

COASTLINE

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U.S. Naval Activities Spain



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Building Resilience Through Challenge and Care

Leadership Corner



**DODEA Middle/High School Principle
Dr. Courtney Schonfeldt**

One morning while greeting students, one young man stopped and said quietly, “Dr. S, I’m really nervous about this test.” The hallway moved around us in the usual rhythm of a busy school day, but at that moment everything slowed. We talked briefly about preparation, about effort, and about the uncomfortable truth that growth rarely happens when things feel easy. I didn’t promise the test would go perfectly. Instead, I reminded him that feeling nervous often means that something matters and that he was capable of more than he believed in that moment. He took a deep breath, nodded, and walked into class.

I watched him go, thinking about how resilience is not built by removing challenges, but by helping students face them with confidence and support. Each moment of productive struggle becomes an opportunity to strengthen perseverance, self-belief, and the ability to move forward even when certainty

isn’t guaranteed. The balance between unwavering support and high expectations is where resilience begins and where real growth happens.

Adolescence is a time of rapid change, growth, and uncertainty. Students are navigating academic challenges, social pressures, and the ongoing process of discovering who they are. While our instinct as educators and parents may be to shield young people from discomfort, true growth comes from helping them build resilience so they can face challenges, learn from setbacks, and continue moving forward.

A warm, demanding mindset acknowledges that struggle is not something to avoid, but something to guide. We communicate to students: “I believe in your ability to succeed, and I will not lower the bar. I will walk alongside you as you rise to meet it.” This approach creates a powerful balance. Students feel supported, but they also understand that effort, perseverance, and accountability matter.

Resilience does not grow in environments where expectations are removed at the first sign of difficulty. Instead, it develops when students experience productive struggle with caring adults who help them reflect, adjust, and try again. Whether it is revising an assignment, repairing a relationship, or learning from a mistake, these moments become opportunities for growth rather than reasons to retreat.

This mindset extends beyond students; it’s also evident in how we lead and parent. As adults, we don’t always have the answers, and we don’t always get it right, but our consistency matters. When we stay steady during challenges, communicate honestly, and acknowledge that setbacks are part of growth, we give young people permission to keep trying. It’s less about perfection and more about staying present, adjusting when needed, and holding both compassion and accountability at the same time.

Ultimately, being a warm demander is about belief that our children are capable of more than they sometimes see in themselves, and belief that with the right combination of support and expectations, they will grow into confident, resilient individuals ready to face the complexities of the world ahead.

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On The Front Cover



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle answers questions from Sailors during an all-hands call onboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Spain, Feb. 6, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Drace Wilson)

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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.

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Chief of Naval Operations Visits U.S. Naval Station Rota

By Lt. Daniel Ehrlich
NAVSTA Rota Public Affairs

NAVAL STATION ROTA, Spain (Feb. 6, 2026) – The U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Daryl Caudle visited Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota on Feb. 6 as part of his tour of Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central.

The visit to the U.S. installation known as the “Gateway to the Mediterranean” was to survey U.S. shore support capabilities, also known as the “Foundry,” interact with sailors, observe the continuity of forward-deployed sea and air operations, and reinforce the importance of the alliance and relationship with Spain and the Spanish Armada.

After landing in Rota, Caudle was greeted by Admiral of the Cádiz Arsenal Vice Adm. Ruben Rodriguez Peña, and Commander of Naval Activities Spain and Naval Station Rota Capt. Charles Chmielak. He then spoke at an all-hands call to gather personnel from across Naval Station Rota’s 45 supported commands.

“Let me start with a simple message: what you do here matters — a lot.,” expressed Caudle to the crowd of service members. “Rota is not just another Navy installation. It is one of our most strategically important forward positions in Europe.”

Caudle toured several significant operational commands during the visit, including the Navy’s only forward-deployed squadron in Europe, Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 79, and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Eight. He also looked in on maintenance in action at the Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center (FDRMC) Detachment Rota’s additive manufacturing lab, a joint technological venture with the Spanish Armada’s Jefatura de Mantenimiento to adapt 3D printing into the production of critical shipboard parts and equipment.

“You’re also operating alongside our Spanish hosts and NATO allies every day,” said Caudle. “That experience builds trust, interoperability, and a shared understanding of how we fight together—not in theory, but in practice. Those relationships, built over time, are a combat multiplier.”

The Admiral Chief of Staff of the

Armada Adm. Antonio Piñeiro Sánchez invited Caudle onto the Spanish Armada’s flagship, ESPS Juan Carlos I (L61), for a discussion on the bilateral relationship between the U.S. Navy and the Spanish Armada over lunch.

