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United States. Cooperation &  
Security

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## United States. Cooperation & Security

### Resumen:

La reciente demanda del Departamento de Estado norteamericano para ubicar en Rota una veintena de aeronaves da pie a reflexionar sobre el marco de relación con este país, su peso y relevancia el esquema defensivo hispano. España es un aliado preferente de Estados Unidos y el vínculo entre ambas naciones estratégico.

### *Abstract:*

*The recent demand by the US State Department to locate twenty aircraft in Rota gives food for thought on both the framework of relations with this country and their weight and relevance in the Spanish defensive scheme. Spain is a preferred ally of the United States and the link between the two nations is strategic.*

### Palabras clave:

España, Estados Unidos, convenio hispano norteamericano, Rota, Moron.

### *Keywords:*

*Spain, United States, US Spain Convention, Rota, Moron.*

*«This federal republic was born too small, and needed the support and effort of two States as powerful as Spain and France to achieve its independence. The day will come when it grows and becomes huge, even a terrible giant in those regions. It will then forget the benefits it received from the two powers, and will only think of its grandeur. The first step this power will take will be to seize Florida so it can dominate the Gulf of Mexico. After bothering us in that way and our relations with the New Spain, it will try to conquer this vast empire, which we will not be able to defend against a formidable power established on the same continent and a close neighbour ».*

Letter addressed to His Majesty Carlos III from the Conde de Aranda in 1783

## Introduction

The US State Department has recently made a request to locate twenty aircraft in Rota. Strictly speaking, it is not a military force but a question of elements attached to the State Department, in this case coming from Afghanistan, which are expected to give support to different governments in the fight against terrorism and drug-trafficking, and in border control, etc. They will not be stationed there permanently; it will be an intermediate and logistical stage in their relocation that will take place in North African Mediterranean and Atlantic Coast countries. Spain will be responsible for logistical matters and repairs. The request exceeds the limits envisaged in the current Convention and a decision is being awaited.

Globalisation is the great phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We live in a complex world; what defines this century are interrelations – nothing is completely foreign anymore - and acceleration, rather than the direction forward that is being taken. Working this out becomes critical, all the more so when on the one hand, globalisation has maximised the benefits but, on the other hand has led to the disappearance of airtight compartments in societies and increased their vulnerability, at the same time as it did with its benefits.

As the risks are serious, they have to be assimilated jointly. And the fact is that, given the complex and global nature of problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the solutions necessarily have to be complex and global and require a harmonisation of wills and agreements between many, if such problems are to be confronted.

Spain is defined as a medium power with interests all over the world. However, Spain is more than that. It is the head of a former Empire and a reference for the countries that formed part of that Empire. Spanish is the mother tongue of nearly 470 million people, 6.7% of the world's population is Spanish-speaking. Because of its history and past, Spain represents a cultural model, even though this currently lies on the strategic semi-periphery.

By contrast, the United States is a superpower that accounts for about 20% of the world's GDP, a percentage that is similar to the whole of the European Union. Its geographical position, on a continent far from Eurasia and Africa, protects it and keeps it safe from conflicts, as was the case with the United Kingdom, and from that privileged position and with a sound economic foundation – unlike the latter country – it acts in the capacity of leader of the Western World, selecting the conflicts of interest to it and, when in order, it intervenes, but with the aid of the European Union. The scenario that we face is one of a world in disarray, similar to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, in which the *status quo* is modified through the emergence of other stakeholders and, all the more so, in the aftermath of the Cold War.



- Geographical distribution of United States Military Commands

United States and Spain have a shared history that it would be ill-advised to forget. Almost two-thirds of United States territory formed part of the Spanish dominions; the first European city in the United States was St. Augustine, founded in 1565 by Pedro Méndez de Avilés. Later came Ponce de León, Cabeza de Vaca and Hernando de Soto, who reached Florida and the Mississippi; Vázquez de Coronado, Padre Kino and Juan de Oñate, in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado; or Fray Junípero Serra and the Spanish expeditions, in California.<sup>1</sup> Spaniards were the first to explore the Grand Canyon (Vázquez de Coronado), the Mississippi, (Hernando de Soto) and the first to sail to the ports of New York and Virginia over seventy years before the Mayflower reached them.<sup>2</sup>

What is more, support from Spain was decisive in obtaining independence for the country, first in the form of military assistance and later by sending troops to fight, Bernardo de Gálvez playing an outstanding role.

