



Photo by Andre Joosten

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*General Mueller answers a question from the crowd during Safety Day.*

Photo by André Joosten



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# COMMANDER'S CORNER

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## Professionalism, Perseverance and Pride!

This month, as chronicled in this edition of the SKYWATCH, aircraft LX-N 90449 was removed from the operational aircraft inventory in preparation for its final flight to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in the United States. 449 will be transferred to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group and placed into long-term storage.

There was nothing wrong with LX-N 90449; in fact, the last mission it flew was an assurance mission along the eastern border of the NATO Alliance. It completed this mission as tasked and landed Fully Mission Capable – ready for more.

Nevertheless, the retirement of 449 is just the next step in a series of changes which the E-3A Component will undergo over the next year to posture the NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control force for sustainment to 2035.

By far, the number one question I get asked regarding all of the planned changes to the E-3A Component is why – or why now?

There is no easy answer here as there are numerous combinations of national decisions, program direction from the NAPMO nations and overarching NATO strategic guidance which can all be used to tell the story.

No one decision stands out as the overarching reason for this reduction in force. However, taken in combination these decisions direct the reduction in both the size and capability of the E-3A Component – direction the E-3A Component followed with the retirement of aircraft 449.

If the current path for re-organization is maintained, by the end of 2017 the NAEW Force will be operating from a single international Headquarters located here at NATO Airbase Geilenkirchen. The E-3A Component will maintain operations with 14 aircraft and approximately 1,600 personnel.

To be clear, our Component will remain the second largest Airborne Command and Control Unit in the world, second only to that maintained by the United States. In addition, increased Airborne Early Warning and Control capability within the NATO alliance, in nations such as Turkey, Greece and Italy, offer the potential to provide NATO a larger AEW&C force in the future.

Unfortunately, the path to change here at NATO Airbase Geilenkirchen is neither clear nor easy, particularly when it comes to downsizing civilian personnel. There is no good way to couch the provisionally redundant notices which went to over 160 NATO civilians last month. Each NATO civilian plays an important role in our E-3A Component and each departure will require the transfer of substantial years of experience and knowledge to the remaining workforce. This is not a simple task – and something which will require everyone's sincere effort.

In my three years as your Component Commander there are three qualities embodied within all of you which give me confidence the E-3A Component will see through this period of change.

Professionalism, each day I witness the operations of the E-3A Component conducted by individuals who know the importance of their role to our overall mission and who possess the self-discipline to accomplish their duties following established procedures.

This is the hallmark of professionalism, something I count on each day to know the mission will get done in a safe and effective manner. Maintaining this professionalism through the upcoming change is key to sustaining our success in the E-3A Component.

The second quality I see in action each day is perseverance. Regardless of the challenges presented, time and time again the personnel in the E-3A Component adapt and overcome to sustain our mission. Nowhere is this more evident than in the realm of personnel changes.

Implementation of the Forced Review results in the third PE change in ten years in the E-3A Component. Despite the constant uncertainty created by all this change the E-3A Component sustained the mission.

In 2014 we concluded a 4 year mission in Afghanistan while seamlessly and simultaneously transitioning to the

important assurance measures mission. Perseverance certainly enabled our success.

Finally, as I walk around the E-3A Component I am still struck by the incredible sense of PRIDE I find in each work section.

This pride is an incredible reflection on your professionalism – but equally telling of the character of the personnel embodied within our Component. The pristine condition of aircraft 449 is just the latest example of the PRIDE we all hold in the E-3A Component.

As Keri and I depart the E-3A Component next month be certain we are leaving with this an incredible sense of PRIDE – Proud to be a part of a one of a kind, multi-national organization which for 33 years has stood as an excellent example of what is possible through multi-national cooperation under the umbrella of NATO.

We wish you the best of luck in the coming years and leave knowing that your professionalism, perseverance and pride will sustain the mission success in the E-3A Component for years to come.