Caudle closed his trip by meeting with members of Naval Station Rota’s port operations department, responsible for more than 200 ship movements in 2025 and the sustainment of the five forward-deployed Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers homeported in Rota.

“We are honored to have Admiral Caudle visit to see firsthand the incredible work that Team Rota does to sustain the fleet and enable the warfighter,” said Capt. Charles Chmielak, commanding officer of Naval Station Rota. “The Gateway to the Mediterranean’ is proud to showcase the professionalism and discipline of the Sailors and workforce that keep the foundry strong and the fleet ready to fight.”

Caudle was sworn in as the 34th CNO on Aug. 25, 2025. Throughout his visit, he highlighted his “Foundry, Fleet, Fight” principles.

As the “Gateway to the Mediterranean,” NAVSTA Rota provides U.S., NATO, and allied forces a strategic hub for operations wherever and whenever they are needed. NAVSTA Rota is a force multiplier, capable of promptly deploying and sustaining combat-ready forces through land, air, and sea, supporting warfighters and their families, and fostering the U.S. and Spanish relationship.



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Commander, SURFLANT Rear Adm. Cahill and FORCM Lonsdale Visit NAVSTA Rota

U.S. Navy Photos by Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Drace Wilson

Rear Adm. Joseph Cahill, Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic, and Force Master Chief Jon Lonsdale, spoke with the command triad of Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Spain, during a visit to the installation, Feb. 9, 2026.

Cahill and Lonsdale used this visit to prioritize engagement with the crews, ombudsmen, and spouses of Rota-homeported ships through multiple town hall sessions. They also took the time to focus on Sailor quality-of-life programs and infrastructure, adding in visits to Fleet and Family Support Center and base housing and schools. All of this demonstrated the Surface Navy's continuing focus on and support of forward-deployed personnel to maintain a ready and resilient force.



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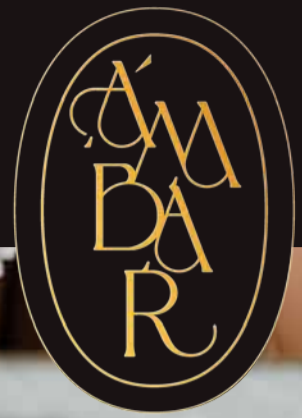


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PUBLISHER'S CORNER

TWO STANDOUT SPOTS REDEFINING ROTA'S SOCIAL AND FOOD SCENE

Rota continues to grow as a vibrant destination for great food and good times, and two local businesses are quickly becoming must-visit spots for residents and visitors alike: Buffalo Sports Tavern and Little John Burgers and Things. Each offers a distinct experience, yet both share a commitment to quality, atmosphere, and community.

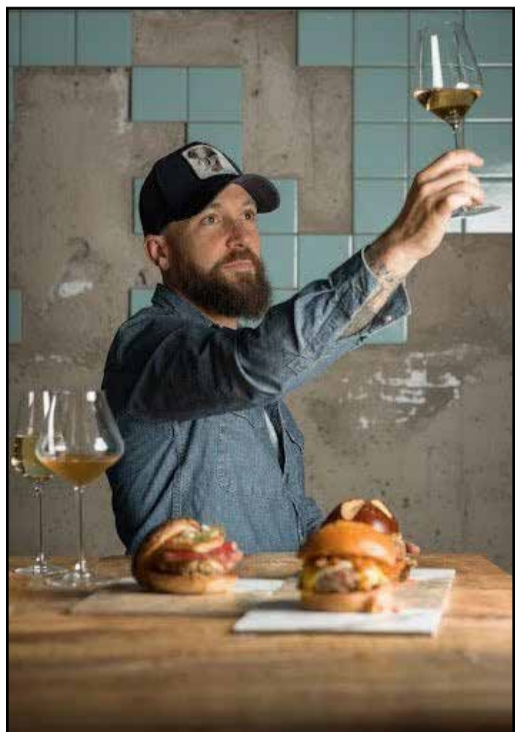
Buffalo Sports Tavern, opened just a couple of months ago, has already established itself as a go-to hangout for anyone looking to relax after a long day. Located in the heart of Rota, the sports bar delivers exactly what fans expect—and more. With large-screen TVs broadcasting top sporting events, a lively and friendly crowd, and a solid menu of cocktails and comfort food, Buffalo creates an easygoing environment perfect for unwinding with friends or meeting new people. Open daily from 5:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m., it has quickly become a favorite evening stop for those looking to enjoy Rota's nightlife in a welcoming setting.

