

# COASTLINE

June 12, 2025 / Volume 35, Issue 6

U.S. Naval Activities Spain



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# Leadership Corner



**Commanding Officer, U.S. Navy Medicine Readiness & Training Command, Rota**  
**Capt. Michael Mercado**

where I served as the Executive Officer and enjoyed rich Italian history, art, architecture, and, of course, food!

Though administrative in nature, my leadership position has its foundation in my career as a board-certified family physician, caring for patients in the outpatient clinic, inpatient ward, intensive care unit, newborn nursery, urgent care, and obstetrics floor as an independently practicing physician and a residency faculty member training newly minted physicians. In my new role, I resolve to apply my clinical expertise to my administrative decision-making to meet our mission to support regional Naval power projection and joint force readiness by defending, restoring, and elevating the health of warfighters and their families. But that mission is not carried out in isolation: It requires teamwork, trust, and partnership with the broader Naval Station Rota community to include military units, tenant commands, DoDEA schools, quality of life organizations,

Uncompromising Healthcare And Warfighter Readiness Is Our Mission

Hola, Team Rota! I am thrilled and humbled to support our Rota community as the new Commanding Officer of U.S. Naval Hospital Rota. Along for the journey includes my faithful wife, Gemma; our son, Maxwell (18); and our two daughters, Maya (16) and Moriah (9). Great traveling partners indeed. I was previously assigned to U.S. Naval Hospital, Sigonella, Italy

families, civilians, and our Spanish hosts.

I'm eager to listen and to understand the strengths, needs, and goals of our shared community. Whether we are collaborating on medical readiness, supporting family health, or responding to an operational contingency, I know we do our best work when we act as one team.

Some of the areas of focus to enhance the quality of your care include the increased availability of virtual appointments. We know that your time is extremely valuable, therefore we want to maximize the opportunities where medical visits can be performed safely without a face-to-face encounter. Additionally, we offer a variety of resources to meet the diverse needs of our community. Some examples include our walk-in contraception clinic through the Obstetrics and Gynecology clinic, and access to numerous specialty care providers through telehealth referrals, connecting our patients remotely with specialists across the enterprise.

Additionally, I invite you to join our team on AFN Rota, 102.5 FM, for "Wellness Wednesdays," where we highlight useful tips and insights to optimize your health. And if you are active on social media, please follow us on our Facebook and Instagram pages to maintain awareness of any updates, services, or community engagement events.

I am abundantly grateful for the warm welcome I have already received, and I am incredibly honored to represent a medical team wholly committed to delivering uncompromising, quality health care to our Rota community. I look forward to meeting many of you personally and partnering with you to keep our community strong, resilient, and healthy!



On The Front Cover



Rota Elementary School students play a game during Field Day, an annual event held to bring students together by teaching teamwork and cooperation onboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Spain, May 28, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class Marlin Dominguez.)

## 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](mailto:rotacoastline@gmail.com).

*Publication is subject to approval.*

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# Annual Oil Spill Exercise For Response To Maritime Emergencies

By Spanish Armada Public Affairs

On May 9, 2025, Naval Base Rota hosted the annual oil spill response exercise.

This event is one of the bilateral exercises between the U.S. Navy and the Spanish Armada. In previous years, Bay of Cadiz Port Authority, Junta de Andalucía Maritime Port Authority in Cadiz, Spanish Maritime Rescue Services, and, for the first time, Unidad Militar de Emergencias (UME), participated, in accordance with the Sistema Nacional de Respuesta Spanish National Response System to maritime contamination. Furthermore, the Director General of Spanish Merchant Marine was present during the exercise, and Commanding Officer of Naval Activities Spain, Capt. Teague Suarez, oversaw the exercise at the pier from the very beginning.

"Executing joint exercises alongside civilian authorities allows us to improve the coordination between entities during emergencies, natural disasters, or threats to our national security. These exercises foster a mutual understanding in the processes, capabilities, and limitations of each entity, which is essential for a quick and efficient response", explained Spanish Navy Commander Manuel Posada, Segundo Ayudante Mayor at Naval Base Rota and director of the exercise.

U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jon Silva

emphasized that "teaming up with our Spanish allies for oil spill recovery drills is a great exhibition of skill and unity. We get to see how each other's teams operate leading to a stronger bond and environmental adherence."