In 2009, researchers discovered in the Indies Archives, a letter dated 1783 from the President of the Continental Congress, Elias Boudinot, to Bernardo de Gálvez's Secretary – a friend of George Washington and whom he would have liked to march by his side in the victory parade -, Oliver Pollock, in which he made a request for a portrait of the General so that it could be hung in the place where the US Congress meets, in just recognition of his merit. This wish came true in 2014, at the same time as he was granted US citizenship posthumously, an honour that he shares with only eight other people in History.

It took 231 years to achieve this, although no moment is inopportune for justice to be done. However, it must be pointed out that it was Spanish researchers, not US researchers, who were responsible for the finding, and this fragment of history is more important to them than it is to us.

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<sup>1</sup> Aspiroz, Ander. "Spain's Legacy in the United States reaches Internet". <http://www.abc.es/cultura/20131116/rc-legado-espana-estados-unidos-201311160725.html>

<sup>2</sup> Spanish Geographical Society. "Traces of Spain in the United States" <http://www.sge.org/sociedad-geografica-espanola/publicaciones/boletines/numeros-publicados/boletin-no-28/la-huella-de-espana-en-estados-unidos.html>

There is no such thing as determinism in the non-biological sphere, and everyone is free to choose the parents they wish to have. And an ineffectual Spain with a weak pulse in 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was, undoubtedly, a poor parent for the one who wants to be an Empire. Furthermore, Spain is a historic leader of a powerful culture, like it or not, that rivals the Anglo-Saxon culture led by the United States, in spite of the fact that it currently lies on the strategic semi-periphery, and if that were not enough, it opposed the founding nation, the United Kingdom, precisely at that founding moment (Elisabeth I).

All in all, the Spanish contribution to what the United States is today deserves to be recognised and appraised. The United States does not begin with Ivanhoe or the Tudors, it has many more legacies to claim: Polish, Irish, etc., even though it has consolidated itself around the English language, but that does not fall within the scope of this article.

Spanish heritage, often watered down and ignored to the benefit of others, is inescapably present. The Hispanic population of the United States currently stands at around 52 million.

### **Military Alliances. The Architecture of Spain's Security<sup>3</sup>**

The Security & Defence area brings together vital interests that are constant in time and have a long-term vocation; the joint venture embarked upon strengthens these interests and smooths things over.

And the fact is that a framework of shared values is inherent to military agreements, they must have a similar view of the world, i.e., one without serious incompatibilities and with common interests when there is a threat or an enemy to be faced up to. Furthermore, these agreements, in view of their expansive nature, tend to spill over into other areas: trading, technological, industrial, etc. They are, or at least ought to be,

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<sup>3</sup> This section is a further development of the theories expounded earlier in the section entitled "multilateral and bilateral cooperation in security and defence matters" in Aznar Fernández-Montesinos, Federico. *"Disorder and Rearming in the Asian Pacific."* www.ieeee.es

State policies that transcend the domestic circumstances of the country that adopts them.

Just think that when a base is constructed, if the design is suitable and the strategic paradigm does not shift, it can exist for a very long time. In the case of Spanish naval arsenals (Cadiz, Ferrol and Cartagena), they have lasted for 300 years. When an arms technology transfer takes place, it is not carried out so that, in the course of time, it can be used against those who provide it. We are in long-term processes of trust.

A basic requirement is that there are no disputes between the parties. Between neighbouring countries this is difficult, because it is sufficient for just one party to be under that impression for a dispute to exist. However, the United States and Spain are far apart from a geographical perspective, and as the conflict with Cuba was solved to Spain's disadvantage in 1898, other disputes are highly unlikely to arise.

Thus, as Ángel Viñas points out: *“there has been no other association between Spain and another country that has remained uninterrupted for so many years. It is nevertheless true to say that there have been orientations to a greater or lesser extent towards the three major countries whose action has, in one way or another, restricted Spain's room for manoeuvre where foreign policy is concerned (i.e., France, the United Kingdom and Germany), but in none of those cases has the circumstance given rise to a permanent and manifestly expressed association leading to a succession of agreements covering the period from 1953 to the present time, a period during which Spain, the United States and the international system have undergone substantial modifications.”*<sup>4</sup>

The nature of bilateral agreements depends largely on the potential of the parties; they normally provide greater political backing, but they are more fragile. When the parties are clearly hetero-potential, which is the case in point, it is difficult for the relationship to be completely two-way and suitable compensatory mechanisms are established, so they make the weaker party heavily dependent. However, they do make mutual awareness possible and facilitate otherness.