Just a short walk away, Little John Burgers and Things offers a completely different, yet equally memorable, experience. The restaurant is the realization of a lifelong dream for Juan Ruiz, named Best Sommelier in Europe by the International Academy of Gastronomy in 2015 and Best Sommelier in Spain by the Royal Academy of Gastronomy in 2016. Inspired by classic American diners, Little John blends the soul of comfort food with the precision and creativity of high-end cuisine.

Since opening in July 2020, the restaurant has stood out for its authentic cooking and thoughtful pairings. Here, burgers aren't just matched with beer or soda, but also with carefully selected wines from around the world, Champagne, and fortified wines from Jerez. It's a personal and approachable way for Ruiz to share his passion for wine and gastronomy with a broad audience.

From the moment guests walk in, the kitchen sets the tone: the aromas of sautéed vegetables, butter, aged cheeses, fresh-cut onions, and sizzling meats fill the space. Every dish is built from scratch, with house-made stocks, sauces, and emulsions prepared daily. The undisputed stars are the burgers—up to 16 varieties on the menu, including chicken and vegan options—but the offering goes far beyond that. Standout dishes include nachos topped with egg and traditional pisto, Little John fries with cheddar and bacon, a Cajun-style roasted chicken club sandwich, and crowd-favorite barbecue rib croquettes, one of the newest additions to the menu.

Together, Buffalo Sports Tavern and Little John Burgers and Things showcase the diversity and quality of Rota's local business scene. Whether you're looking for a relaxed night out watching the game or a thoughtfully crafted meal that elevates classic comfort food, these two spots prove that Rota has something special for everyone.



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PWD Rota Begins Realignment from NAVFAC EURAFCENT to NAVSTA Rota to Enhance Shore Mission Support

By Lt.j.g James Gourley
 Naval Station Rota
 Public Works Department

Over the next few months, personnel at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota will begin to see changes within the Public Works Department as the Navy implements a major strategic initiative known as the Shore C2 Realignment. This effort marks a significant shift from the current model where Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) is responsible for nearly all aspects of public works, from developing requirements to executing the work. The realignment will streamline maintenance and public works at shore installations, improving support for the fleet.

Under this new structure, Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) will become the operational authority for installation-level maintenance and public works, responsible for defining the requirements for all public works and facility support and prioritizing what needs to be done. NAVFAC will continue to serve as the Navy's shore technical authority, focusing on engineering,

acquisition, design and construction. NAVFAC will continue to oversee all major construction efforts on NAVSTA Rota through the Resident Officer in Charge of Construction (ROICC).

This realignment will involve the formal transfer of specific functions and personnel from NAVFAC to CNIC, beginning with staff responsible for developing facilities requirements, managing the work flow, and overseeing environmental compliance. While this represents a significant shift in our command structure, the ultimate goal is to create a more efficient, agile, and fleet-focused shore enterprise that is aligned and prioritized to the Installation Commanding Officer's needs and direction. The core mission of the Public Works Department is not changing and most personnel will notice little difference in their daily interactions with the department as it continues to serve and support the installation.

Deputy Public Works Officer John Eichstadt stated, "These are exciting times and impactful changes for both NAVFAC and Public Works Departments globally." He further went on to state,

"Installation Supported Commands will start to see Public Works Department personnel within and around their spaces without the NAVFAC logo and, after more than 25 years, will now need to start to recognize the Public Works Department being part of CNIC. The partnership between NAVFAC and Public Works Departments will continue to be strong, as they will continue to rely on one another for installation mission success."



Rota Public Works Responds to Damages Caused by Severe Weather

By Lt.j.g James Gourley
 Naval Station Rota
 Public Works Department

Public Works Department personnel remove debris and support recovery operations following a recent storm onboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Spain, Feb. 5, 2025. NAVSTA Rota is the enduring sum of the 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.





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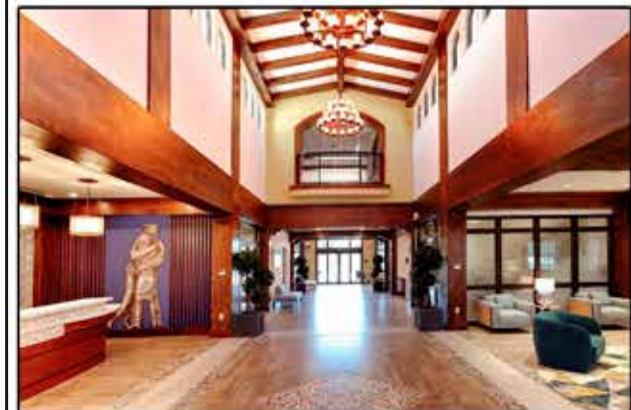
HOW TO GET THERE?



