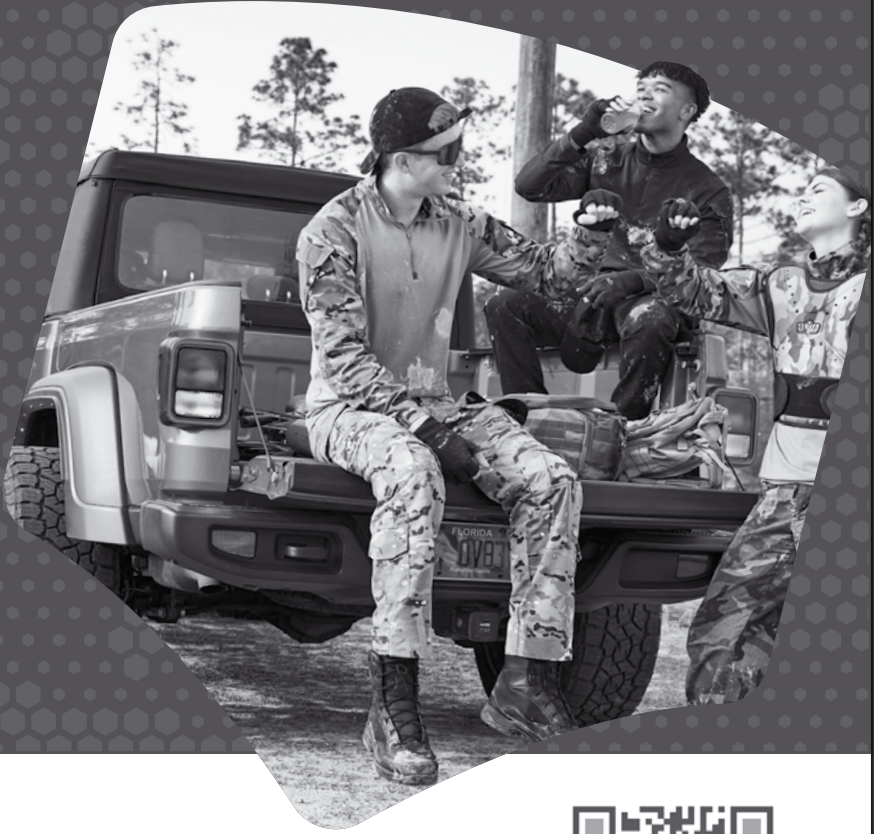
When not in the workplace, Boone enjoys traveling, reading on the beach, and working on home renovation projects with her husband. She’s also been working on her Spanish speaking skills to help her enjoy and become even more immersed in Spanish culture!



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Welcome back to school: A year full of possibility

By Dr. Courtney Schonfeldt
Principal, Rota Middle High School

Every August, there's a student who pauses just outside the front door for an extra moment. Maybe it's a brand-new sixth grader taking a deep breath before walking into a different school. Maybe it's a senior realizing this is their last first day of high school. Maybe it's a student who has just arrived in Rota, wondering if today will be the day they make their first friend.

They all have something in common: they're stepping into a year filled with possibilities they can't yet imagine.

That's one of the things I love most about schools. Every year begins with hope. Every student gets a fresh start. New friendships will be formed, new interests will be discovered, challenges will be overcome, and confidence will grow, often in ways that aren't obvious until we look back months later.

At Rota Middle High School, we believe those possibilities grow when we all embrace three simple expectations: Be Ready. Be Responsible. Be Respectful.

Being **Ready** means arriving each day prepared to learn with curiosity, an open mind, and the confidence to try something new. It's about showing up, being present, and making the most of every opportunity.

Being **Responsible** means owning our choices, following through when things become difficult, doing our best even when no one is watching, and

understanding that our actions affect not only ourselves but those around us.

Being **Respectful** is the foundation of a strong school community. It means treating others with kindness, listening with empathy, celebrating our differences, and helping create a place where every student feels welcomed, valued, and safe enough to be themselves.

These aren't just school expectations. They are life skills. They are qualities that help young people succeed not only in school, but in college, careers, military service, and life. And while these expectations guide what happens inside our classrooms, they grow strongest when they're reinforced at home.

Parents and families are our most important partners. One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is showing them that school matters. Help them establish routines that set them up for success. Make attendance a priority because every school day counts. Ask about homework, encourage reading, and help them stay organized. Attend parent meetings, concerts, athletic events, and school celebrations whenever you can. Stay connected with teachers and never hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns.

Most importantly, have conversations. Instead of simply asking, "How was school?" try asking:

What challenged you today?
What made you smile?

Did you learn something that surprised you?

How did you show respect today?

How did you help today?

Those simple questions send a powerful message: what happens at school matters, and so do you.

To our students, this is your year. Say yes to opportunities. Join a club. Try a new activity. Cheer on your classmates. Ask for help when you need it, and offer it when someone else does. Your favorite memories will come from the friendships you build, the challenges you overcome, and the moments that remind you that you belong.

To our families who are new to Rota, welcome. We know military life brings frequent transitions, and starting over is rarely easy. Please know that you are joining a school community that is committed to helping every student feel connected, supported, and successful from the moment they walk through our doors.

Finally, thank you to our families, volunteers, military leaders, and community partners who invest in our schools throughout the year. Your encouragement, your presence, and your

partnership make an extraordinary difference. Together, we are preparing not only strong students, but kind people, thoughtful citizens, and future leaders.

As we welcome another school year, I hope every student walks through our doors knowing three things: you belong here, you are capable of great things, and there are adults who believe in you every step of the way.

Every student has a story that is just beginning. Together, with families, educators, and our community, we have the privilege of helping write the next chapter.

I can't wait to see where this year takes us. Welcome back, Admirals.



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Allied explosive ordnance disposal units strengthen interoperability at Sea Breeze 2026

Story by Petty Officer 2nd Class Leon Vonguyen
U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. Sixth Fleet

Beneath the waters of Weymouth Bay, Allied nation and NATO partner explosive ordnance disposal units collaborated for the second portion of Sea Breeze, an annual maritime exercise aimed at building collective capability and capacity to restore security and stability in the Black Sea, July 13-24.