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<sup>4</sup> Viñas, Ángel. “Negotiation and Renegotiation of the Spanish - US Agreements, 1953-1988: A structural view” *Contemporary History Notebooks* 83 2003, 25 83-108. ISSN: 0214-400X, Page 85  
<https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CHCO/article/viewFile/CHCO0303120083A/6902>



As multilateral cooperation waters down individual differences it can serve as a means for counteracting the imbalances in the power relations between the parties, given that it reduces the loss of sovereignty inherent to any negotiated relationship and bestows it with a more egalitarian dimension, and thus one that is more democratic. Multilateral agreements allow for a better coordination of interests and increase the framework for negotiation and exchange. Furthermore, they make such agreements more stable and long-lasting. The Security & Defence space brings together vital interests that are constant in time.

One question arising from these relations is that they limit the scope of the controversies between the parties with conflicting interests as a natural consequence of the limits imposed by the framework. The fact that the range of negotiation options is broadened gives greater room for manoeuvre, which also serves to legitimise the decisions that affect any of the members, not only with their acquiescence, but also with the force of the agreement of intent of a community of nations formed on the basis of the principles of dialogue and cooperation; this gives rise to a notable practice of exchange of support for the wide variety of international situations. The backing of countries like the United States becomes critical within this context.

The fact that there is a standing and institutionalised debate forum turns the agreement into an intergovernmental organisation; its structures enable its users to modulate the process as a whole, facilitating the creation of informal channels, in view of the fact that the Armed Forces of different countries share a common cultural foundation, which makes a prolonged relationship much easier. Thus, a contribution is made to consolidating the system and relations with vested interests. Furthermore, they are standing and arbitrated committees for political encounters and for dealing with all sorts of communal problems.

In view of all the above, it is an empirically established fact that military agreements are the most stable ones throughout time, followed by those of an economic nature and, finally, those of a regional kind. Furthermore, it can be stated that not only are military agreements extremely stable, but also that they contribute to an early resumption of diplomatic relations with vested interests once the cause of their interruption no longer exist. There is no shortage of examples and Spain could well be one.

They have also proved themselves to be able to withstand the modifications to the parties' political situations and even the international scenario, given that, as has already been pointed out, the relationships between the Armed Forces in one strategic environment directly affect their vital interests and require a common cultural basis. They are stable in time, and are not generally altered by a mere change of circumstance, so the bond is kept by equipping the system with a stability that allows for more associations in other fields that likewise contribute to further strengthening the system. Other reasons are to be found in the culture of Armies as organisations, in the unimaginativeness of army routine and its tendency to perpetuate what is already under way.

Security & Defence organisations such as NATO can be a result of circumstance, fruit of the need to respond to a common enemy, which makes it necessary to bury the hatchet and leave differences and contradictions to one side, in order to permit a sound and long-lasting construction. Yet as soon as they are established, they transcend what caused them to come into existence and even their own success. It even became necessary to factually modify the sphere of activity and the types of missions to be performed to conserve unity of action, without opening the can of worms and modifying its founding treaty.

On a bilateral level, relations between Spain and Portugal are text-book in nature. The overall balance for Spanish-Portuguese relations over the last 30 years is very positive. After centuries of complex bilateral relations, with periods of rapprochement and times of hostility, in the last three decades there has been a rapid rapprochement between the two countries and their respective societies.<sup>5</sup>

The two States joining the European Union and their position at the core of European architecture where international relations are concerned – with many negotiation tables that facilitate encounter and even forum shopping (the search for the most favourable framework out of different options for agreement) – has helped to settle differences and overcome rivalries. At the same time, it has enabled the countries to create new opportunities for cooperation, for coordinating activities and for adopting a common

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.exteriores.gob.es/documents/fichaspais/portugal\\_ficha%20pais.pdf](http://www.exteriores.gob.es/documents/fichaspais/portugal_ficha%20pais.pdf)



stance, while ensuring a healthy tension in the relations, invariably within the framework of international coexistence.