Every year, the importance of this exercise increases, motivated by the Naval Base Rota Internal Maritime Plan, which became official last year and is requested by the law.

The simulation started with a small spill of 50 gallons of oil from one of the piers at Naval Base Rota, initially contained by the U.S. Navy and Spanish Armada resources on the base, which constitutes level I response. At that moment, Armada deploys the Environmental section, whose objective is to evaluate the reach of the spill to inform at all times about its dangerousness in order to activate the appropriate resources to contain it.

The spill was not controlled and increased to 5,000 gallons, which forced the activation of Naval base Rota Internal Maritime Plan and level II response, including the creation of a technical advisory committee. As specified by this plan, once the spill was carried outside of the base perimeter, coordination with Bay of Cadiz Port Authority started and the Spanish Maritime Rescue Services resources were used to avoid further expansion of the oil throughout the sea and the coastline of the Bay of Cadiz.





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A big thank you to USO Rota for hosting this Memorial Day Ceremony and Remembrance Walk and to everyone who joined to celebrate and remember our fallen heroes.





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# Puzzle Prodigy: Angelo Kirkconnell

By Katrina Geylani  
Rota Elementary School Teacher

I have a 4th Grade student, Kenneth Angelo Kirkconnell, who goes by Angelo. When I first met him in August, right away he told me that he had a special talent he wanted to show the class. He said that he could solve a Rubik's Cube. He walked up to me, told me to mix up the Rubik's cube as much as I wanted, then had us time him as he solved it in the quickest time I've ever seen in person. His 27 other classmates and I cheered and were left in disbelief. Each time we've welcomed a new student this year, we ask him to show them his talent. More impressively, he's so motivated and driven, that he looks up competitions throughout Spain and asks his parents to travel so he can compete. He's gone to Sevilla and Malaga among others, with his most recent competition being held in Barcelona. The competitors are of all ages, with him usually being the youngest among them.

Angelo's mother, Mae, wrote this about

their trip to Barcelona.

"Our amazing Angelo made it to second place overall! He ranked first in the children's category and second among participants of all ages. We're incredibly proud of him. I still can't believe how he solves a Rubik's Cube in just seconds! He's the youngest one competing from Europe. This is his fifth competition. The first four were with the World Cubing Association. His personal best is 13 seconds, and his official record is 20 seconds. We're so proud of him!"



# Spouse Talk: Ties to Family and Friends

By Ashley Leigh  
Contributing Community Member

There's an anonymous quote that says, "happiness doesn't have just one address." No truer words can characterize what encompasses us as a military community. Moving is what we do: We can't avoid it, and a part of the continuous moving cycle we endure is being separated from our friends and family.

Everyone has a different relationship with their family. Some may rely on them more than others. You might be estranged and have little contact with them. Regardless of where you are at, distance and separation become a distinct part of our military life. Keeping up with each person we left can be a daunting task we take on.

We make concessions to stay in contact and nurture those relationships. Sending birthday cards, gifts, writing messages on social media, and phone calls are just some of the countless ways we stay connected to our loved ones. It takes work. And while we are trying to figure out our new community, where to put everything, school schedules and such, connection to friends and family is usually not on the top of our "to do" list.

Those who have never been in our situation of always being on the move truly don't understand the responsibility we feel to appease and make everyone happy with this new transition. We stay in touch



with more than just one person. We don't always realize the amount of pressure we can put on ourselves to keep things relevant and moving along as if nothing has changed.

The internal guilt of being the one who moved can unknowingly cause us to become the CEO of the "Relationships Maintenance Group." We spend significant time mentally listing out each person we need to connect with, how to do it, and then putting it into action. After a time, the position can become overwhelming and produce more pressure than we need. I used to have family that guilted us for leaving and made it a requirement that we be the ones to stay in touch. They did zero work, but complained when we didn't do enough. It was exhausting trying to follow the rules of correspondence they gave. After a time, we gave up. Guilted the fact that we moved so much was just not

See Spouse Talk Page 20

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# Health Promotions: Resiliency and the 7 C's

By Devin Evans

Naval Hospital Rota, Health Promotions Department

When I find myself trying to do something without any help, it's because I'm trying to prove something to someone. The problem is that I usually end up proving that I'm nothing more than prideful. The plans I try to execute all by myself almost never turn out as well as expected. On the contrary, the most meaningful and satisfying accomplishments of my life wouldn't have been possible without help from the experts, my family and my friends around me.