“In any exercise, when we share the experience between each other or we can work together, we can understand together,” said a Ukrainian naval officer and explosive ordnance disposal team leader who goes by the callsign Morgan.

Co-led by the U.S. and Ukraine and hosted by the U.K., Sea Breeze 26-2 brought together EOD technicians from NATO Allies and partner nations to conduct intensive joint-operation training, with a focus on expeditionary mine countermeasures and improving existing interoperability between participants by embracing the challenges of a multinational environment.

“One of the biggest challenges is the difference in systems,” said Morgan. “NATO countries have their own standards and procedures, and we have our own procedures to follow. That can cause conflict between teams.” In this portion of the exercise, specialized dive units run daily drills, sharing technical expertise on mine countermeasure and diving operations in the Black Sea. Units included U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 8, Royal Navy Diving and Threat Exploitation Group (DTXG) Delta Squadron, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force EOD Team, Ukrainian



Photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Cameron Edy and Petty Officer 2nd Classes Jonathan Nye and Leon Vonguyen

Navy EOD and other EOD counterparts.

“If we can go out and do something in a different environment that gives us a different result, we can use that information to adjust our position next time we’re in that type of environment,” said U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician 2nd Class Ezra Cimino. “We are just adding tools to the toolbox.” The drills required communication between multiple dive teams through a wide range of operations, such as training in diving and salvage missions and using remotely operated vehicles, like the VideoRay Defender-Viper, the latest mine disposal system.

“Our enemies are improving their weapons, such as placing sensors on their bombs that can explode underway at any given time,” said Morgan. “We should always prepare for the worst.” Members of EODMU-8 are conducting search and identification operations, practicing safe clearance capabilities and dive operations. The team is also providing training to participants on ROVs, such as

the Defender-Viper. “We are still finding old mines planted [in the Black Sea] from World War II, especially air bombs, and some may date back even further,” said Morgan.

As warfare advances, unmanned technology becomes critical to the warfighter’s toolbox. In EOD, this means integrating ROVs with unmanned surface vessels. Allied nation and NATO partner participants will have the opportunity

to witness their application in a safe environment in the surrounding area near the Portland Port. Sea Breeze is an annual maritime exercise aimed at building collective capability and agility to restore security and stability in the dynamic Black Sea. Sea Breeze 2026-2 is focused on mine countermeasure, explosive ordnance disposal, dive operations and unmanned underwater vehicles.



USS Paul Ignatius back on patrol after successful maintenance availability

Story by Lt. Jeffrey Ackiss
USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117)

USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117) departed Rota on July 6 for its sixth Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe (FDNF-E) patrol following the successful completion of a four-month selected restricted availability and several certification events. In coordination with Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center Detachment Rota along with the Spanish lead maintenance activity Navantia, Paul Ignatius completed all milestones and assessments on time or ahead of schedule. Each department and every Sailor played a critical role in ensuring the success of Paul Ignatius.

Following patrol 5, which included a surge to support national-level tasking in December and January, the crew

enjoyed a leave period while at the same time maximizing opportunities to attend numerous schools in Rota and stateside, further developing the knowledge and warfighting lethality of the ship. Onboard, the maintenance team worked around the clock to complete numerous upgrades and assessments to enhance the overall readiness and ensure system operation.

Notably, Paul Ignatius is the first ship in the Fleet to successfully upgrade to the Navy's newest Consolidated Afloat Networks and Enterprise Services software version five, significantly enhancing cybersecurity and network capabilities. Partnering with engineers from Naval Information Warfare Center and Fleet Readiness Directive 200, Combat Systems department resolved multiple software compatibility issues, capturing lessons learned to facilitate

implementation across the Fleet.

Operations department continued to earn praise as the "Best Looking Warship" due to their consistent topside preservation efforts while preparing for Aviation Certification and embarkation of the air detachment from Helicopter Strike Maritime 79. Through global coordination, Supply department kept tools, parts, and material flowing to enable every repair and upgrade. Whether a known issue or last-minute discovery, the Supply team identified the way forward to rapidly acquire every requisition.

In the final stretch of the availability, Engineering department exemplified extreme ownership and a relentless pursuit of excellence through early completion of Damage Control Material Assessment and a record setting completion of Light Off Assessment, earning a Fleet record of 96.01% in three days! Through every Sailor's determination and dedication to the mission, Paul Ignatius was able to complete the maintenance availability early - a feat showcasing incredible teamwork.

Weapons department concluded the journey to mission readiness by inspecting, loading, and preparing the Ship's ordnance and equipment to ensure Paul Ignatius remained mission capable and ready to respond when called upon.

"The crew of Paul Ignatius has demonstrated tremendous ownership preparing this ship and themselves for our next patrol," said Cmdr. William Burke,



commanding officer of USS Paul Ignatius. "We now steady our resolve as we head back to sea, where every Sailor will be depended on for mission success."

Paul Ignatius is currently operating in the Sixth Fleet area of responsibility in defense of national and allied partners and interests. Her success and operational readiness are a testament to the crew's dedication, tenacity, and grit. Warship 117 and her crew remain ready to answer their nation's call whenever and wherever called upon. Always ready, fight on!



Photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class Deven Fernandez

CTF 68 Sailors complete a practical expeditionary warfare board

Photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Brandie Nuzzi
Commander, Task Force Six Eight

Sailors assigned to Commander, Task Force Six Eight participated in a multitude of individual exercises during an expeditionary warfare qualification board, July 16

In order to receive the warfare device, participants showed proficiency in various skills such as land navigation, first aid, and casualty response.





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A journey into Spain's sweetest history: Our trip to La Despensa de Palacio

By Dan Bennett

Contributing Community Writer

For anyone living in the Rota community, we know that Andalusia is packed with incredible history, stunning views, and unforgettable food. But recently, a group of us took a day trip that truly felt like stepping straight into a chocolate lover's fairy tale. Six local families, totaling 28 people in all, headed out to visit La Despensa de Palacio in Estepa. It is a hidden gem that absolutely needs to be on your family's bucket list.