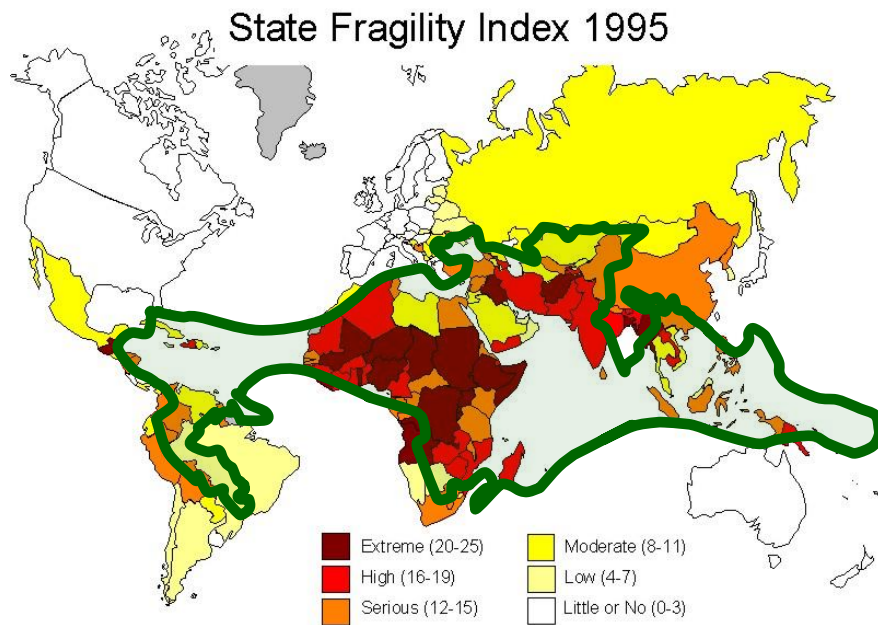
The architecture of Spanish Security & Defence is built on four pillars that are superimposed on one another and supplemented by others (OSCE, Initiative 5+5, etc.) without entering into contradictions; they are pillars that mutually reinforce each other. The pillars of the Spanish Security architecture revolve around membership of the European Union and NATO, Spanish-US agreements and an unshared threat.

The 2013 National Security Strategy defines the transatlantic link as *“one of the key pillars in the management of Euro – Atlantic space and one of our main assets in the international dimension of our security”*. This bilateral agreement is thus reinforced and becomes one of the pillars that affects other multilateral ones.

### **Geopolitical Considerations. Spain’s Strategic Position**

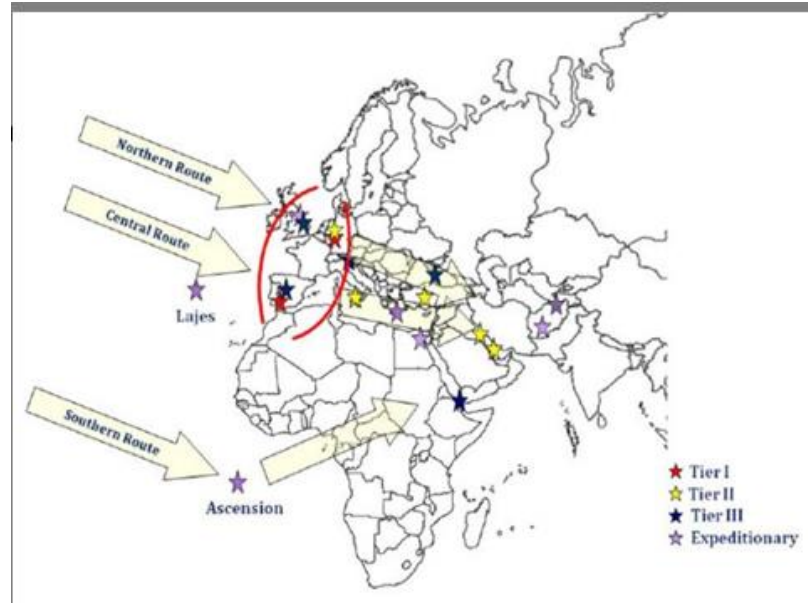
The fate of a man is emblazoned in his character and the fate of a nation is emblazoned in its geography. In the History of Spain, its successes have not been achieved by chance, they are consistent with this statement. America was not discovered by accident, it was found because the objective conditions were right for it to be discovered.

And Spain is the appendage of Europe, one flank of the Mediterranean – this sea pivots between our country and Turkey, and it is by no means coincidental either, that the two countries are cultural melting pots – and a bridge to Africa and America. The Strait is a crossroads, and the Peninsula is able to project itself independently onto two seas, thereby thwarting any attempt at geographical control or restriction. Spain is one of the world’s Key Choke Points.



As can be seen in the graph, Spain lies in the immediate periphery of the Barnett disconnection area characterised by conflict. Therefore, it is in a forward position, uninvolved in the conflicts, a position from which it has the capacity not only to monitor but also to intervene.