  
Maj Gen Andrew M. Mueller

**Skywatch** 

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29 May 2015

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# Skywatch evolves with fresh, new look



NATO AIR BASE GELENKIRCHEN

## Skywatch

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Photo by André Joosten

By Tech. Sgt. R. Michael Longoria

As you may have noticed by now, the NATO Skywatch has a different appearance than it did last month. The E-3A Component Public Affairs Office decided to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Skywatch by giving the newspaper an updated layout and look.

The Skywatch has gone through several changes since it was first published on May 31, 1985. The primary purpose of the Skywatch is to inform and entertain; however, this change, just as others in the past, is to make the newspaper more visually appealing. Not only has the look of the Skywatch changed, the process in which it is created has progressed with technology.

"During the first decade of publishing the NATO Skywatch, it was a labor-intensive process. Layout back then took two working days. Today, with a special layout computer program, it takes about four hours from start to finish," explains Maureen Geraets-Head, PA staff assistant.

After 30 years, more than 1.4 million copies of the Skywatch have been printed and distributed, in addition the paper receives thousands of monthly views online.

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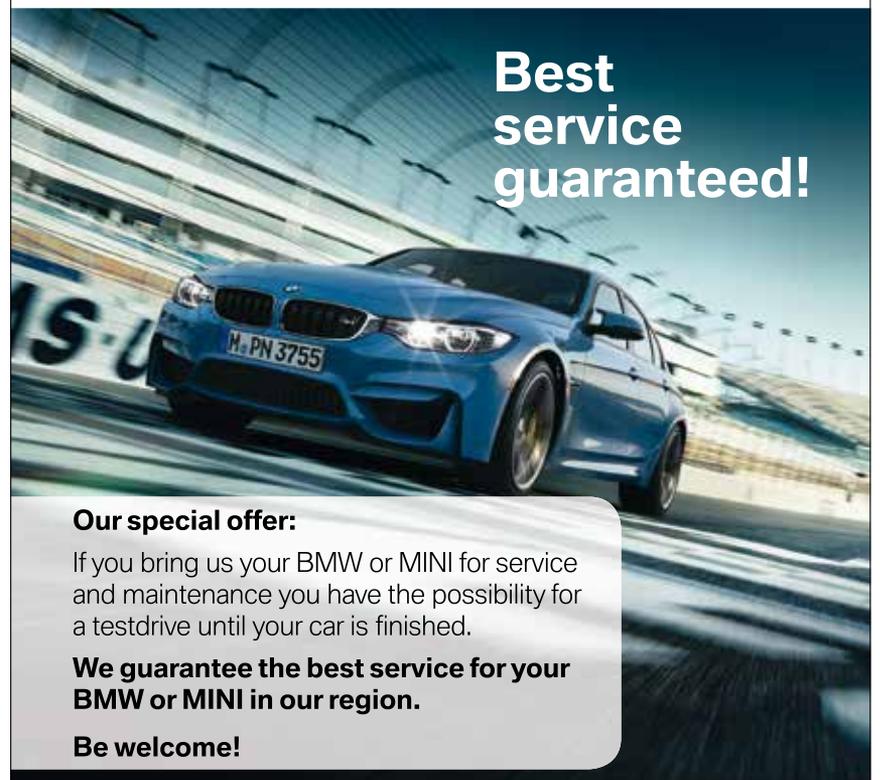
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**The VIPs below landed at NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen and then transitted to Aachen for the Charlemagne Prize Ceremony.**



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of Jordan, **Abdullah II**



President of the Republic of Lithuania,  
**Dalia Grybauskaitė**

# A historic event - First NA



By Maureen Geraets-Head

**Soon, the last entry will be made into NATO E-3A 70-0449's logbook and it will close, forever. Aircraft 449 is about to make history, becoming the first NATO E-3A to officially retire, scheduled to leave the E-3A Component on June 23, 2015.**

Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Probst, Deputy Logistics Wing (LW) Commander and Main Operating Base's (MOB) project officer for the Retirement Aircraft 449 Project explains, "The fleet reduction was decided by the NAPMO nations and the main reason why aircraft 449 was selected to retire was a Depot Level Maintenance (DLM) inspection scheduled for mid-July 2015. DLM is performed on a six-year cycle and costs roughly 15 million Euros. Not performing this inspection means that the aircraft is no longer allowed to fly."