Stepping into their workshop is like stepping back in time. The family's baking legacy stretches all the way back to 1743, when their ancestor, Antonio Sunday, began working as a baker for the Marquess of Estepa, eventually taking charge of the palace pantry. Today, over 270 years later, that very same artisan passion is being passed down to the family's latest generation.

What makes this place completely unique is their dedication to the craft. They are currently the only chocolate-making factory in Andalusia—and one of the very few left in all of Spain—that imports and processes pure, raw cocoa beans from places like Venezuela, Brazil, and Madagascar.

Walking through the doors, you are instantly hit with a wave of incredible aromas: sweet queen cinnamon, rich bourbon vanilla, toasted almonds, and local lemons. The absolute highlight of our day was how welcoming and interactive the experience was for everyone, especially the younger ones.

As one parent in our group shared:

"Wonderful staff and kid-friendly. The children got to make a chocolate pop and there were chocolates and treats to try upon arrival. The museum is nice and has many artifacts from chocolate history and the company. We got to see their artist designing the art for the chocolate tins and people packaging chocolate. I would go again in-season to see the factory at work."

Beyond their hands-on workshops and world-class chocolates, they are famous for their traditional, hand-wrapped Christmas cakes like "montecarlos" and "polvorones." The care they put into their craft is so legendary that their iconic

metal tins were even used as props in filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar's acclaimed movie "Pain and Glory," starring Antonio Banderas.

It was an unforgettable experience, full of rich flavors, deep Andalusian history, and wonderful memories for our Rota families.

Planning Your Own Trip

If you want to gather a group and experience this incredible tour for yourself, here is everything you need to know to make it happen:

Our Guide: We booked our tour with "Julio," who speaks fluent English and makes scheduling seamless. As trip organizer Brenna Bennett noted, "The staff were so kind and accommodating! Organizing our own trip through Julio was so easy."

Group Size: To book a private tour, you must have a group of 15 or more people. Perfect for a multi-family getaway like ours!

Payment: The tour requires prepayment. While you can use a standard Spanish bank transfer, international banking and payment apps work great and make the process incredibly easy.

For a beautiful visual sneak peek of the jungle-to-workshop journey and the incredible passion behind their chocolates, check out their official videos online by searching for "La Despensa de Palacio - On the lookout for the best cocoa in the world."



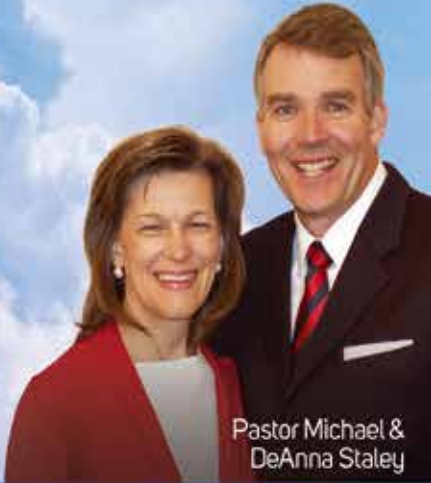




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AA on base: "Rota 213" meets Tuesday and Thursday, 1800-1900 (6-7pm) in person in the NAVSTA Rota Chapel (in the back). For meeting information, please contact Cynthia at +34 661 47 95 20 or Dean at +34 674 38 77 55.

AA off base on Zoom: "Rota Drydockers." Every Saturday, 1600 (4 pm) on Zoom only. For information on how to join the Zoom session, contact Cynthia at +34 661 47 95 20 or Joe G. via WhatsApp at: +34 603 84 15 59.

AA in Rota in English: "Rota to Recovery." Every Saturday, 1900-2000 (7-8pm) in person, Calle Bachiller, 11, Rota; parking is available near the marina. For information, please contact Cynthia at +34 661 47 95 20 or Dean at +34 674 38 77 55.

AL-ANON MEETINGS

Have you been affected by another person's drinking? If so, please join us every Wednesday at 1600 (4 p.m.) at the base chapel nursery for an Al-Anon meeting. The only requirement for Al-Anon membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend. For info on meetings, please contact Naydene at +34 669 09 7149.

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Volunteers are welcome and encouraged to stop by the office and CPR courses are now being offered. Days and times of the courses will be posted on our FB page. For more information, call us during business hours at DSN 727-2333 or commercial, +34 956-82-2333, or visit our Facebook page, @RedCrossRota.

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Red Cross Emergency Messages services operate 24/7. If you have a family emergency during business hours, call us immediately at DSN (314) 727-2333 or +34 956-82-2333. After hours or on weekends, our national call center can be reached at +1 (877) 272-7337. Messages can also be initiated online, at <https://www.redcross.org/military-emergency-communication.html>

ROTA EDUCATION CENTER

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and University of Maryland Global Campus offices are open and able to assist you in reaching your education goals. The Rota Education Center is located on the first floor of the Community Services Building (Bldg. 3293).

NAVY-MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY (NMCRS)

When you are having trouble meeting urgent financial needs, NMCRS may be able to provide an interest-free loan or grant. Through financial counseling, we will also help you plan for better financial stability. Our services are completely confidential. If you are approved for a loan or grant, you will receive funds immediately. There

is no application fee and the appointment is completely free. If you need \$1,000 or less, you may be eligible for our Quick Assist Loan.

NMCRS Business Office

Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.- 4 p.m.

Office: DSN 727-1614 or +34 956-821-614

After Hours Duty Cell: +34 660 984 511

After Hours Emergency Assistance: +1 (877) 272-7337

Email: rota@nmcrs.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nmcrsrota

NMCRS Thrift Shop

Hours of Operation

Monday: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Thursday: 3-6 p.m. (third Thursday / active duty + dependents only)

Third Saturday of month: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

NMCRS Casework and Classes

Casework Appointment: For active duty Navy, Marines, retirees, and dependents, the NMCRS can help you with financial relief. This can be used for emergency travel, basic living expenses (BLE), pet OCONUS, auto, household set up, and more.