It thus offers them an immediate and secure proximity (in all senses of the term, from citizen security to the reliability of its commitment), with Western standards of living and with a mild climate that permits operation throughout the year (unlike the situation in the United Kingdom and the countries of Northern Europe) and the ability to access North Africa and Africa's Atlantic Coast directly, without being restricted to the Mediterranean, as is the case, for example, with Italy, - in 2014, the latter had 113 US facilities installed in the centre of the country-, or find it impossible to enter it.



- Transport routes from the USA.<sup>6</sup> -

Spain lies in an intermediate position on the central access route from the United States to the Middle East, which enables it to lean towards either of the other two at any time, and Spain is also midway between Northern Europe and West and North Africa. As a result, the country is a strategic crossroads halfway between the zones of interest not only to the United States but also to Spain.

Furthermore, the interests are convergent. Spain is committed to stability in North Africa and the Sahel Region, as well as to stability in the Middle East. That is why it supports the actions that the United States has taken seeking stability in the region: it forms part of the coalition against ISIS, has deployed troops in Afghanistan, etc. There is a concurrence of interests and the will to anticipate potential problems.

US plans in its relations with Spain have been associated not only with geographical space and projection, but also with stability in the area, keeping the *Status Quo* in the region and reinforcing the established alliance system.

<sup>6</sup> "Moron Air Base, hidden "jewel" of the Pentagon's deployment in the world", *defensa.com* 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 <http://www.defensa.com/frontend/defensa/base-aerea-moron-joya-oculta-despliegue-mundial-pentagono-vn9978-vst169>

## Historical perspective of relations between Spain and the USA

As has already been pointed out, relations between Spain and the USA date back to the War of Independence. There is still a cemetery in the Port of Mahon (Minorca) where US marines who died at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in the campaign against the Algerian corsairs are buried.

The first article of the Treaty of Washington signed on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1819 establishes: *"There shall be a secure and inviolable peace and a genuine friendship between Your Catholic Majesty, your successors and subjects, and the United States and its citizens, without the exception of any people or places".*<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the modern history of relations between the two countries goes back to 26<sup>th</sup> September 1953, with the signing of the Pacts of Madrid. These were three executive agreements: one concerning defence that involved the construction and use of military bases; a second one involving economic aid, which only remained in force until 1956; and a third accord concerning mutual defence. The defence agreement was originally in effect for 10 years, with successive extensions envisaged for two 5-year periods.

These Pacts, together with the Vatican Agreements, constituted the content of the Regime's foreign policy and enabled it to return to an international scenario marked by the Cold War.

However, many historians considered these Pacts to be unequal to the extent that for one of the parties they introduced an element of legitimacy, while exacting an implicit price, bordering on the explicit, in terms of sovereignty. And unlike US presence in other European countries, protected by NATO, the Spanish case stood out because it was under the auspices of a bilateral agreement that did not involve either a military alliance or a mutual defence commitment.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, and as though that were not enough, the historians in question considered that what happened in practice by far exceeded the bounds of what had been agreed upon in the Pacts.

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<sup>7</sup> Speech given by the Minister of Defence in Seville on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Universidad Méndez Pelayo "Spain- USA. 60 years of relations (1953-2013). <http://docplayer.es/4811862-Universidad-internacional-menendez-pelayo-eeuu-espana-60-anos-de-relaciones-1953-2013.html>

<sup>8</sup> Viñas, Ángel. "Negotiation and Renegotiation of the Spanish - US Agreements, 1953-1988: A structural view" *Contemporary History Notebooks* 83 2003, 25 83-108. ISSN: 0214-400X, Page 85 and successive. <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CHCO/article/viewFile/CHCO0303120083A/6902>

Spanish interests gradually modified with the passage of time, and the successive renegotiation of certain agreements redressed the imbalances. Economic requirements, the need for political support and recognition were no longer a question of survival and the accords became more egalitarian. The various negotiation processes also served to plug gaps and to crystallise the lessons learnt from putting the agreements into practice.

In 1970, a Friendship and Cooperation Agreement was signed whereby the US installations at the Spanish military bases would come under the ownership of the Spanish State, which authorised the USA to use certain facilities there. Furthermore, the Rota-Zaragoza Oil Pipeline, essential today from our country's energy security viewpoint, came to be owned by Spain.