Significant life stressors can test your physical, mental, spiritual and social fitness. The way you respond to these factors is called resilience, which includes adapting to tough experiences and overcoming challenges. Some people may appear more resilient, but resilience is developed with practice and life experience. Consider the following elements and strategies if you want to increase your resilience:

**Confidence:** Being confident in yourself and your capabilities may help you recover more quickly from a difficult situation or failure. Try these tips to improve confidence:

- Take care of your body by choosing healthy lifestyle behaviors (e.g., regular exercise, hydration).
- Seek opportunities for self-discovery

when going through tough times. Focus on how you can grow, or have grown, from an experience.

**Competence:** Having the skills to make appropriate judgement calls and responsible choices can improve your ability to handle challenges. Try these tips to boost your competence:

- Break down overwhelming situations into smaller pieces that you can manage. Focus on what you can do in the present moment to solve the existing issue.

- Develop and work toward a goal. Identify a rational goal and take steps each day to accomplish it.

**Connection:** Strong relationships with friends, family and others can provide help and support when you're going through hardship. Try these suggestions for building connection:

- Prioritize your relationships with people you trust and feel comfortable with speaking openly. Ideally, this is someone who makes you feel heard and validated when sharing sensitive information.

- Join a group with people who have experienced something similar to what you are going through. You can also join groups with people who have similar interests (e.g., a gaming club) to expand your social network and feel more connected to your community.

**Character:** Establishing core values can create a strong sense of self and improve your ability to overcome tough

situations. These tips can help you develop self-awareness:

- Reflect on your personal values and why they are important to you. Understanding the root of who you are can help you approach situations more successfully.

- Try to keep a positive outlook, even when things are not going your way. Your mentality can set the tone for how you respond to situations and daily life events.

**Contribution:** Feeling like you matter and have purpose can boost your self-worth and make you more resilient. Try these tips to improve your contribution:

- Give back to your community. Volunteer at a local shelter or with a charitable organization.

- Help a friend or family member in need. Supporting loved ones can deepen your connections and improve resilience.

**Control:** Knowing that your actions can dictate what happens, at least to a certain extent, is a key component of resilience. These tips can help improve your sense of control:

- Accept change for what it is. Recognize when you cannot alter an outcome or situation and instead focus your energy on what you can control.

- Try shifting your perspective. Although you may not be able to change or prevent an unfortunate event, you do get to choose how you respond.

**Coping:** The way in which you respond



to stressors can influence how prepared you are to handle challenges. Try these tips for better coping ability.

- Practice mindfulness with journaling, yoga or meditation. Use this time to express gratitude and reflect on your strengths and positive life experiences.

Avoid unhealthy coping mechanisms like alcohol or drugs. Instead of attempting to ignore stress, focus on providing your body the resources needed to work through it.

Everyone has experienced challenges. For most people, using their own strategies and resources is enough to get them through what they are experiencing. Sometimes though, you may have trouble dealing with the problem yourself in a healthy manner. It is at these times that it is important to take the mature step and seek out medical support through your Primary Care provider or the nearest health care facility.

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# DoDEA DGF Rota Elementary School Field Day Fun

David Glasgow Farragut (DGF) Rota Elementary School students kick off the summer with outdoor games such as bubbles, relay, jump rope, tag, obstacle courses, basketball, and soccer during their annual Field Day onboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Spain, May 28, 2025.

This event is held to bring students together and to increase teamwork and cooperation in a constructive way with a multitude of fun activities.





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# RHS Class of 2025, Departing

By **Quenette Kirkconnell**  
RHS 2025 Class President



heartfelt Friendsgiving, each moment has created long-lasting memories. One of the most unforgettable gatherings was our senior sunset, where we met at the beach to enjoy one of our last evenings together as a class. We swam, laughed, and reflected on the time we've shared together. Of course, no senior year would be complete without a fun senior prank, which was so good admin had to clean it up before students even arrived.