### Three Phases

Colonel Probst continues, "This aircraft was in service until May 13, 2015. On May 18, 2015, the equipment testing started, followed by dismantling equipment and parts. This project is being performed in three phases. Phase one started here, at MOB Geilenkirchen, leaving all flight-essential equipment in place necessary for 449's final flight to Tucson, Arizona, USA. Once it lands in the USA, phase two will kick in for roughly three weeks." The purpose of phase two is to maximize reclamation of aircraft parts using MOB resources.

"The retirement of this aircraft involves a lot of planning and preparations. A working group has been established, consisting of highly motivated personnel who closely cooperate with Force Command Logistics (FCLE) and NATO's Supply and Procurement Agency (NSPA). All these qualified individuals work as a team, doing their utmost to bring this task to a successful end," Probst adds.

Mr. Willy Sluijsmans is the team leader of the 449 retirement project. "The parts that we are going to recover have a total value of 40 million US dollars. Once these parts are removed they will be assessed, re-certified and put back on the shelves in a serviceable condition," he says. "Some parts are no longer on the market or have now become very expensive, making them extremely valuable to the Component. But first, before any specific part is removed, it will be tested to make sure it is still usable," he says.

Mr. Thomas Roskam, also a member of the 449 retirement working group, adds, "This working group consists of personnel from the Electronic Maintenance, Aircraft Maintenance and Supply Squadrons, and the LW staff. We have developed a work card system for phases one and two, with workflow diagrams listing each and every part to be removed in a given order. By using this card system we can track and control all the work necessary for this project."

### Arizona

Phase two starts once the aircraft



*The complete crew of the Flight and Mission deck of 449's last mission poses after having flown an Assurance Mission.*

*Photo by Hay Janssen*

lands in Arizona. A LW team of 10 persons will be available upon arrival of 449 to defuel the E-3A, tow it to the assigned parking spot, and further prepare the aircraft for reclamation storage. 449 will be parked next to an old family member, one of NATO's former Trainer Cargo Aircraft (TCA). In August 2010, this TCA with tail number 19997 retired and was flown - just like 449 now - to this aircraft boneyard used for surplus military and government aircraft.

After 449's arrival in Arizona, another 13 technicians will also be flown out there. The two LW teams will work together, removing as many parts as possible until end of July. Roughly 30,000 lbs. of parts are being removed during phases one and two. For the time being, the prominent rotodome with a diameter of 9.1 meters will remain on the fuselage.

Component carpenters have constructed special wooden crates for transporting parts such as mission and flight control equipment from Arizona to Geilenkirchen. The dismantling in Arizona is going to be a tough job because the aircraft will be situated in the middle of the desert. Performing intensive manual labour in extremely hot temperatures without any air-conditioning is unpleasant for the technicians, also because rattlesnakes live in this area.

Phase three will start after all identified remaining parts have been dismantled by Component LW personnel. The jet will then be handed over to the Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG). This unit is contracted to store 449 for three years. Upon request by Force Command the AMARG can still remove parts and ship them to the E-3A

# NATO E-3A aircraft to retire



The base's Fire Fighter trucks gave a perfect double hose down to 449. Photo by Hay Janssen

Component when needed. After three years, this NATO E-3A aircraft will be scrapped.

### 449's Last Flight

"For this 'one leg' flight - a flight without any operational stops - we have a fully qualified flight deck crew flying 449 from Geilenkirchen, across the Atlantic Ocean, in the direction of Bangor, USA, passing the New England area where it will be air refuelled, with final destination Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, near Tucson, in Arizona," explains Lieutenant Colonel Frank Boshoff. He is an Evaluator Pilot and Head Flight Deck Branch in the Standardization and Evaluation Division.

The flight deck crew for this flight will consist of an aircraft commander,

two additional pilots, a flight engineer and a navigator, plus a communication technician.

Lieutenant Colonel Ekkehard Heinichen, Safety Officer and navigator for this flight says, "All flight equipment must remain in place when the technicians start the dismantling process.

All flight deck controls have to stay valid and legal. This also applies to the communication section, all electronic equipment, air-conditioning, galley and toilet."