USS Bulkeley Performs a Replenishment at Sea with RFA Tideforce

U.S. Navy Photos by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Johnny Garcia
USS Bulkeley (DDG 84)

U.S. Navy Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in preparation for a replenishment at sea with the Royal Navy Auxiliary Tide-class tanker RFA Tideforce (A139) on Jan. 8, 2026 within the North Atlantic Ocean. Bulkeley is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations to support the warfighting effectiveness, lethality, and readiness of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, and defend U.S., Allied and partner interests in the region.



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Commander, SURFLANT Rear Adm. Cahill, and FORCM Lonsdale Meet with Ombudsmen and Spouses from Across the Installation

By Alexa Ponce-Matias
NAVSTA Rota Public Affairs

Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic, Rear Adm. Joseph Cahill, and his wife Mrs. Angela Cahill, along with Force Master Chief, Naval Surface Force Atlantic, Jonathan Lonsdale and his wife Mrs. Martha Lonsdale, met with various ombudsmen and spouses onboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota on Feb. 9, 2026 for a roundtable discussion.

During the discussions with the command ombudsmen, SURFLANT and FORCM Lonsdale, along with their wives, joined NAVSTA Rota spouses to address key aspects of overseas life. Participants highlighted successful programs that have eased the transition to living abroad, shared concerns affecting the community, and discussed the unique challenges spouses face when relocating overseas. The open dialogue provided valuable insights into both the difficulties and support systems that shape the overseas military family experience.

As the "Gateway to the Mediterranean," NAVSTA Rota provides U.S., NATO and allied forces a strategic hub for operations in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. NAVSTA Rota is a force multiplier, capable of promptly deploying and supporting combat-ready forces through land, air and sea, enabling warfighters and their families, sustaining the fleet and fostering the U.S. and Spanish partnership.

U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Drace Wilson



HSM-79 and USS Roosevelt Conduct Flight Operations During MOB-A Certification in the Mediterranean

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Indra Beaufort

U.S. Sailors, assigned to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 79, with the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Roosevelt (DDG 80), conduct flight operations while underway in the Mediterranean Sea on Jan. 21, 2026. Roosevelt is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations to support the warfighting effectiveness, lethality and readiness of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, and defend U.S., Allied and partner interests in the region.



College Corner: What UMGC and Embry-Riddle Can Offer You

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The UMGC Rota team includes Site Lead Elizabeth Sheehan, Academic Advisor Colleen Grey, and Program Coordinators Hailey Toffeland, Alexandra Wolf, Caitlin Melo-Constantine, and Veaya Holzknicht. This dedicated team serves active duty service members, spouses, dependents, and all military-connected learners on Naval Station Rota.

High school students can take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities at a discounted rate of \$125 per credit hour. Families are encouraged to visit the office to learn more.

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Carolyn Palugod, Associate Campus Director, has proudly supported the Rota

community for 15 years. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from Old Dominion University and her Master's in Leadership from Embry Riddle. As a one-person campus, she oversees advising, outreach, and daily operations—but above all, she is committed to providing individualized, compassionate support to every student.

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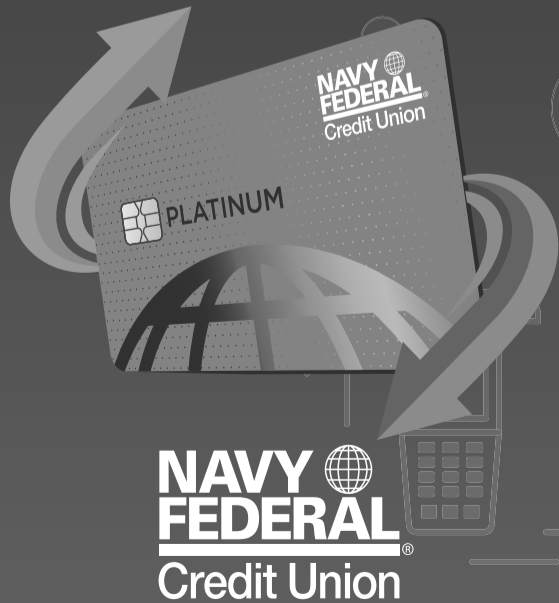
CTF-66 Launches Seasats USV in NAVSTA Rota with the Spanish Armada