This graduating class has seen many faces come and go, but through it all, the friendships and connections we've built have remained strong. As we stand on the edge of new beginnings, we look back with gratitude and ahead with hope. Though our time at Rota Middle High School is coming to an end, the memories and experiences we've shared will always stay with us. No matter where we go, Rota will forever be part of who we are.

The Class of 2025 is one of the most diverse high school graduating classes in the United States. Although Rota Middle High School represents a much smaller community, our graduating class has certainly lived up to that reputation. Within our tight-knit group are scholars, athletes, artists, and leaders - students who have left their mark on our school and on each other. Throughout the year, we've come together to celebrate this final chapter of our lives with events that reflect our bond and school spirit. From lunch picnics and craft nights to cookie exchanges and a



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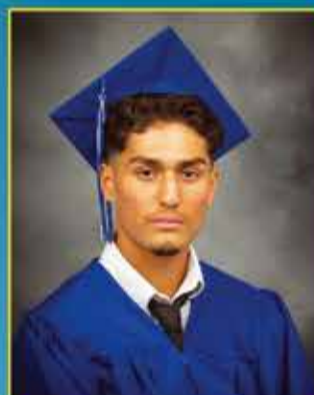
Lauren  
Chambers



Zeppelin  
Hasselbring



Milian  
Jackson



Jayden  
Jasso



Shelby  
Johnroe



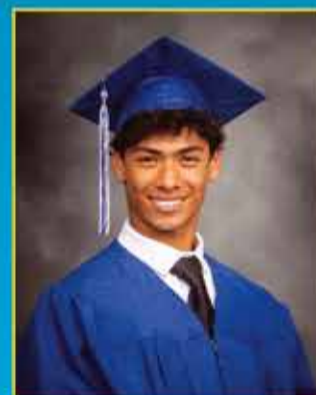
Rebecca  
Owins



Thomas  
Phillips



Joyah  
Rawels



Anthony  
Romero



Keelyn  
Simkins



Aiden  
Smith



Athena  
Stewart



Lillie  
Stockton

# chool Class of 2025



Gabriel  
Cleary



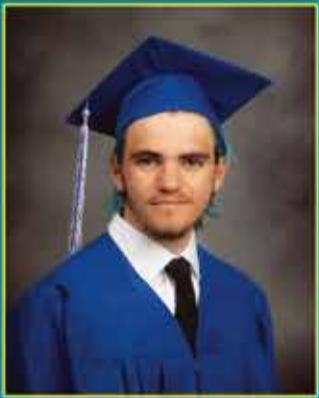
Lila  
Cypers



Allie  
DeMeritt



Joshua  
Gonzalez



Tyler  
Marcus



Vladimir  
Mejias



Jaquay  
Naylor



Rachel  
Owens



Caden  
Ryder



Ronald  
Ryder



Trevor  
Shannon



Camille  
Siguenza



Christian  
Suarez



Landon  
Sullivan



Mia  
Werner



Bianca  
Westberg

Rota and Ramstein-Miesenbach High School Students Base Visit

By Alejandra Tirapu Lucero  
NAVSTA Rota Public Affairs Community Relations Advisor

Students from Rota, Spain and Ramstein-Miesenbach, Germany visited the base on May 7, 2025, as part of a new exchange program between these two cities.

Rota and Ramstein-Miesenbach became sister cities in 2019 after participating in exchange activities for years to foster cultural and economic relations. The main reason behind this special partnership is the fact that the two cities host a military installation, with U.S.

presence in both of them.

This year, they are participating in a new program involving one high school from each city, giving their students the opportunities practice different languages and learn more about the other country's culture. One of its main activities included a visit to Base Naval de Rota, coordinated by the city of Rota in collaboration with the Spanish Armada and U.S. Naval Station Rota. During their visit, students toured different units, such as a Spanish ship, 725th Air Mobility Squadron, and a Naval Station Rota Fire and Emergency Services station, and learned why these two cities are so special.





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# Rear Admiral Dianna Wolfson Visits FDRMC Rota, Spain

**By Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center Public Affairs**

During her visit to Rota, Spain, Naples, Italy, and Manama, Bahrain, Wolfson reviewed new quality of service areas for crews in maintenance availabilities, visited the Spanish intermediate-level facility JEMANDIZ with new additive manufacturing capabilities, toured FDRMC facilities such as the comprehensive intermediate maintenance activity shop in Bahrain, engaged with FDRMC divers, and met with industry partners Navantia, the Bahrain Ship & Repairing and Engineering Company and Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard Bahrain.