Boshoff adds, "The removal of mission deck equipment will change the weight, and this affects the behavior of the aircraft. It is therefore important to perform a confidence flight prior to the cross- Atlantic flight, to verify that everything works according to technical orders, staying in a legal condition to fly."

### 449's Career

During 449's NATO career between August 19, 1983 and May 13, 2015, the airframe gathered 22,206.29 flight hours, operating out of 21 different countries: Afghanistan, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Also, it flew over Europe, North America, Asia and Africa in support of NATO operational activities.

Aircraft 449 contributed to the success of operations such as the very recent Operation Afghan Assist, flying 152 missions and 1,533.75 flight hours, mainly from Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan. In support of Assurance missions, aircraft 449 flew 25 missions and 205.7 flight hours. In January 2015, the aircraft participated in its last overseas exercises: one

called COMPTUEX, in Virginia, USA, followed the February-March exercise Red Flag, in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA.

The last maintenance work was done on May 12, 2015, when one tire and a brake had to be exchanged.

On May 13, 2015, 449's last mission, an 11.5 hour Assurance Mission, was flown by an international crew consisting of 10 different nationalities. Upon landing, five crew chiefs performed the inspection.



Route of 449's flight to its final destination.

The removal of the first parts started on May 20, 2015, inside Hangar One.

Photos by Andre Joosten

Crew Chief Lars Boemer marshals in 449. He worked on aircraft 449 for almost 20 year.

Photo courtesy of F. Jordine & H. Hinz





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# Sports Day Road Bike Tour

By Geoff Bucknall

Just purchased that nice new eleven speed road bike, but hardly used it? Now is your chance to get some serious kilometres in. Over the recent years, it has become a common place for a road bike tour on the Component Sports Day, usually around 100 plus kilometres.

Component Sports day will be held on June 11. Initially, there were only three or four participants, with each year a few more. Last sports day there were 17 participants, maybe 20 plus this year?

The cycling region will be the Dutch, German and Belgium border region. In order to determine type of ride, thus hilly, flat, or a bit of both, a meeting will be held on June 9 at 1000 hours New Gym.

Depending on the number of participants, and the different levels, we can then decide on a single group, or two groups, with perhaps different distances (say 60km and 100km plus).



Please email and let me know your experience and preferences and whether or not you intend to participate, also, if you cannot make the meeting, pass on your preferences via email: [gbucknall@e3a.nato.int](mailto:gbucknall@e3a.nato.int) or [Geoffry.bucknall@gmail.com](mailto:Geoffry.bucknall@gmail.com).

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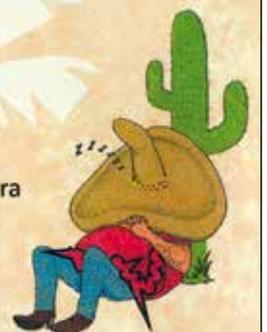




Photo by Tech. Sgt. R. Michael Longoria

## CHASING GREMLINS

The Electronics Maintenance Squadron (EMS) consists of five aircraft maintenance specialties with the mission to deliver precise, proactive, and responsive mission system and flight essential maintenance on the E-3A fleet. During the efforts to maintain the electronics aircraft systems the shops often face tremendous challenges that go beyond the scope of normal duties yet the specialists of EMS continually prove they can tackle any challenge and find technical solutions that have led to the Component's mission success. These challenges are sometimes described as "chasing gremlins" since electronic failures can be very elusive, yet our experts at EMS continually find the technical solutions. To read examples of "chasing gremlins," visit <http://dvidshub.net/r/r9ezen>.



Courtesy photo

## Chief reaches aviation milestone

Chief Master Sgt. Michael Gerber (right) celebrates reaching 12,000 flying hours on May 4, 2015. As a flight engineer, Chief Gerber has flown 10,000 hours for the E-3A Component and another 2,000 hours for the Bundeswehr.