Budget for Baby Class: Are you a new or prospective parent? Join us in-person to learn important budgeting skills for your new addition! Parents will learn about military pay fluctuations, baby expenses, consumer pressures targeting new parents, and entitlements available through government and private sources. This class is now open to both active duty and government civilian families. All participants will receive a layette and a handmade baby blanket. Families will also receive a \$50 Amazon gift card. To register, visit <http://linktr.ee/nmcrsrota> and select the desired class and date.

Command Classes: We offer financial classes for groups and commands. Our caseworkers can come to you, or we can hold the classes in our classroom. Call or email our office to schedule one of these classes.

UPCOMING NMCRS AND HOSPITAL MATERNAL PROGRAMS AND CLASSES:

The Visiting Nurse program includes home and virtual visits, classes, and community support groups for active duty, retirees, and their families. The Visiting Nurse provides health education, resource referral, and support for prenatal and postpartum, newborn care, breastfeeding, pediatric, adult, and geriatric health concerns.

NMCRS: VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Are you interested in volunteering in the NMCRS office or Thrift Shop? We have several opportunities to grow your resume while contributing to our community! We also reimburse for childcare and mileage. Apply to volunteer online at <http://linktr.ee/nmcrsrota> and join

us for a monthly volunteer orientation. NMCRS Rota is looking for blanket makers and Thrift Shop volunteers.

PRESCHOOL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Child Find for children three to five years of age is an ongoing outreach program that locates and identifies children who may have developmental delays or educational disabilities and need special services. If you have concerns regarding your child's development, please contact DSN 727-4185/4435 or commercial, +34 956-82-4185/4435.

RETIRED ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO)

Fleet and Family Support Center, Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., by appointment only, +34 956 82 3232.

RAO serves as a link between the military retired community and other government agencies, such as Federal benefits Unit for Social Security and Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Veterans Administration (VA), and Office of Personnel Management (OPM). RAO provides assistance to survivors regarding pensions and benefits and is a source for information about retiring and living in Spain.

USO ROTA

The mission of the USO is to strengthen the well-being of America's military service members and their families. At USO Rota, we are dedicated to this mission by offering a variety of events and services—all free for active duty service members and their families.

Our center is conveniently located inside the Air Terminal and is open Monday through Friday, from 0830 to 1630. We invite you to join us for any of our events or stop by for a visit!

Interested in giving back? The USO is a fantastic organization for volunteering. To get started, fill out your volunteer profile at VOLUNTEERS.USO.ORG.

For all USO Rota events and more, follow "USO Rota" on Facebook at www.facebook.com/USORota.

WIC OVERSEAS

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Overseas is a nutrition education and supplemental food program that aims to improve the overall health and wellness of families for active duty service members and their dependents, DoD civilian employees and their dependents, DoD contractors and their dependents. Basic nutrition and health screenings, drafts to be redeemed for nutritious foods, access to resources & tips that help you and your family lead healthier lives, healthier birth weights for babies, reduced anemia rates for children, breastfeeding support, breast pump loan program, breastfeeding/pumping room open to everyone. Call DSN 727-2921 or commercial, +34 956-82-2921, for more information.