U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Deven Fernandez

Shane Connor, an unmanned surface vessel (USV) operator, pulls in a lightfish USV after a maritime domain awareness demonstration with the Spanish Armada onboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Jan. 26, 2026. NAVSTA Rota is a complex operational platform designed to maintain maximum readiness, home to units operating across the spectrum of military operations, and the foundation from which these forces operate to deter conflict and win wars. Commander, Task Force 66 is U.S. 6th Fleet's all-domain task force that drives innovation, development, and acceleration of robotic and autonomous systems across the European and African theaters and deliver full-spectrum maritime operations in concert with Allies and partners.



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Chaplain Parks is the New Command Chaplain for the Chapel & NAVSTA Rota



By Cmdr. Jeffrey B. Parks
NAVSTA Rota Chapel

good things don't just happen; they are realized when great people get together for a common good in order to improve the lives of others with dignity and respect. This tour can be your greatest adventure in the military. Don't allow anything to stand in your way of personal and spiritual growth and development. Let us and others help, and where possible, join in on the contributions to making the program a huge success.

I close for now with a mandate and reminder of our institutional definition of spiritual fitness, which is a great reminder for all of us to contemplate: "Spiritual Readiness is the strength of spirit that enables the warfighter to accomplish the mission with honor." Please strengthen your spirit throughout this tour so that you can accomplish your unit's mission with honor!

See you on the deckplates!

I am greatly humbled by the opportunity to serve all of our service members and their families aboard NAVSTA Rota! As a fellow member of our faith communities, I endeavor to lead by example from a servant leadership perspective in every facet of my duties here in beautiful Rota. I believe in these powerful and simple areas of responsibility: Faith, Family, Friends, Finance, Fun, and Fitness. 6 F's that lead to a winning warrior's mindset. I only have three years to serve here and so our journey begins. Please, let's communicate early and often. I know that



Get to know Chaplain Parks

Commander Jeffrey B. Parks is a native of Bryan-College Station, TX, and brings more than two decades of dedicated naval chaplain services to the communities he serves. He holds multiple degrees in theology, counseling, and psychology, including a Doctor of Theology, and is endorsed by Chaplaincy Full Gospel Churches. Commissioned in 2003, Cmdr. Parks has served in a wide range of operational and ashore assignments across the globe, including Okinawa, Japan; Kuwait; San Diego, CA; and Virginia Beach, VA. His roles have included Command Chaplain for major fleet, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard commands, most recently serving as Command Chaplain aboard USS Essex (LHD 2) before assuming his current duties at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Spain.

He is a Fleet Marine Force Qualified Officer and Surface Chaplain Qualified Officer. Cmdr. Parks has been recognized with numerous personal decorations, including two Meritorious Service Medals and commendations from the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Married to his wife Sharon for 35 years, he is the proud father of two sons serving in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force, and a devoted "Paw Paw" to nine grandchildren. Cmdr. Parks considers it a privilege to walk alongside Sailors, Marines, and their families, offering spiritual care, counsel, and encouragement wherever he is called to serve.



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1700-1800


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POC(s): Ernesto Andino +34 956-82-2511 or Ernesto.Andino@ncis.navy.mil
Steve Barbour +34 646-95-9835 or Stephen.Barbour@ncis.navy.mil
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Service Beyond the Sea: Partnering to Make a Difference

By Lt. Adewale Giwa-Alaka and Lt.j.g Mary Bishop Wade
USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51)

In a demonstration of commitment to community service, the crew of USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) took part in their fourth community relations (COMREL) project this year at the Rota Animal Welfare League (RAWL) onboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota on Dec. 13, 2025. Under the leadership of USS Arleigh Burke's Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Ethan Reber, the initiative reflects a broader mission to foster a culture of responsibility and connection between Team 51 and the local community.

In his daily orders, Cmdr. Reber emphasizes four key tenets: "Fix something; Learn something new; Teach someone something; Do something nice." These standing orders are meant

to shape a culture where service and teamwork are integral to the daily lives of the Sailors.

"Engaging in community service has become part of our culture and an expectation for our crew," said Cmdr. Reber. "These events not only strengthen our bond with the local community but also allow our Sailors to embody the values we hold dear in services to others."

