

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks to United States and Spanish Troops at Naval Station Rota in Rota, Spain

July 10, 2016

Hello, Team Rota! *Buenas tardes!* Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you, Minister Morenes, for your kind introduction, for your leadership, and for your partnership. We could not ask for a better ally than Spain.

I want to recognize your outstanding leadership team here at Rota. Vice Admiral Jaime Foggo, give him a big round of applause. Come on, guys. [*Applause*] Captain Mike MacNicholl. Now, apparently, Mike has only been here 3 weeks. Five days after he started, the Secretary of the Navy visited. And now here comes the President. So we're testing Mike a little bit. It's like the in-laws coming over. [*Laughter*] But he is doing an outstanding job already. We have great confidence in him. And I also want to acknowledge Command Master Chief Michelle Brooks. I tend to like people named Michelle. [*Laughter*] And you spell it right, with two l's. [*Laughter*] It's the right way to do it.

Now, we've got quite a group here today. We've got sailors from the United States Navy. We've got the Air Force 725th Maintenance Squadron. We've got marines from Morón. [*Applause*] Marines, hey! [*Laughter*] We've got outstanding civilian personnel. Don't be left out, civilians. Let's make some noise. [*Applause*] And of course, we've got the loved ones who serve by your side. Give it up for our incredible military families. Woo!

And we're proud to be joined by our outstanding Spanish allies and friends. Marineros from Spain's armada. I want to—yes, we can clap. [*Applause*] Come on! See, the Spanish are a little more polite than we are. [*Laughter*] Right? We're just yelling.

I want to acknowledge Admiral Muñoz-Delgado, Admiral Suanzes, and [Vice]^{*} Admiral González Gómez. And on behalf of the American people, I want to thank Mayor Arana and everyone in this community and this country for being such great hosts and partners and friends to all the American personnel and their families who are here in Spain. We're grateful. *Muchas gracias.*

Now, I'm not going to give a long speech. I know you've been standing here for—or sitting here for a while, and it's a little warm. But what I really wanted to do is come down and shake some hands. You know, I—look, I'll be honest, it's been a tough week back home. And I've had to adjust my schedule. I was going to be in Spain for 2 days; now I'm just here for a day. But I didn't want to miss the opportunity to come and thank all of you for your outstanding service.

I just wrapped up our 2 days of meetings at the NATO summit in Warsaw, in Poland. And obviously, it's a challenging time for all of our countries. Recent terrorist attacks have shaken America and France and Belgium and Turkey. Migrants who are seeking refuge, many from war-torn countries, are flocking to Europe. Russia's aggression against the Ukraine threatens our vision of a Europe that is at peace. And a vote in Britain has raised questions about the kind of Europe that we're going to see in the years ahead.

So, on my visit to Europe, what I've been trying to communicate, what I've been wanting to focus on is America's relation to Europe and the fact that our commitment will not change.

^{*} White House correction.

We have an enduring commitment to the transatlantic alliance and to our allies in Europe because you are central to our security, and we could not have a more important alliance or a better set of friends than those of us—those of you here in Europe. That includes a strong and unified Spain, one of our closest allies.

The alliance between our countries is rooted in shared values of democracy and pluralism and open markets and our shared commitment to freedom. For more than 60 years, Spain has hosted Americans here at Rota. Today, this base is home to more than 3,000 Americans. And it's the home port for American destroyers that strengthen our alliance's new missile defense, as I just saw during my visit aboard the USS *Ross*. Although, I will say, when I visit ships these days, I feel like an old man, because the average age is, like, 21 on these ships. And I had to tell some of the folks onboard that you couldn't put me in charge of anything at 21. So the fact that they're doing such incredible work makes me really proud.

But day in and day out, Americans and Spaniards like you serve together, shoulder to shoulder, not only here, but in missions for our common security: in the coalition to destroy ISIL, combating piracy, supporting peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. And that's because we believe that people around the world, and here in Europe, have the right to live in security and prosperity and dignity. That's what America stands for, that's what Spain stands for, and that's what NATO stands for.

So my message today is that we're going to keep standing together to meet the challenges of our time. In the face of terrorist networks that seek to destroy, we're going to prevail not only because of our military strength, but because we will stay true to our values: our diversity, our respect for one another, our refusal to be divided by ethnicity or nationality or religion. In the face of humanitarian crises, we're going to deliver help and hope to those in need. In the face of aggression, we'll stand up for the sovereignty of nations like Ukraine. And in this moment of uncertainty in Europe, we'll remain steadfast allies through NATO, the strongest alliance that the world has ever known.

So, Team Rota, all of you embody this spirit of cooperation and resolve as well as anyone. And my main message here today is to say thank you. Thank you for your service on behalf of a safer America, a safer Spain, and a safer world. And to all our Spanish friends, thank you for your friendship and thank you for your service.

To all the Americans who are here, I know it's never easy serving far away from home, although, I must say, if you've got to be away from home, this is not a bad place to be. *[Laughter]* But even in a place as beautiful as this, you're missing holidays and birthdays and family reunions. But each and every day, you stand up for our country, and you do it with honor, and you do it with courage, and you do it with commitment. So, on behalf of a grateful nation, let me just say that we're proud of you. We honor you. We thank you for your service, and we thank your inspiring families as well, for all that they do to make sure that you can do your jobs.

At a time when sometimes the world feels uncertain, sometimes, people ask me, how do you stay so calm? And what I tell them is, as tough as the challenges are, as serious as the threats that we face, the one thing that I have learned during the time that I've had the privilege to be the President of the United States is that the American people are good and they are decent. And we have the finest fighting force the world has ever known. We have great partners around the world. And I am absolutely confident that people of good will will ultimately overcome those forces that seek to divide and destroy us. You give me confidence. You give me hope.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America! God bless Spain! Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Defense Pedro Morenes Eulate of Spain; Vice Adm. James G. Foggo III, USN, commander, U.S. 6th Fleet; Capt. Michael MacNicholl, USN, commanding officer, and Command Master Chief Petty Officer Michelle L. Brooks, USN, U.S. Naval Station Rota; Adm. Gen. Jaime Muñoz-Delgado, chief of naval staff, Adm. Francisco Javier Franco Suanzes, fleet commander, and Vice Adm. Santiago Ramón González Gómez, admiral of logistics support for the Bay of Cádiz, Spanish Armada. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Naval Station Rota in Rota, Spain.

Locations: Rota, Spain.

Names: Arana, José Javier Ruiz; Brooks, Michelle L.; Foggo, James G., III; González Gómez, Santiago Ramoñ; Mabus, Raymond E.; MacNicholl, Michael; Morenes Eulate, Pedro; Muñoz-Delgado, Jaime; Suanzes, Francisco Javier Franco.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Europe : European Union :: United Kingdom, membership status; Europe : Relations with U.S.; Europe : Middle Eastern and North African refugees, humanitarian situation; Navy, Department of the : Secretary; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; Spain : Defense relationship with U.S.; Spain : Minister of Defense; Spain : Naval Station Rota in Rota; Spain : President Obama's visit; Spain : Relations with U.S.; Terrorism : Global threat; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; Ukraine : Russia, role; United Kingdom : European Union, membership status.

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