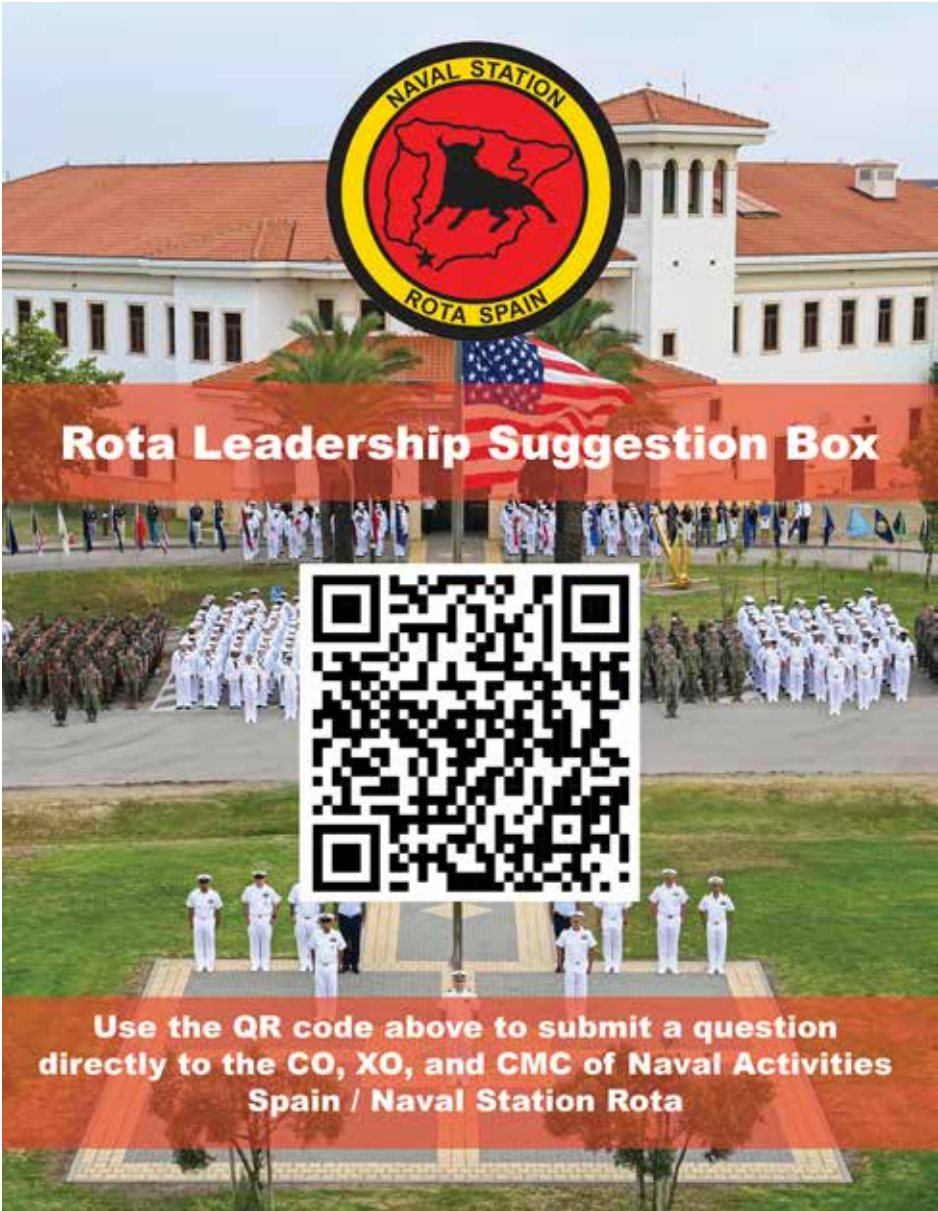


LN Legends: MWR food and beverage

This most recent LN Legends highlights our Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Food and Beverage local nationals!

From serving up great tacos and burritos to catering our installation's large events, our MWR Food and Beverage teams support our warfighters and their families with the highest quality of service and food quality.

Naval Station Rota is the enduring sum of more than eight thousand people that call it home; the variety of backgrounds, skills, and experiences they possess; and the lines of operation they enable, ensuring U.S. and Allied forces are ready to operate when called upon.



CRIME VICTIM CHECKLIST

1. NOTIFY LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

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2. OBTAIN A COPY OF YOUR POLICE REPORT

3. TAKE POLICE REPORT TO NCIS

** NCIS is located in bldg. 3263 across from the NEX behind the main Security building.*

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Rota Sailors attend music festival through Liberty program

By Christina Brewer
NAVSTA Rota Liberty Program

Eight Sailors from Naval Station Rota's Liberty Program traveled to Madrid this summer for an unforgettable experience at the 10th anniversary of the Mad Cool Music Festival. The trip gave participants the chance to enjoy one of Spain's premier music events, featuring an impressive lineup that included Foo Fighters, Florence and the Machine, Twenty One Pilots, The Black Crowes, and many other internationally acclaimed artists.

For many sailors, the trip was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity made possible through the Liberty Program. "Mad Cool was one of my favorite memories in recent times," said Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jackson Wanous. "I met many amazing people and got the opportunity to see so many artists that would put me in bankruptcy if I tried to on my own. MWR gave me and several others an opportunity of a lifetime to experience this festival."

Wanous added that attending the festival through MWR not only made it

affordable but also helped create lasting friendships.

NAVSTA Rota's Liberty Program, designed for single and unaccompanied service members, frequently hosts recreational trips and cultural excursions throughout Spain. By offering subsidized travel and coordinating logistics, the program ensures Sailors can safely and affordably experience their host nation while building strong peer networks.

To learn more about upcoming Liberty Program trips, visit the Rota MWR website or stop by the Liberty Center on base.



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Enhanced Virtual Single Sailor Platform

By CNIC Public Affairs

Commander, Navy Installations Command's (CNIC) Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program has launched an enhanced Virtual Single Sailor Program online platform designed to better connect junior and single Sailors with MWR programs, resources and activities, regardless of duty location.

"Quality of Service is about improving the everyday experience of serving in the Navy and ensuring Sailors have access to programs that support their well-being, resiliency and connection to one another," said Vice Adm. Scott Gray, commander, Navy Installations Command. "The relaunch of the Virtual Single Sailor Program is another step in our continued effort to provide junior and single Sailors with meaningful opportunities and resources, wherever they serve."

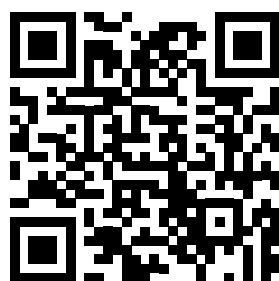
The redesigned VSSP website provides a centralized resource where junior and single Sailors can discover MWR programs, installation activities, virtual events, recreation opportunities and quality-of-life resources from anywhere in the world.

"The enhanced VSSP website provides junior and single Sailors with a single destination to access MWR programs and resources regardless of where they are serving," said Jess Donnelly, VSSP program manager. "By

expanding access to information and virtual engagement opportunities, we are strengthening connections across the Fleet and supporting our Sailors' quality of life."

For more information about VSSP and to access the new website, visit

"www.navymwrsinglesailor.com" or scan the QR code below.



Commander, Navy Installations Command is responsible for worldwide U.S. Navy Shore installation management, designing and developing integrated solutions for sustainment and development of Navy shore infrastructure as well as quality of life programs. CNIC oversees 10 Navy regions, 71 installations, and more than 48,600 employees who are focused on warfighting and manning, training, and equipping the Shore to fight and win. Navy installations are warfighting platforms essential to every fleet operation. Learn more: www.cnic.navy.mil.