## A trip down memory lane

Navy Cmdr. (retired) Gary Scott visited the E-3A Component on May 13, 2015. Commander Scott was stationed at NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen, Germany, from 1982 to 1986 as a tactical director in the Training Wing. One of the commander's most memorable moments was witnessing the arrival of the first AWACS on base. He also happily reminisced about the base Oktoberfest and other celebrations. "I enjoyed working here because it was different from all the other assignments in my career," the commander explained. "I got to work with people from so many different countries and background that it really made it an unforgettable experience."

Photo by Tech. Sgt. R. Michael Longoria



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# GK Rod & Gun Club Shooting Competition

**The MWA Sponsored NATO International Geilenkirchen Rod and Gun Club is alive and well. The club just hosted a Shooting Competition followed by a delicious BBQ on May 9, 2015.**

Three competition shooting disciplines, Pistol, Rifle and Archery, were conducted. And, for the first time in the club's 25 year history, they had a direct shoot off between an Archer and a Rifle man.

More than 30 NATO ID Card holders and their families enjoyed this event's good weather, good sports and a wonderful BBQ.

The Club's Vice-President Mr. Dieter Brandt, assisted by Mr. Eugen Tolle, provided a safe and fair event for our club members and guests. Under their guidance, even first time shooters felt safe and comfortable shooting a 22 Cal. pistol and rifle for the first time.

The smooth hand of Mr. Frank Weber took first prize for 22 Cal. pistol shooting at 25 meters with 138 of 150 total points. Mr. Dennis Owens, the Club's president, took top honours with the 22 Cal. rifle shooting a 144 out of 150 total points.

His score went up against our legendary Archer Mr. Frits Boskma who

scored an amazing 148 out of a total of 150 points possible. Mr. Boskma walked away with both the top prizes winning in the Archery category and also Archery versus the Rifle.

The club is looking forward to bringing these three shooting disciplines back to the Component Sports Day on June 11!

Transportation will be provided every half hour from the New Gym to the Archery and Pistol range near the IDT area on the north side of the base.

Furthermore, all interested NATO ID Card holders are invited to become members of the club. Membership is only 25 Euros per year single and 40 Euros per year for family.

The range is open 11:30 to 13:00 on Wednesdays and Fridays as well as the first and third Saturdays of each month. Also, they offer 300 meter Swiss Army Rifle shooting in Niederheid once a month.

For information about the club or to become a member, please contact Mr. Dennis Owens at either [dowens@e3a.nato.int](mailto:dowens@e3a.nato.int) or [info@dennisowens.com](mailto:info@dennisowens.com), work ext. 3744.

The club can also be found on Facebook: GK Rod & Gun Club.



Photo by Dennis Owens

# ISC ends year with Bingo Night

By Rebecca Hendrickx

**On May 7, 2015, The International Spouses' Club bid farewell to another fantastic year which has seen membership almost double, bigger and better events and so much more. To finish off the year, the ISC board hosted the traditional members only Bingo Night with desserts provided by our very own board members and lots of raffle prizes.**

After doors of the E-3A Club opened, the club quickly filled up with eager members looking forward to the chance of winning some amazing prizes. Once everyone found their seats, bought raffle tickets, received their bingo cards and pens, it was time for the opening announcements where all our current board members received a small token of appreciation for the work put into this past year. After this, our newly appointed board members announced.

To get the Bingo underway, General Mueller announced the rules and the

progression of the rounds we were to play. Filled with lots of humor, he diligently called the Bingo numbers until, on each round, a winner called "Bingo!" The anticipation of winning was palpable with everyone quickly scanning their cards, crossing off the called numbers, praying that their final two or three numbers were called before someone else called 'Bingo'. After the two Bingo cards were played, the first of the raffle prizes were won. Ladies eagerly laid out their raffle tickets waiting for their numbers to be called and for the lucky ladies, they won some amazing prizes. Once a good portion of raffle prizes were called, it was back to Bingo where the next round of numbers were eagerly anticipated and with everyone, again, praying to be lucky enough to call BINGO!

With three cards and nine rounds of Bingo played, it was time for everyone to indulge in the delicious treats provided by our Board members, with a wide selection to choose from, there

was something for everyone! It was also time again for raffle prizes to be announced with lots of winners and big smiles from the lucky ladies whose numbers were called. Once everyone had the chance to finish their plates and almost all the raffle prizes were won, it was time again for the final round of Bingo.