The renewal of the agreements in 1976, elevated them to the status of an International Treaty and imbued with a more egalitarian content was genuine backing for Spanish Democracy, and amongst other matters it envisaged the setting up of a permanent "US-Spain Council."<sup>9</sup>

A new era commenced in July 1982, with the signing of the "*Friendship, Defence and Cooperation Agreement*"<sup>10</sup> between the two countries when Spain was already a member of NATO. This Agreement is set out in seven supplementary Agreements and is applied to other areas: economic, scientific, cultural, defence, scientific, industrials, etc. The accord accepts "*that the security and complete territorial integrity of Spain and the United States of America contribute to the keeping of peace and security in the West. It is stated that their cooperation for defence is based upon total respect for the sovereign equality of each country and involves mutual obligations and an equal sharing out of defence duties...*"

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<sup>9</sup> Article XX was inserted as part of that quest for equality. However, its provisions obviously never came to be implemented. "A death sentence imposed by the Spanish Authorities on a member of the US personnel in Spain, in a case where Spanish jurisdiction prevails, in compliance with the provisions of this Agreement may only be carried out using an execution method permitted both by Spanish Law and United States Law".

<sup>10</sup> Official State Gazette (BOE) N<sup>o</sup> 106, dated 6<sup>th</sup> May 1989.  
[http://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/xml.php?id=BOE-A-1989-10178](http://www.boe.es/diario_boe/xml.php?id=BOE-A-1989-10178)

It is also established that the Spanish flag, in accordance with Spain's sovereignty, will be the only one to fly, the Chief of the US Forces being responsible for his men and resources.

These were the Moron, Torrejón de Ardoz and Zaragoza Air Bases, the Rota Naval Base, the Cartagena Petroleum and Ammunition Storage Depot, the Humosa, Inoges, Minorca and Seller Communications Stations, the Estaca de Bares Communications Relay, the Estartit LORAN Station, the Guardamar del Segura Communications Station and the Sonseca Weather and Seismological Station.

A lack of State agreement about Spain's position in matters concerning Security & Defence during the Transition was settled after the 1986 Referendum, in which the majority answered the following question affirmatively:

*“The Government considers it advisable, in the national interest, that Spain remains in the North Atlantic Alliance, and agrees that this be expressed in the following terms: 1<sup>st</sup> Spain's participation in the North Atlantic Alliance will not include it being fully incorporated into the military structure. 2<sup>nd</sup> Installing, storing and bringing nuclear arms onto Spanish territory will still be banned. 3<sup>rd</sup> There will be a gradual reduction of US military presence in Spain. Do you think that it is advisable for Spain to remain in the North Atlantic Alliance under the terms agreed by the Government of the Nation?”*

As a result of approval being given to this Referendum, the 1982 Agreements were renegotiated, leading in 1989, to the *“Defence Cooperation Agreement between Spain and the United States.”* This reduced US presence exclusively to the Rota and Moron Bases and guaranteed strict control over permits and authorisations (flights, prepositioning, etc.), limiting the agreement exclusively to Defence and removing references to all other factors (technological, economic, industrial, etc.).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, international society underwent change and circumstances became considerably modified. In 1999, Spain joined NATO's military structure and in 2001, Spain and the United States issued a Joint Statement in which the two countries *“stressed their commitment to the 1988 Defence Cooperation Agreement and the basic principles that gave rise to it”*, while at the same time indicating that *“the two parties will soon initiate conversations with a view to reviewing it technically, in the light of the close and growing bilateral*



*relationship.*<sup>11</sup>

That led to Protocol I, which amounted to a thorough review of the 1989 Agreement and a clear movement back to the 1982 Agreement in a Spain that was now a member of NATO, and if that were not enough, incorporated into its military structure. So, in 2002, industrial cooperation questions were dealt with again, together with other political, cultural, scientific measures, etc., which were removed from the 1982 Agreement. The new necessities of the fight against terrorism and other aspects such as teaching in Spanish were introduced.

Protocol II was negotiated by Zapatero's Government and signed by Rajoy's Government in 2012, which shows the intrinsic nature of State policies in relations with the USA. It perseveres with the return movement initiated with the Joint Statement in response to proliferation (in 1972 only 9 countries had ballistic missiles and by 2011 there were 30) and changes of a strategic nature. This agreement meant Spain's integration into the NATO anti-missile shield with the arrival of 4 "Aegis" destroyers at the Rota Naval Base.