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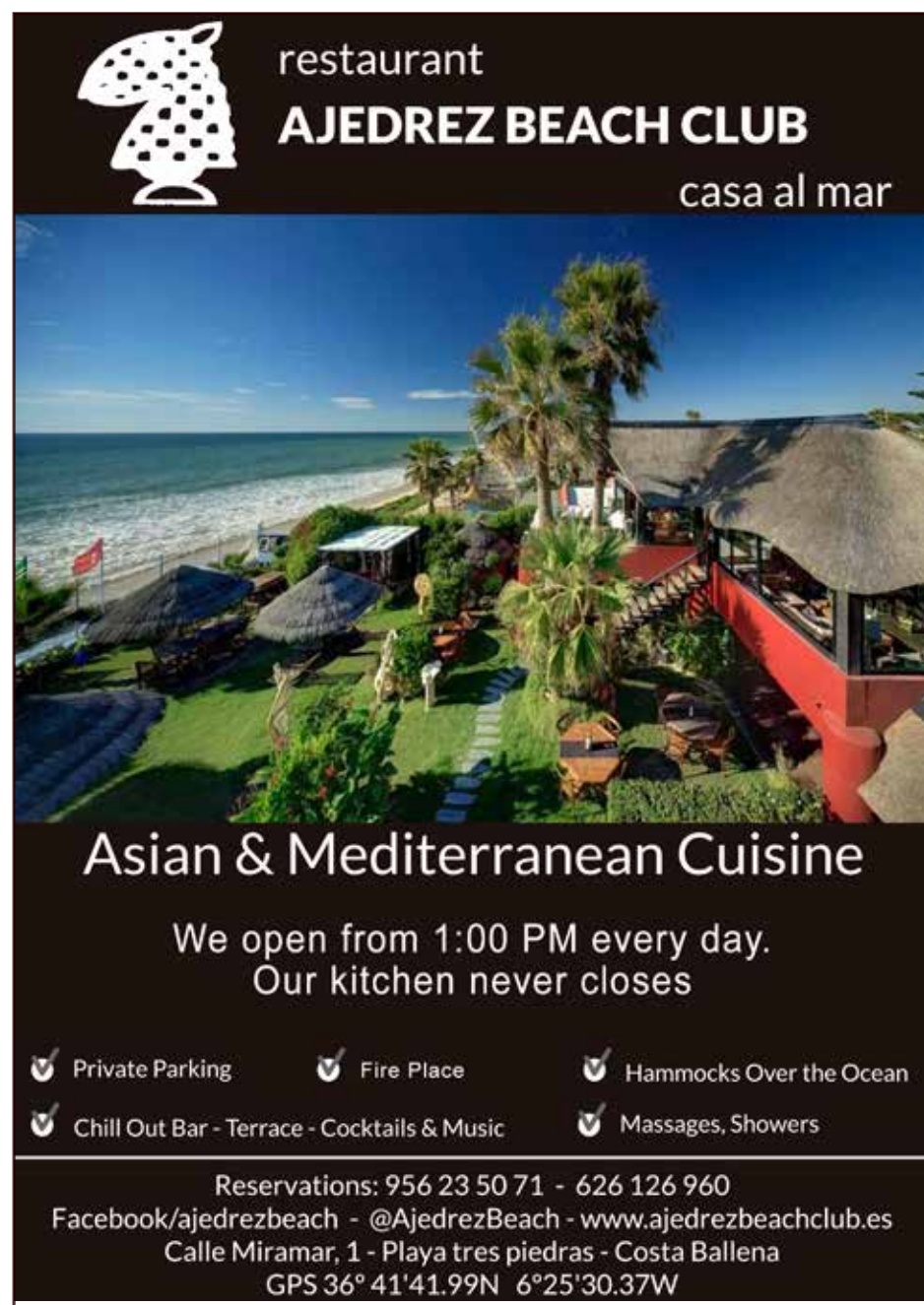
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Rota MHS graduate enters Naval Academy

Courtesy Story

Tommy Phillips, a graduate of Rota Middle High School in Rota, Spain, was inducted into the Naval Academy Class of 2030 on June 25th, marking the beginning of six challenging weeks of basic midshipman training during Plebe Summer.

Approximately 1,200 candidates are selected each year for the Academy's "plebe" or freshman class, and each student is required to participate in Plebe Summer. During this time, plebes have no access to television, movies, the internet, or music and restricted access to cell phones. They are only permitted to make two calls during the six weeks of Plebe Summer.

The pressure and rigor of Plebe Summer is carefully designed to help plebes prepare for their first academic year at the Naval Academy and the four years of challenge that awaits them. As the summer progresses, the new midshipmen rapidly assimilate basic skills in seamanship, navigation, damage control, sailing, and handling yard patrol craft. Plebes also learn infantry drill and how to shoot 9 mm pistols and M-16 rifles.

Other daily training sessions involve moral, mental, physical, and professional development and team-building skills. Activities include swimming, martial arts, basic rock climbing, and obstacle, endurance, and confidence courses designed to develop physical, mental, and team-building skills. Forty hours are

devoted to the instruction of infantry drill and five formal parades.

Founded in 1845, the U.S. Naval Academy today is a prestigious four-year service academy that prepares midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically to be professional officers in the naval service. More than 4,400 men and women representing every state in the U.S. and several foreign countries make up the student body, known as the Brigade of Midshipmen. In 2022, U.S. News and World Reports rated the Naval Academy as the #1 public school, #4 undergraduate engineering school, and #6 national liberal arts college. Midshipmen learn from military and civilian instructors and participate in intercollegiate varsity sports and extracurricular activities. They also study subjects such as leadership, ethics, small arms, drill, seamanship and navigation, tactics, naval engineering and weapons, and military law. Upon graduation, midshipmen earn a Bachelor of Science degree in a choice of 26 different subject majors and go on to serve at least five years of exciting and rewarding service as commissioned officers in the U.S. Navy or U.S. Marine Corps.

The Brigade of Midshipmen is comprised of approximately 4,400 students from every state in the union and a handful of international students. Each year, approximately 1,200 young men and women are admitted to the Naval Academy's incoming class.



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FASTEUR Marines compete in BTEC Tui-Santiago patrol competition

Courtesy photos

Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team Company Europe Marines participated in the BTEC Tui-Santiago patrol competition from June 22 to June 26. The event covered 120km of the Camino de Santiago, with a 6-man team completing multiple skill tests along the way. Tests included land navigation, marksmanship, NATO obstacle course, grenade throw and a river crossing. The competition consisted of teams from France, United Kingdom, Portugal, as well as Spanish Army, Air force and Marines.



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USO Rota supports service members, families around the installation

Courtesy Photos

Our friends at USO Rota have been busy supporting our service members and their families across the installation and waterfront. Here's a few of the things they've been up to!