Despite inclement weather that disrupted planned painting activities, the Sailors made the most of the day by performing essential tasks including general cleanup, cat kennel sanitation, and yard maintenance. One notable participant, LS2 Bailey Brown, utilized her specialized Navy training to assist RAWL in organizing hazardous materials to meet safety standards. The maintenance manager, Ms. Angel Aldridge, expressed her gratitude for the crew's willingness to share their expertise, highlighting the importance of such skills in passing necessary inspections. She also mentioned that the facility runs solely on volunteer support.

Lt. Adewale Giwa-Alaka, the Command Chaplain, commented on the enthusiasm of the Sailors, stating, "These events are incredibly popular among our Sailors because they genuinely want to serve their community. Their conscientiousness is a testament to their desire to be good citizens and role models for all."

The collaboration between Team 51, the Sailors of USS Paul Ignatius (DDG

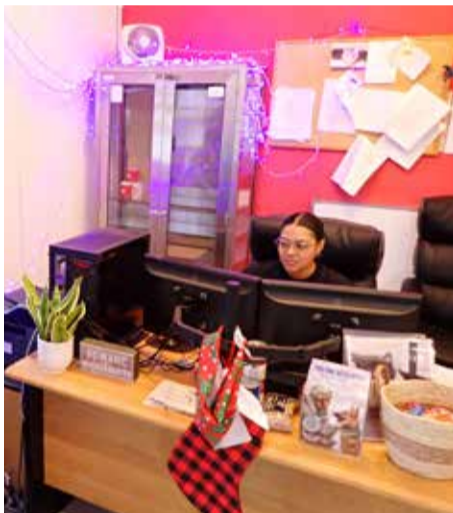
117), and the staff of RAWL exemplified how partnerships between organizations and community members can make a difference. Cmdr. Reber expressed heartfelt thanks to the volunteers, emphasizing their crucial contributions toward a collective vision for enhancing the Rota community through joint efforts.

As the Arleigh Burke continues to engage in service initiatives, her crew remains dedicated to fostering goodwill and making positive contributions to the community, reinforcing the Navy's commitment to service well beyond the sea.

RAWL is a non-profit organization that solely depends on donations. For those interested in supporting, contact rawlpets@gmail.com.



Gas Turbine System Technician (Electrical) Francis Dumaguing (bottom) and Fire Controlman (AEGIS) Emilio Orozco (top) assist with yard maintenance and enclosure repairs to ensure safe and habitable kennels at RAWL. (U.S. Navy photo taken by Lt. Giwa-Alaka)



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FEBRUARY

<p>FEBRUARY 7 AGUSTÍN MANCHEÑO (CANTE) JESULÉ DEL PUERTO (TOQUE) ANA FERROCAL (BAILE)</p> <p>FEBRUARY 14 SPECIAL SAN VALENTÍN NIGHT (BALADAS JAZZ) JESUS SEVILLANO (PIANO) ILDEFONSO MARÍN (CONTRABAJO)</p>	<p>FEBRUARY 21 SELU TORRES (CANTE) ADRIANO LOZANO (TOQUE) RAÚL ORTEGA (BAILE)</p> <p>FEBRUARY 28 EVA DEL CRISTO (CANTE) SANTIAGO MORENO (TOQUE) IRENE OLIVARES (BAILE)</p>
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MARCH

<p>MARCH 7 SARA SALADO (CANTE) JESULÉ DEL PUERTO (TOQUE) LORENA CABALLERO (BAILE)</p> <p>MARCH 14 SARA SALADO (CANTE) ADRIANO LOZANO (TOQUE) RAÚL ORTEGA (BAILE)</p>	<p>MARCH 21 SELU TORRES (CANTE) ADRIANO LOZANO (TOQUE) MARÍA FERNÁNDEZ (BAILE)</p> <p>MARCH 28 EVA DEL CRISTO (CANTE) SANTIAGO MORENO (TOQUE) IRENE OLIVARES (BAILE)</p>
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NAVSTA Rota Catholic Community Pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Virgen del Rocio

By Edward S. White
Knights of Columbus

On the morning of Jan. 24, a group of 58 pilgrims from the Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota Catholic Community set out from the NAVSTA Chapel by bus headed to El Rocio (Huelva). They began their pilgrimage to the Shrine of La Virgen del Rocio, a Marian shrine of significant importance here in southern Spain. The Pilgrimage was organized and led by the local Council of the Knights of Columbus La Virgen del Rocio Council #17363, an international fraternal Catholic organization for men.