Protocol II, after the assassination in 2012 of the US Ambassador to Libya in Benghazi, involved increasing US capacity in Moron with a force under the authority of the Africa Command, capable of covering 1,500 kilometres in less than 9 hours – the radius reaches the Western Mediterranean, Maghreb and Sahel – for such actions as providing backing for embassies, evacuating non-combatants, recovering aircraft, providing humanitarian assistance or responding to disasters. Western Mediterranean Occidental, Maghreb and Sahel aims to cope with a wide range of contingencies.

This means increasing the number of soldiers from 500 to a maximum of 2,200, the number of civilians from 75 to 500 and increasing the number of aircraft from 21 to 36. The number of marines also goes up from 850 to a maximum of 1,100 during the shift periods. There will now be twelve MV-22 transport aircraft, four KC-130 aerial refuelling aircraft plus a support aircraft.

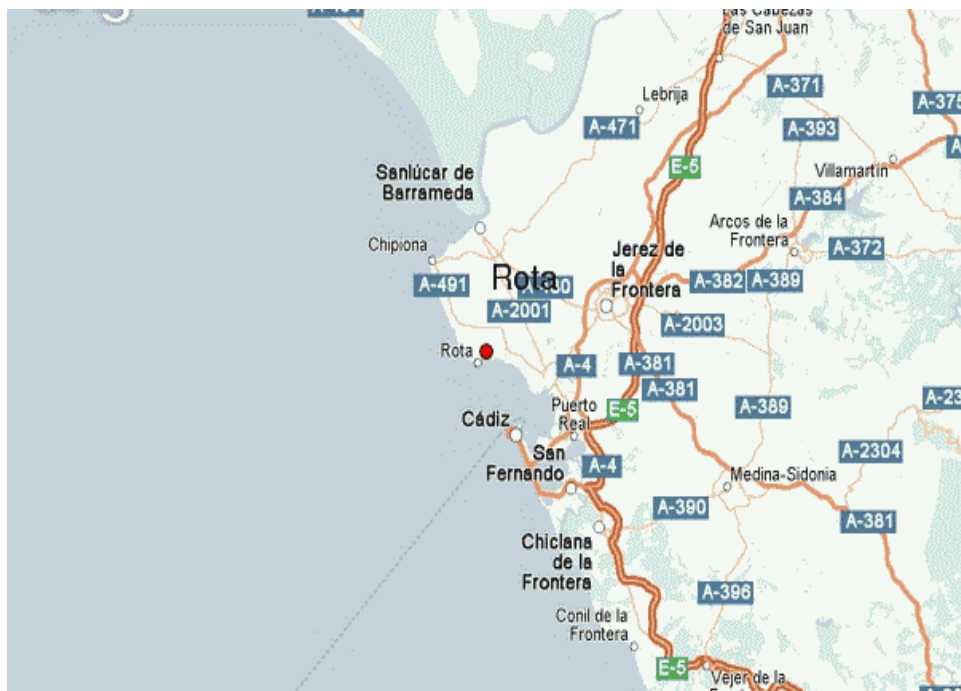
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<sup>11</sup> Viñas, Ángel. "Negotiation and Renegotiation of the Spanish - US Agreements, 1953-1988: A structural view" *Contemporary History Notebooks* 83 2003, 25 83-108. ISSN: 0214-400X, Page 85 and subsequent <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CHCO/article/viewFile/CHCO0303120083A/6902>

### Spanish Bases for joint use

As has already been explained, Spain occupies a strategic position on the Central Atlantic route that links the United States, Europe and the Middle East; and it forms part of the Strait-Balearic-Canaries axis. Rota and Moron are jointly-used sovereign Spanish bases and provide an outlet to the Ocean, permitting control over the Strait without being confined to the Mediterranean rendering the military capacity of the British Colony of Gibraltar irrelevant. The Cartagena Naval Base supplements control over the Mediterranean side of the Strait guaranteeing the deployment of a Spanish naval force in the Mediterranean Sea.

In 2009, a report issued by the Pentagon Air Mobility Command recommended that the Rota Naval base be granted maximum priority, together with the bases at Ramstein and Hickman (Pearl Harbour, Hawaii), while at the same time giving the Moron Base third degree importance. The Pentagon would thus be able to split the 6,000 annual flights that crossed the Peninsula to take into account potential contingencies.<sup>12</sup>



- Plan of the Bay of Cadiz and its environment -

<sup>12</sup>Izquierdo, Alfonso. "Moron Air Base, hidden "jewel" of the Pentagon's world deployment", defensa.com 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 <http://www.defensa.com/frontend/defensa/base-aerea-moron-joya-oculta-despliegue-mundial-pentagono-vn9978-vst169>

The Navy has been in the Bay of Cadiz, which is where Rota is located, for centuries. La Carraca Arsenal (with the NAVANTIA shipyards), the Spanish Navy Marines (the most important unit in the Naval Infantry) and the Puerto Real civil shipyards, whereas the Puntales Naval Station is in Cadiz.