With much anticipation, General Mueller set about calling the Bingo numbers with his the enthusiasm and wit, which

the ladies had enjoyed all evening. When the last round was played and the winner called "BINGO!" there was a collective sigh of disappointment from the ladies not so fortunate to win but who still had great fun playing. It was now time for the final raffle prize, a Pampered Chef deep covered dish donated by Pampered Chef rep, Heather Kidd, to be won and our customary nametag prize winner.

**Continued on page 14, see ISC**



Photo courtesy of ISC

# MWA INFORMATION

## UPCOMING EVENTS & IYA ACTIVITIES

(Open to all US and NATO identification card holders)

### JUNE / JULY

Visit the Services Branch WSS Web Page for the latest program information and upcoming events

POC: IYA Events: Mrs Neuhalfen, ext. 4954; Sports Events: Mr Stelten, ext. 4920; Food Services: Mr Peeters, ext. 4990



#### 11 Jun: E-3A Component Sports Day

See page 10 for details.

#### Up until 18 June: Youth Spring Soccer League/Practice

Tue and Thu 1700-1800.

#### 22 June - 14 Aug: IYA Summer Break Programme

for children of all nationalities aged 5 and older. Monday to Friday, 0745 to 1745. Enjoy fun games, exciting contests, swimming, field trips, arts & crafts, sports & hikes, free play, special projects, movies and much more. Rate for Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday-package: € 56 with MWA Card, € 80 without. Daily rate: € 15, € 18 incl. lunch with MWA Card, without MWA Card € 22, € 26 incl. lunch. All fees include entrance to the swimming pool each day, and lunch on Friday. Registration and further information at the IYA Office in Bldg 95, x 4955.

#### 25 June: Basketball Tournament

1100-1500 hrs. Participation for E-3A Component, JFC Brunssum, USAG Schinnen and ZVBw Niederheid. Register by contacting the Sport Department: ofc-bpws@e3a.nato.int or ext. 4946. Deadline Registration: 24 June.

#### 26 June: Bavarian Breakfast at the Rotodome

#### 01 July: IYA Trip to Zoom

Big modern zoo with playgrounds and attractions, for children aged 5 and older, 0800-1745, € 25 without MWA Card, € 17 with MWA Card. Registration and further information at the IYA Office, x 4955.

#### 08 July: IYA Trip to Phantasialand

Big amusement park, for children aged 5 and older, 0800-1830, € 47 without MWA Card, € 32 with MWA Card. Registration and further information available at the IYA Office, x 4955.

#### 11 July: IYA Kayaking Trip to the River Lesse

Saturday, 11 July, 0730-2000. Discover the beautiful scenery along the Lesse during a unique descent of 21 km in two-seater kayaks. Spend an unforgettable day combining sport, nature and adventure at your own rhythm and in complete safety. You will pass castles, majestic rocks and two rapids. Along the river there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy a picnic and purchase refreshments. Children aged 5 to 11 have to be accompanied by an adult.

Cost is € 29,50 with MWA Card, € 39,50 without. Registration and further information available at the IYA Office in Bldg 95, x 4955.

#### 15 July: IYA Trip to Walibi

Big amusement park, for children aged 5 and older, 0800-1830, € 37 without MWA Card, € 25 with MWA Card. Registration and further information at the IYA Office, x 4955. Registration and further information available at the IYA Office, Bldg 95, x 4955.

#### 15 July: BBQ Lunch at the Rotodome

#### 22 July: IYA Trip to the Rursee

with cruise, hike and castle visit, for children aged 5 and older, 0800-1745, € 22 without MWA Card, € 15 with MWA Card. Registration and further information at the IYA Office, x 4955.

#### 29 July: IYA Trip to Toverland

big amusement park, for children aged 5 and older, 0830-1830, € 37 without MWA Card, € 25 with MWA Card. Registration and further information at the IYA Office, x 4955.