After arriving in El Rocio, the base's Catholic Chaplain, Lt. Cmdr. Tomek Maka, celebrated mass for the Pilgrims in English at the Santuario de Nuestra Señora del Rocio, followed by a prayer for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Both El Rocio and the Santuario were packed with Spanish visitors, many of whom also participated in the Mass. Following the Mass, the Rota Pilgrims visited the Santuario's small museum; taking some photos and then returning to the buses.

After departing El Rocio, the Pilgrims drove to Almonte for a delicious four-course Spanish lunch that consisted of salad, paella, carrillada, and a lime pudding dessert, at El Tamborilero. When lunch was done, the tired and well-fed Pilgrims returned home and made it back safely around 7:30p.m. The day was long but filled with fruitful prayer and fellowship.



Spouse Talk: XOXO Valentine's Day

By Ashley Leigh
Contributing Community Member

Valentine's Day 2012. I was working as a social worker for a hospital in Tampa, Fla. This hospital was broken into two sections: a women's hospital on one side of the street and the main hospital on the other. I was working on the main side. My husband was on a 15-month deployment. It was one of those deployments where you never know where they are or when you'll talk to them next.

Valentine's Day is in full swing. I was anticipating getting flowers sent to my office. All day I waited and nothing came. I thought to myself, "Surely there will be a delivery waiting at my door." But nothing was there. I was enraged and sad. Finally,

at the end of my day my husband sends me an email asking if I received the flowers he ordered. "No, I didn't," I told him. He sent me the email where they were delivered and received by someone at the hospital.

The next day, I called the flower company and discovered they sent them to the other hospital across the street. I called over to the social work department asking if my flowers were there. Low and behold, yes they were. Oddly enough, there was another Ashley in that department, who had my flowers sitting on her desk. I angrily walked myself right over to that department, swung the door open (not really, but in my mind, I wanted to), and took back my flowers. The secretary mentioned that the other

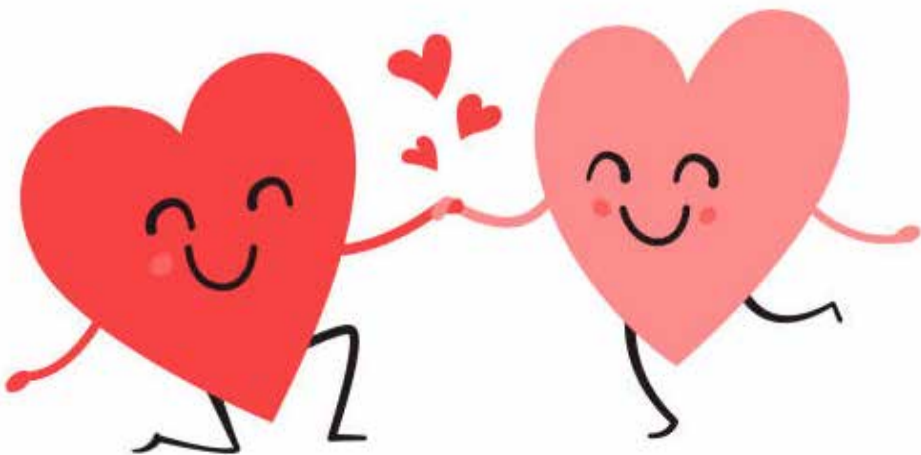
Ashley said her brother sent them. What brother is sending his sister red roses? You could clearly see my full name on the card and a message from my husband. I wrote her a note, telling her she knew full well those weren't for her. I walked the vase full of flowers back to my office.

Long story I know, but how rude right? Deployments are the worst, and they feel even more intense on a special or meaningful day. We as spouses sacrifice a lot so that our partner can be committed to their career. On an emotional level, we give up those feelings of excitement and love on days where the outside world is celebrating them with overly sappy Facebook and Instagram posts. Making our feelings even more "sacrificial" because we are here alone, taking care of kids, and no one to share those emotions with.

At some point, you'll get to have a normal Valentine's Day together (or any holiday or anniversary). Every day that we spend apart, makes the next one even better. However, I would suggest spending those special days with friends. I would spend my anniversary with my friend, Samantha Eno. She and I would go to lunch together and swap gifts. It became a tradition that I still cherish today. To quote philosopher Ramesh Balseker, "Separation is not the absence of love — it's the space where love proves its strength."



"Spouse Talk" is written by Ashley Leigh, a military spouse of 16+ years and a homeschool parent to one "spunky" redhead. She hopes her frank conversations on military life will inspire others to embrace the challenge and find the good at each duty station.