"FDRMC generates critical readiness for our forward deployed naval forces, directly maintaining the needed lethality for our ships in combat operations," said Wolfson. "They are the difference for our Sailors who go into harm's way, knowing this forward deployed maintenance team has their backs throughout 5th and 6th Fleets."

Wolfson and Lind also engaged with U.S. 5th and 6th Fleets' leadership and task force commanders to affirm strong support and investments for maintenance and modernization of forward-deployed ships and assets while validating success of the maintenance mission.

"Having served with the FDRMC team previously, it was fantastic to be back and see again the incredible work this exceptional team of maintainers

and technicians executes for our Sailors and Marines, especially in austere and dangerous locations like the Red Sea," said Lind. "It is no surprise that Fleet stakeholders see FDRMC as a readiness generator and warfighting advantage for their forces."

During the all-hands calls with each site, Wolfson provided impactful insight into USFFC's priorities and efforts to prepare the Fleet for a transition from peacetime support to wartime through the Global Maritime Response Plan, which includes significant shifts in ship readiness generation and maintenance. Lind provided updates to RMC enterprise initiatives including assessments, availabilities and manning.

Together Wolfson and Lind presented FDRMC with the Regional Maintenance Center Excellence Award Pennant during the town halls, remarking on the exceptional work and mission impact of the team.

"It was a privilege to show Rear. Adm. Wolfson and Mr. Lind the impactful work executed by our FDRMC team throughout sustained combat operations," said Capt. Mollie Bily, FDRMC commanding officer. "I look forward to their support in removing barriers, streamlining operations and increasing investments that will provide significant improvements for the team to continue to deliver and maintain mission-ready ships deployed across U.S. 5th and 6th Fleets."

FDRMC provides emergent,

intermediate and depot-level maintenance and modernization for Forward Deployed Naval Forces in U.S. 5th and 6th Fleets through fleet technical assistance, voyage repair, contract management oversight, assessments, and diving and salvage. FDRMC is the only forward-deployed RMC supporting two numbered fleets, serving three combatant commanders, and conducting work on three continents.



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## EN1 Hannah Ybarra

U.S. Navy Engineman 1st Class Hannah Ybarra, from Ft. Collins, Colo., is the Waterfront Leading Petty Officer and Dockmaster for Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota's Port Operations department.

Since graduating from Great Lakes "A" School in 2015, her journey has taken her through assignments at Southeast Regional Maintenance Center (SERMC) Mayport, Fla. From 2015 to 2017 and USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10) from 2017 to 2022, before her current role supporting Port Operations at NAVSTA Rota.

As a Dock master, she plays a critical role in ensuring pilots and crew safely guide ships into port while training others on seamanship, navigation, and confidence on the open water.

"I love being out on the water on a boat. It can be very relaxing, especially with a good boat crew." One of Ybarra's collateral duties includes being Lead Shore Installation Basic Boat Coxswain (SIMBBC) Program Instructor.

When asked what she loves most about being stationed in NAVSTA Rota, Ybarra replied, "I love the culture, how friendly the locals are, and how there's always something to do here. You can never be bored."

Off duty, Ybarra enjoys quiet moments with her two cats and frequent visits to her favorite local coffee shop, Momentum Haus, often joined by friends as they explore new spots around town.

EN1 Ybarra's story is one of leadership and a deep connection to both the mission and the communities she serves anchored by a love of the water that continues to guide her journey.









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# Rota Middle High School Celebrates the Class of 2025

By Chad Jimison  
Rota Middle High School News Liaison

On the evening of June 6, Rota Middle High School hosted a heartfelt and spirited graduation ceremony honoring the Class of 2025. Friends, family members, faculty, and distinguished guests gathered in the school gymnasium to celebrate the achievements of 32 graduates preparing to embark on their next chapter. Thanks to a Facebook livestream, loved ones from around the world were also able to join in the celebration from afar.

