

PRESS RELEASE

US EMBASSY MADRID, SPAIN



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR SOLOMONT ON STATIONING OF U.S. VESSELS IN ROTA, SPAIN

I was extremely pleased by the October 5th joint announcement by President Zapatero, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen and U.S. Secretary of Defense Panetta that Spain has decided to host four American Aegis-class ships. These ships will be an important element of the collective missile defense strategy agreed to at last year's NATO Defense Ministerial at Lisbon. This decision demonstrates Spain's commitment to the common defense of Europe and its key role within the Alliance. Spain has long been a linchpin within NATO, having repeatedly demonstrated its commitment in operations throughout the world.

We value Spain's partnership in stationing U.S. Naval forces and have a long history of bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the high seas, in training missions and in joint operations. We train and exercise with Spanish naval forces, and Spain's excellent naval facilities at Rota have welcomed visits of U.S. ships operating in the Atlantic or transiting the Mediterranean. There is work to be done in moving forward with this initiative, and I thank our navies in advance for the cooperation and commitment they dedicate to this important endeavor.

I am confident that the crews and their families will be welcomed by the gracious people of Rota, Puerto Santa Maria, Cadiz and other surrounding communities, further expanding community ties. This project will have a significant positive impact on the region's economy, through construction of some new facilities and the presence of the crews and their families. Reflecting on my own experience since I arrived in Spain almost two years ago and my travels since then, I am grateful for the many friendships I have made and hold the greatest affection for the people of Spain.

All of us at the Embassy appreciate the efforts of the Government of Spain and the Ministry of Defense to make this agreement possible, and we look forward to even greater cooperation between the U.S. and Spain.

Madrid, October 6, 2011