"Teddy Bear Club" for children



Sweets at Naval Hospital Rota



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World Cup Fever at NAVSTA Rota

By Lt. Daniel Ehrlich
NAVSTA Rota Public Affairs

A couple weeks has not removed the fervor of the Spanish faithful about "La Roja's" second star, nor has it for the members of the American community at Naval Station Rota. We are slowly curing the epidemic that has spread across the base, but do we really want to?

Watching the World Cup in a nation with a competitive football, sometimes known as soccer, team was an unbeatable experience. Americans simply do not root as hard for their football clubs and the U.S. Men's National Team (USMNT) as much as England, France, Portugal, and, yes, Spain. The additive effect that the World Cup is a once-every-four-years tournament adds the dramatic effect. You simply can't help but get pulled in.

This year's World Cup featured 104 matches across 16 cities in Canada, Mexico, and our home nation of the United States. It is a strange paradox to be a U.S. service member serving overseas watching the World Cup in your home. You can connect to it, but you don't feel the same energy that was running through the streets of many American cities, and that energy is powerful. You could certainly feel it run through the hallways at work. Almost every conversation would start: "Hey, did you see the match last night?"

More than any previous World Cup did I feel that the nation was truly behind our boys in red, white, and blue. Maybe it was

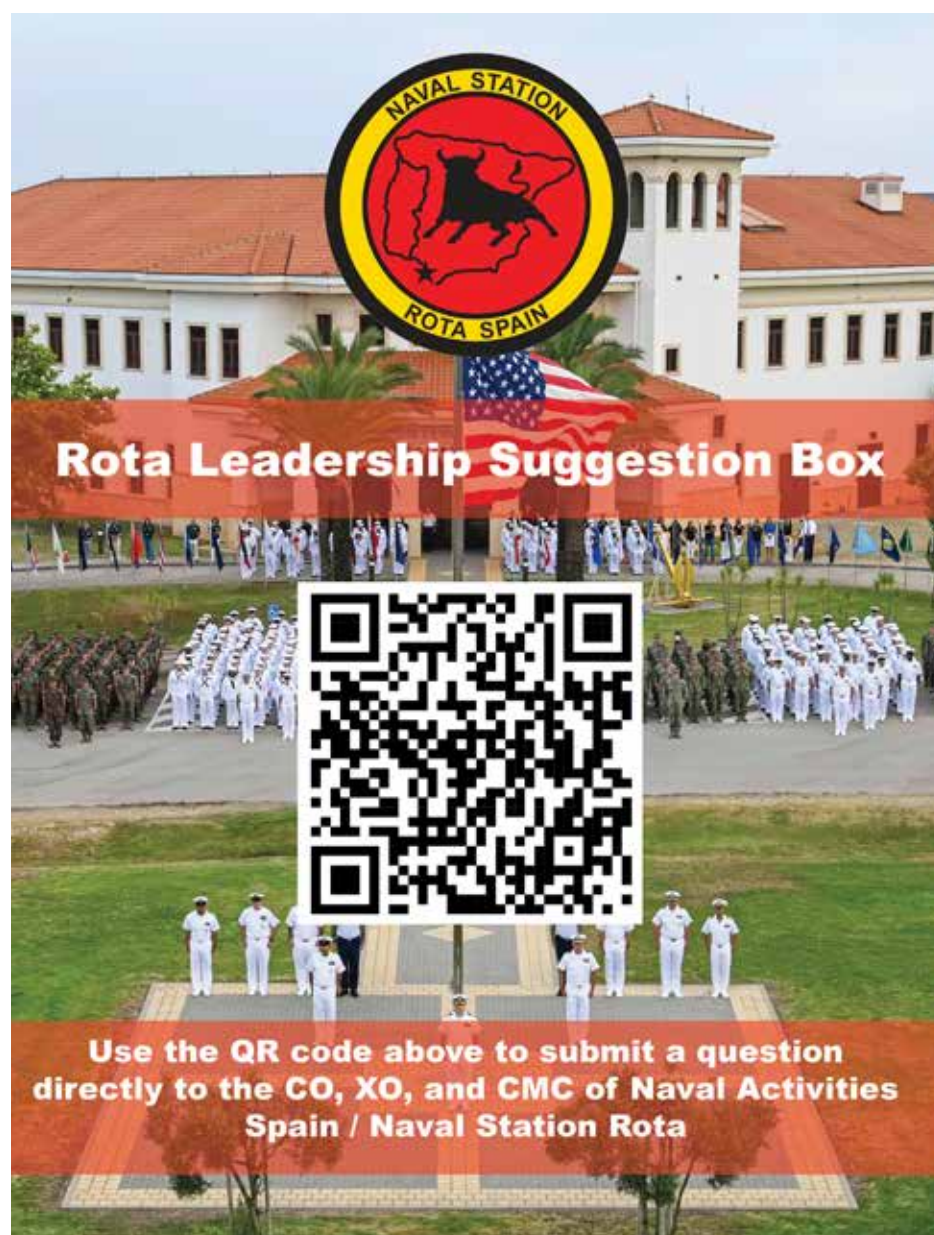
America's 250th birthday landing smack-dab in the middle of the tournament. Maybe it was the strong national fervor that comes with hosting the tournament. Maybe it was a mutual understanding as Americans that this would be a chance to do something really funny to all those soccer purists. The effect, regardless of the cause, was the same: the U.S. team did better than it ever had before yet still failed to reach the Round of Eight and the realm of soccer royalty.

It would have been nice to have that spectacle of a July 10 match between Spain and the U.S., but destiny kicked us in the face... and so did Belgium 4-1. What it did do was take the pressure off us Americans stationed here in Rota, and that is where the epidemic truly took off. We were able to put the full force of our rooting interests behind our adopted country, the one whose community is our second home and accepts us: Spain.

Almost instantly the red and yellow kits came out. Americans began to gossip and fret openly with their Spanish colleagues, neighbors, and friends about Spain's recent and upcoming matches. Commands began to hold "jersey days" to not only show off the spirit of their own teams but also wear kits to back the host nation.