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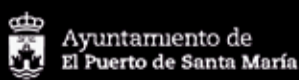


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Navigating Navy Life, Together: How COMPASS is Helping Navy Spouses Find Their Way

By Heather Brown
Contributing Community Member

For Navy spouses arriving in this sun-washed corner of southern Spain, the rhythms of military life can feel both familiar and disorienting. There are acronyms to decode, systems to learn, and the added complexity of building a life far from home. For many, a program called COMPASS has become an early point of reference.

Now in its 25th year, COMPASS—run through Naval Services Family Line—was designed to help spouses navigate the practical and emotional terrain of Navy life. At Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, where overseas assignments amplify both opportunity and isolation, the program has taken on renewed importance.

Led by volunteer mentors who have lived the experience themselves, COMPASS offers spouses an introduction to the ins and outs of Navy life. Sessions

cover everything from military structure and terminology to pay and benefits, deployment cycles, permanent change of station moves, and how to read a Leave and Earnings Statement. Participants are also introduced to on-base support services and encouraged to find their place within the local community.

For many spouses, the value of the program lies as much in connection as in content.

“I wish I had taken COMPASS sooner,” said one recent participant. “It answered questions I didn’t even know I had, and hearing other spouses’ experiences made me realize I wasn’t alone. I may not remember everything, but I know where to turn for help.”

At NAVSTA Rota, COMPASS places a deliberate emphasis on building community. Participants are encouraged to ask questions, set goals, and share

their own stories, often forming support networks that extend well beyond the classroom. In a transient military environment, those relationships can prove essential.

Programs like COMPASS are increasingly seen as integral to family readiness and, by extension, mission readiness. When spouses feel informed and supported, families are better positioned to navigate the demands of service life.

The next COMPASS session will be held Feb. 23–25 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Base Chapel Fellowship Hall. Lunch will be provided, and childcare reimbursement is available. Registration is open through nsfamilyline.org, the COMPASS Rota Facebook page, or by scanning QR codes posted throughout the base and can be found on page 9.



Spanish Garlic Mushrooms (Champiñones al Ajillo)

We hope you enjoyed our previous recipe, the classic Spanish tortilla. This time, we’re sharing another traditional Spanish dish and one of our favorite tapas: Champiñones al Ajillo. It’s made with mushrooms sautéed in olive oil, garlic, parsley and sometimes a splash of white wine; finished with diced serrano ham for extra flavor. In Spain,



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

this tapa is usually served hot, right in the center of the table and ready to be shared. It is always served with plenty of bread to soak up the garlicky sauce. It’s a perfect example of Spanish cooking: simple ingredients, good olive oil, big flavor, and meant to be enjoyed slowly with friends and a drink in hand.

Ingredients:

- About 1 lb (500 g) mushrooms
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- About 3.5 oz (100 g) diced serrano ham
- 4 tablespoons of mild olive oil
- 1 small glass of “Manzanilla”; dry sherry wine from Sanlúcar or “Fino” dry sherry wine from either El Puerto de Santa María or Jerez.

Method:

- Remove the stems from the mushrooms. Clean and drain well, then cut into quarters or thick slices.
- Peel the garlic cloves and slice thinly.

- Heat the olive oil in a clay pot or large pan over medium heat and gently sauté the sliced garlic until golden.
- Add the mushrooms and cook over high heat, stirring occasionally.
- Halfway through cooking, pour in the “Manzanilla” or “Fino” sherry wine and continue cooking until both the wine and the natural juices from the mushrooms have evaporated.
- Add the diced serrano ham and stir well, so all the flavors come together.
- Season with salt and black pepper.
- Finely chop the remaining garlic clove and add it to the pan, together with the parsley just before removing from the heat.



To Serve

Serve hot, traditionally in the same clay dish, or in a small bowl or mini pot. And don’t forget the bread, it’s essential for dipping into that garlicky sauce!

For more local recipes, we invite you to visit our cooking blog: www.aprendiendoacocinar.es/recipes.php

Thank you all so much, and we’ll see you very soon with our next recipe.

If there’s a particular dish you’d like us to share, don’t hesitate to contact us at info@aprendiendoacocinar.es we’d love to hear your suggestions!

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NAVAL STATION ROTA COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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).

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.

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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.

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THURSDAY
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6:30-8:00 PM

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HELLO BABY!

NAVSTA Rota
Birth Announcements

Solana R. McLaughlin

8 lbs 1 oz

Born on January 30th, 2026

Congrats to Samantha & Brittan
McLaughlin!

Kynzlee Gould

8 lbs 6 oz

Born on January 15th, 2026

Congrats to Kylee & Zachary &
Gould!

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