The evening began with a warm welcome from class sponsor Pamela Dannels. As the graduates processed into the classic strains of "Pomp and Circumstance," the audience rose to their feet. Principal Dr. Courtney Schonffeldt then invited everyone to stand for the presentation of colors by the Rota Middle High School JROTC Color Guard, followed by musical tributes to both host and home nations. The Spanish national anthem was performed by the school band, and senior Olivia Bussey delivered a stirring rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." The moment reflected the school's unique setting on an international U.S. naval installation and honored the unity of its American and Spanish community.

Dr. Schonffeldt then addressed the graduates with a thoughtful and reflective message, surprising each student with a gold envelope containing a personal note and a five-dollar bill tucked beneath

their seat.

"Five dollars isn't much," she said with a smile. "It probably won't even buy you lunch at the Dive In." But she encouraged students to consider how they choose to spend what they're given—not just money, but time, energy, attention, and kindness. "The five dollars is just a symbol... of how you spend your life."

Vice Principal Daniel Gostkowski followed with a spirited and proud look at "the Class of 2025 by the numbers." Among the 32 graduates, 24 are heading to four-year universities, while others are pursuing community college, trade school, or military service—including one each joining the Coast Guard and Navy, and four entering the U.S. Air Force. Collectively, the class earned nearly \$924,000 in scholarships. "You've set the bar incredibly high for what I should expect from a senior class," Gostkowski said. "You will always have a special place in my heart."

Salutatorian Lila Cypers shared a moving reflection on her personal journey since moving to Rota.

"When my parents told me we were moving to Rota, I was scared," she admitted. "I thought it would break me. But what I found was that it fixed something I hadn't known was broken." She credited the Rota community for helping her

See **Graduation** Page 20



Photos by Dr. Stephen Bond, Everett Lopez, and Jadon Afisivalu

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# Sunflowers, Sand, and San Juan: Summer in Southern Spain Is Here

*The contributors are co-founders of a seasoned agency committed to assisting expatriates with navigating Spanish culture and lifestyle. With extensive experience in translation, interpretation, and cultural coaching, they equip expats with the tools and knowledge necessary for a seamless integration into Spanish society.*

**By Ellie McDonald and Brenda Navarro**  
Contributing Community Members

Ready or not, summer weather has officially checked in. Here in southern Spain, it doesn't just arrive; it struts in with color, music, sunscreen, and a burst of sunflowers so bright you might mistake the countryside for a giant Instagram filter.

If this is your first summer stationed near Rota, buckle up. It's going to be hot, yes. It'll be crowded, absolutely. But it's also going to be one of the most unforgettable seasons of your time in Spain, so let's get you ready for it.

**The Sunflowers Are Here (and They Brought Churro Oil with Them)**

Drive inland just a bit this time of year and you'll be greeted by entire fields of golden sunflowers, some already blooming, others still waking up. Not just a pretty face, these sunny giants serve a practical purpose, too: sunflower oil. In Spain, it's the unsung kitchen



hero, especially for frying all the best things in life like churros, croquetas, and calamares.

And yes, the fields are tempting for photos. We get it, but remember: most are private property. Always ask first, tread lightly, and don't forget to check your shoes for critters when you get back in the car. Trust us, nobody wants to bring a tick home from a selfie.

**Beach Life: Sun, Sand, and That One Parking Spot You'll Never Find**

Let's talk about beach days, because they're about to become your entire personality. With dozens of Blue Flag beaches along the Costa de la Luz, you're never far from clear water, clean sand, and top-notch facilities (showers, lifeguards, accessible paths—check, check, and check.)

What's a Blue Flag? Think of it as the Michelin Star of beaches. It means these spots are eco-friendly, well-managed, and swimmable with peace of mind.

But here's the thing: everyone knows that if you're not parked by 11 a.m., you'll be doing laps around the block like a tourist on day three of having a rental car. Solution? Go early. Or better yet, bike, walk, or hitch a ride with a friend who owes you a favor.

**Beach Etiquette: How Not to Be "That" Person**

Personal space matters. Just because someone has a nice umbrella doesn't mean you get to sit under it.

Use your headphones. We love Bad



Bunny too, but not at full volume from your speaker.

Watch the wind. Shake your towel in the wrong direction and suddenly you're the villain in someone's beach day.