We reached epidemic proportions before the World Cup semi-final match.

See **WORLD CUP** Page 31



Use the QR code above to submit a question directly to the CO, XO, and CMC of Naval Activities Spain / Naval Station Rota



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8 lbs 1 oz
Born on July 20th, 2026
Congrats to Alejandro Cervantes Castro & Breanna Federico

Deya S. Bond
8 lbs 5 oz
Born on July 28th, 2026
Congrats to Peyton & Brett Bond

Carlota K. Chambers
8 lbs 2 oz
Born on August 9th, 2026
Congrats to Leighna & Tre Chambers



NAVY FAMILY OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Navy Family Ombudsman Program is designed to provide better and faster communication between Navy families and Navy leadership. Navy commands and all deploying units, including the reserves have an Ombudsman, typically a spouse of one of the command's active-duty members. Ombudsmen are official, appointed, liaisons between commanding officers and families. They can expedite communication between the command and families. In addition, Ombudsmen provide information on services, upcoming events, and/or help in crisis situations. Air Force Key Spouses & Family Readiness Assistants are similar to Ombudsmen, support service members, their families, and command leadership. Contact your command's representative to be added to their distribution list.

Ombudsman Coordinator Fatima Majidi-Nicholson (fatemeh.majidi-nicholson.naf@us.navy.mil)



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NAVSTA Rota Command Picnic

Photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Drace Wilson and Petty Officer 2nd Class Jett Morgan

Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota personnel and family members celebrated summer with a command picnic July 17. After NAVSTA Rota's Commanding Officer, Capt. Charles Chmielak, gave remarks, everyone took part playing games in the sun and eating some burgers and hotdogs in the shade.



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Spain throughout the tournament had mown down competition through sheer talent, skill, and cohesiveness. One goal allowed through their entire tournament. Now, they faced their biggest threat yet: the offensive powerhouse of France. It felt like what should've been the actual final. Many members of the Naval Station Rota community, including myself, watched intently at bars, restaurants, and watch parties alongside their Spanish friends. When Spain won, I felt almost as if the USMNT had won.

The Final was a formality. The

celebration was what mattered. Listening to car horns, shouting, cheering, singing. That was the appetizer. Coming to work the next morning and celebrating with my Spanish colleagues and friends, that was the true gift. It put a bow on an incredibly memorable experience. We, as one, were champions. I'm honored to be accepted into that distinction as part of this community, and I think I'll hold off on fever medication until the next World Cup in 2030. I guess I'll see you then, Rota. I think a familiar country might be hosting.



Gilthead Sea Bream (Dorada)"a la Roteña" Rota's Signature Fish Dish

Every summer during the first long weekend in August the town of Rota comes alive with one of its most beloved celebrations: The Urta Festival. The streets fill with music, local food, and visitors eager to enjoy the flavors that have made this fishing town famous.

The festival takes its name from the urta, a local rock fish traditionally prepared "a la Roteña," one of the most celebrated dishes in Andalusian cuisine. Although urta is the classic choice, the delicious onion sauce, tomato, and peppers typically used for this dish pairs beautifully with many types of white fish.

For our recipe, we've chosen gilthead sea bream (dorada), a wonderful alternative that is easy to find and perfect for recreating one of Rota's most traditional dishes at home.

Depending on the size available at your local fish market, you can prepare this recipe with one large gilthead sea bream or two smaller ones.

Prepared with extra virgin olive oil, ripe tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic, and a touch of Sherry wine, this recipe beautifully reflects the Mediterranean flavors that have shaped our local gastronomy for generations.

Although urta is the traditional fish used for this recipe, gilthead sea bream, European sea bass, snapper, or any other firm white fish work beautifully with this classic "a la Roteña" sauce. Pair it with a chilled glass of Manzanilla from Sanlúcar de Barrameda or a dry Sherry wine for an authentic taste of Andalusia.

Ingredients:

- 1 large gilthead sea bream (about 2–2½ lb / 1–1.2 kg), or 2 smaller gilthead sea bream (about 1 lb / 450–500 g each), cleaned
- 2 medium potatoes
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 lb (500 g) ripe tomatoes, peeled and diced
- 3 green peppers, sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- Juice of 1 lemon

- 1 lemon, sliced for garnish
- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 5 tablespoons dry Sherry wine
- ½ cup (125 ml) water
- 1 small glass of cognac
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Fresh chopped parsley
- For the Herb Paste**
- 2 garlic cloves
- Fresh chopped parsley
- Salt
- Whole black peppercorns
- A drizzle of extra virgin olive oil



Method:

- Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).
- Peel the potatoes, slice them into thick rounds, and arrange them in a baking dish. Drizzle with a little olive oil, season with salt, and bake for about 10 minutes.
- Season the gilthead sea bream with salt and freshly ground black pepper. You can leave the head on for a traditional presentation or remove it and use it later to prepare a delicious homemade fish stock.
- Meanwhile, prepare the sofrito, the flavorful base of so many Spanish dishes. Heat a little olive oil in a large frying pan and gently cook the sliced onions, minced garlic, and green peppers for about 10 minutes.
- Add the diced tomatoes and continue cooking for another 15 minutes, until the vegetables are soft and the sauce has thickened slightly.
- Remove the potatoes from the oven

- and place the sea bream (or the two smaller fish) on top. Cover generously with the tomato and vegetable sauce.
- Prepare the herb paste by crushing together the garlic, parsley, salt, peppercorns, and a drizzle of olive oil using a mortar and pestle. Spread the mixture over the fish, then pour in the water and lemon juice.
- Add the bay leaves and drizzle with the dry Sherry wine. Bake for 30–40 minutes, depending on the size of the fish, or until the flesh flakes easily with a fork.
- About 5 minutes before the end of the cooking time, pour in the cognac together with a few spoonfuls of the cooking juices. Return to the oven to finish cooking.
- Garnish with fresh parsley and lemon slices before serving.
- Serve immediately with the roasted potatoes and plenty of the delicious Rota-style sauce.



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