#### 30 July: BBQ Lunch at the Rotodome

#### 31 July: Bavarian Breakfast at the Rotodome

#### ISC, continued from page 13

All members agreed that the night was full of fun, laughter and sweet treats! A big thank you to General Mueller who did an excellent job calling the numbers all night, for keeping the ladies entertained and focused, and to Rene Peeters for checking all the winners numbers, handing out prizes and raffle prizes.

The board of the International Spouses Club would like to thank all those amazing women (and few men) who turned out to our monthly events and to the those who so graciously volunteered their time to help their nations create incredible nights filled with culture, delicious foods and fantastic entertainment.

We would also like to thank the staff of the E-3A Club for their continued and unfailing help and support both behind the scenes and on the night. Without them, our events would not be possible.

With so many members and board members leaving us for new and

exciting postings, we wish each and every one of you good luck for the future and hope that our paths will cross again. Introducing our new board members: President Malika Keval, Secretary Mary Leard, Treasurer Stavroula Kalaboka, Assistant Treasurer Ursula Rudzki, PR Elisabetta Montefferrri (Skywatch articles and publicity), and Erin Meyer-Dill (Facebook).

From all of us departing board members, we wish the ladies taking on their new roles all the very best of luck!

The International Spouses Club will be back! The Board Opening night will be Sept. 17, 2015, at the E-3A Club. Doors open at 1800, starting at 1900. Please be advised that as of next year, attendance to all ISC events will be members only. Come along to opening night and sign up to enjoy a year full of fun. For more information about the upcoming changes and events, please keep an eye out on our Facebook page (search: ISC) for further questions or inquires please e-mail us via the Facebook or iscofjk@yahoo.com.



Photo Courtesy of ISC

### ISC Spanish Night is huge success

On April 16, 2015, the Spanish ladies from the International Spouses' Club hosted a night full of traditional Spanish entertainment and food. The doors of the E-3A Club opened at 1800 where spouses' were presented with either a bracelet or key chain displaying the colors of the Spanish flag.

Adorning the walls of the E-3A Club were Spanish flags and maps presenting the theme for the evening; the Camino de Santiago, a legendary walk across northern Spain the spans many different terrains and that has attracted tourists for hundreds of years retracing the steps of the pilgrims.

Congratulations to all the Spanish ladies for putting on a night full of history and excitement.

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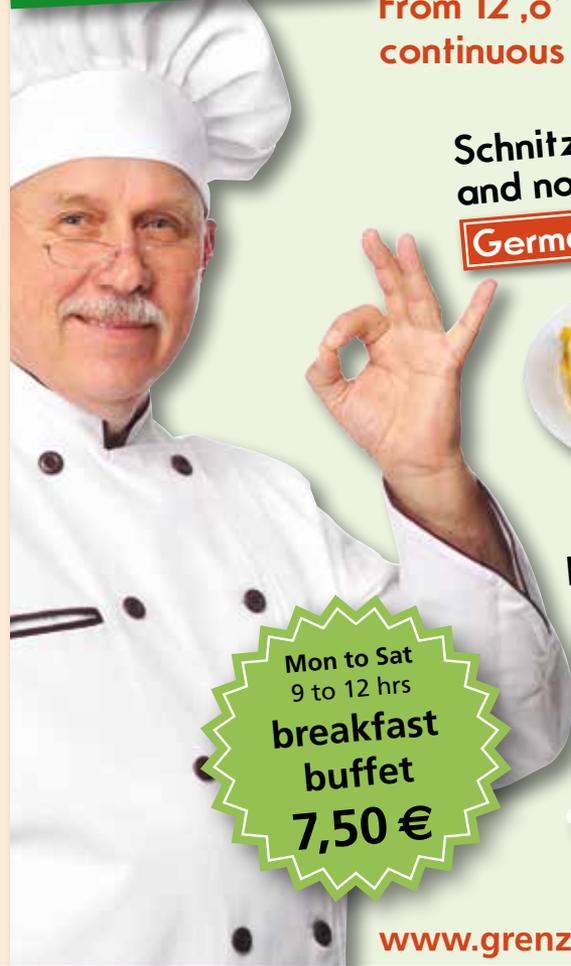
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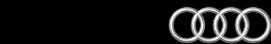


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