Don't feed the seagulls. Unless you're filming a Hitchcock remake.

Smoke smart. Step away from the crowd before lighting up.

**Cool Down Like a Local: Enter Gazpacho Season**

When it's 37°C and climbing, nothing hits like a cold glass of gazpacho. Yes, it's a chilled soup. No, it's not weird. It's fresh, hydrating, and packed with tomatoes that taste like they actually saw the sun.

Locals swear by it as the ultimate summer refresher. And the good stuff? You'll find it at your neighborhood frutería or made fresh at home, not in the

supermarket aisle next to canned beans. Pair it with some crusty bread, pour it into a glass, and boom: Spanish summer in a single sip.

**Late Nights, Bonfires, and the Magic of San Juan**

As the summer solstice approaches, Spain preps for its most mystical night: Noche de San Juan, celebrated on June 23. Picture this: bonfires on the beach, people jumping over flames for good luck, midnight swims to cleanse the spirit, and music echoing into the early hours.

It's one part ancient ritual, one part beach party, and 100% worth staying up for.

Bring a towel, wear something you don't mind getting sandy, and make a wish before you jump the fire (or skip the jumping and just roast a marshmallow—no judgment.)

**Andalusia in the Summer: No Filter Needed**

From the sunflower-lined highways to the bonfire-lit beaches, summer in southern Spain is as magical as it is warm. So plan your beach days wisely, keep a bottle of gazpacho in the fridge, and always, *always*, have a towel in the trunk just in case the day turns into a swim.

Whether you're here for the season or the whole tour, this is Spain at its fullest: hot, festive, a little chaotic, and completely unforgettable.



# FFSC Annual Rota Ignites Military Spouses (R.I.S.E) Event

**By Monica Gonzalez**  
FFSC Work and Family Life Specialist

The Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) hosted its annual Rota Ignites Military Spouses (R.I.S.E) event on Friday, May 16, at the Chapel, bringing together military spouses for a day of personal growth and connection. This event offers spouses valuable opportunities to connect with resources and programs available on the installation.

The event kicked off with an interactive learning session featuring presenters from the Legal Office, Human Resources Office (HRO), USO, Military Spouse Advocacy Network, MWR, Ombudsmen, the air terminal, and local colleges. These sessions provided participants with information and the chance to ask questions, giving them access to a wide range of support services.

Following the learning session, attendees had the opportunity to explore the expo, where they could meet with local organizations offering resources in areas like employment, entrepreneurship,

self-care, travel, volunteerism, education, and more. Several home-based business entrepreneurs also had the opportunity to showcase their products.

FFSC extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended, as well as to the community partners who made this event possible. Special thanks go out to MWR, USO, NEX, and our presenters for their extra support. We look forward to seeing everyone again at next year's R.I.S.E event!



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# Graduation Continued from page 17

grow in confidence and encouraged her classmates to embrace change with courage. "Let the world surprise you," she said. "And don't be afraid to start over—because sometimes the thing that feels like it might break you might just be the thing that puts you back together."

Valedictorian Camille Siguenza brought both laughter and insight with her creative take on the children's book "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie," reimagined as "If You Give a Grad a Diploma." Her witty reflection highlighted the unpredictable and exciting road ahead.

"Our lives can sway in any direction," she said. "If I can impart any encouragement this evening, I hope it is this: Be kind to yourself, be patient with yourself, and never cease getting to know who you are."

Senior Class President Quenette Kirconnell looked back fondly on shared memories, from beach sunsets and craft nights to a senior prank that "admin so kindly cleaned up before everyone could really appreciate it." She praised her classmates as scholars, athletes, and "wonderful people," adding, "Rota Middle High School will always be part of who we are."

The ceremony also featured two distinguished guest speakers who offered words of encouragement and inspiration. Captain Teague J. Suarez, Commander of U.S. Naval Activities Spain and Commanding Officer of Naval Station Rota, spoke with pride about the

graduates' accomplishments and the boundless potential ahead.

"With the knowledge that you gain and earn over the rest of your life, you have the potential to bend the world in ways that even Einstein could barely imagine," stated Suarez. "Your ideas have gravity and that gravity imparts movement, builds momentum and becomes a force unto itself and acts on the world around you."

Following him, Mr. Luke Spencer, a beloved social studies teacher at Rota Middle High School, took the stage with a heartfelt and reflective message that resonated deeply with students.

"Sweat the small stuff," he advised. "Because the small stuff ends up defining us."

His words served as a reminder of the power of everyday moments and personal character.

Other highlights included touching musical performances, a flower ceremony honoring the people who supported each graduate, and the traditional cap toss after Dr. Schonfeldt's official declaration of graduation.

As tassels were turned and caps soared into the air, the sense of pride and possibility was unmistakable. The Class of 2025 leaves behind a legacy of resilience, heart, and community.

Congratulations Admirals. You've made your mark, and your next adventure begins now.



# Spouse Talk Continued from page 6

going to work anymore. Although it put a strain on the relationship, it allowed us to focus on the ones we wanted to retain.

It is impossible to make everyone happy after we leave and move away. Some will be excited for us and others will take it as a personal hit towards them. It's just what it is. We can do our best to keep those ties together. What we can't

do is let that tie become a large knot that we work on but never untangle. Moving may come with lots of uncertainty, but relationships can give us much needed security. Secure those relationships which encourage you and the ones you want to maintain. Keep that tie together and let the knotted ones go.



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# NAVAL STATION ROTA COMMUNITY

## ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS

**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.

## AMERICAN RED CROSS

Mon - Fri, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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.

## AMERICAN RED CROSS EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

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).

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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

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

Email: [rota@nmcrs.org](mailto:rota@nmcrs.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/nmcrsrota](https://www.facebook.com/nmcrsrota)

## NMCRS Thrift Shop

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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.

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 Personal 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](http://VOLUNTEERS.USO.ORG).

For all USO Rota events and more, follow "USO Rota" on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/USORota](https://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.

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Ombudsman Coordinator Monica Gonzalez 727-3232 (Monica.gonzalez26.naf@us.navy.mil)

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# Let's Eat!

By Pilar Ruiz



Have any comments or questions? We'd love to hear from you! You can email us as [pilaraprendiendoacocinar@gmail.com](mailto:pilaraprendiendoacocinar@gmail.com).

This time, we're delighted to share with you readers of "The Rota Coastline," a fresh, flavorful, and nutritious summer classic: Andalusian Gazpacho (Cold Vegetable Soup!)

Made with the finest seasonal vegetables from Rota's farmland, local olive oil, and rustic bread, it's the perfect dish for warm weather—light, healthy, and incredibly refreshing.

At home, my father is the gazpacho expert—he prepares it with so much love, and it always turns out delicious. In the summer, when my sister Cristina is visiting, the two of them often team up to make this family favorite. We always have a big jug of chilled gazpacho in the fridge, ready to enjoy. It's a real treat!

We're happy to share our family recipe with you, and we hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 5 medium ripe red tomatoes
- 2 green "Goat Horn" peppers (mild, not spicy – commonly used in Spain for frying)
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/2 cucumber
- 1/2 onion
- 1/2 slice of moistened country bread
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) extra virgin olive oil
- Salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons Sherry vinegar
- 2 1/8 cups (500 ml) cold water
- Optional garnish (served on the side):
- 1 diced tomato
- 1/2 diced green pepper
- 1/2 diced onion
- 1/2 diced cucumber
- Croutons



## PREPARATION:

1. Wash all the vegetables. Peel the cucumber, onion, and garlic, then roughly chop all ingredients.
2. In a blender or immersion blender container, add the cucumber, green peppers, garlic, onion, tomatoes, and bread.
3. Pour in a cup of cold water to help everything blend smoothly. Blend until fully liquefied.
4. Add the remaining water and the olive oil, and blend again until smooth.
5. Strain the mixture through a fine mesh strainer or sieve into a large bowl or jug.
6. Stir in the vinegar and salt. Chill well in the refrigerator before serving.
7. Serve in individual bowls and top with your favorite garnish: chopped tomato, cucumber, onion, green pepper, and croutons.
8. Ready to enjoy! We hope you love this flavorful gazpacho as much as we do. It's the perfect dish to welcome summer and enjoy the sunshine. Note: At home, we also prepare it without bread—a lighter, even healthier option that's also perfect for people with celiac disease or those following a gluten free diet.

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