Rota Air and Naval Base, constructed in 1953, covers a surface area of 24,280,800 m<sup>2</sup>, has three operating wharfs where up to 24 vessels can be moored, 426 buildings and 806 homes.<sup>13</sup>

On a daily basis – under the direct command of the Headquarters for the Air Forces in Europe– one third of the world’s flights with strategic military transport aircraft *C-5 Galaxy* and *C-17 Globemaster*, which is indicative of the value that this base has to US strategy.<sup>14</sup> In fact, at the time, it was planned that the now out-of-use NASA space shuttle would land there in the event of an emergency. The military aerodrome recorded 21,000 aircraft traffic movements over the last year.<sup>15</sup>

The convergence of naval and air facilities increases the strategic potential of a base that employs 5,000 Spanish members of the Armed Forces and 1,000 civilians, as well as 3,000 members of the US Armed Forces, 250 civilians and 1,300 Spanish civilians.<sup>16</sup>

The Fleet General Command and the Naval Action Force Command and Naval Action Group 2 – are all stationed at Rota Naval Base, on which the Navy’s deployment capacity is based (led by the multi-purpose Assault Ship “*Juan Carlos I*”) -, the 41<sup>st</sup> Escort Squadron (frigates of the Oliver Hazard Perry class) and the Fleet of Aircraft (AV-8B Harrier II plus and helicopters).<sup>17</sup>

As has already been pointed out, Rota serves as the base for a *Forward-Deployed Naval Force* comprising four *Arleigh Burke* destroyers (equipped with the *AEGIS*

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<sup>13</sup> Agencia EFE. “*Rota, a base jointly-used by Spain and USA, one of the most important bases in the world*” “El Mundo” 05/10/2011 <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/10/05/andalucia/1317840127.html>

<sup>14</sup> Izquierdo, Alfonso. “*Moron Air Base hidden “jewel” of the Pentagon’s world deployment*”, defensa.com 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 <http://www.defensa.com/frontend/defensa/base-aerea-moron-joya-oculta-despliegue-mundial-pentagono-vn9978-vst169>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.armada.mde.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspañola/conocenos\\_organizacion/prefLang\\_es/04\\_Apoyo\\_fuerza--01\\_jal--05\\_organos\\_perifericos--01\\_jefatura\\_cadiz--04\\_bnavalrota\\_bienvendida\\_es](http://www.armada.mde.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspañola/conocenos_organizacion/prefLang_es/04_Apoyo_fuerza--01_jal--05_organos_perifericos--01_jefatura_cadiz--04_bnavalrota_bienvendida_es)

<sup>16</sup> Agencia EFE. “*Rota, a base jointly-used by Spain and USA, one of the most important bases in the world*” “El Mundo” 05/10/2011 <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/10/05/andalucia/1317840127.html>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.armada.mde.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspañola/conocenos\\_organizacion/prefLang\\_es/04](http://www.armada.mde.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspañola/conocenos_organizacion/prefLang_es/04)

system) belonging to the European Phased Adaptive Approach programme, whose aim is to equip NATO with an anti-missile system that is interoperable with the US Ballistic Missile Defense system, the fact that this Naval Force is based at Rota means enables two vessels to be kept on patrol permanently in the theatre of operations, reducing the cost of movement and increasing anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence in our country<sup>18</sup>. It also provides logistic support and assistance for the vessels of the VI Fleet and the Air Force aircraft in transit to other destinations in Europe and the Mediterranean.

The Rota Naval Base also has a rare capacity in the Mediterranean environment for supporting an amphibious group, the “Amphibious Readiness Group”, naval group and landing force) as well as prepositioning vessels “Maritime Prepositioning Squadron 1”, equipped with logistical capacities to enable the deployment of a force) and nuclear-powered submarines.<sup>19</sup>

This is a Naval Base that is fully operational 24 hours a day throughout the year (365 days). Rota has a deep-water harbour equipped with multiple logistical capacities (air-to-sea and vice-versa), where the fuel and arms for the aircraft arrive by sea (which reduces expenses and the cost of protection needed to transfer them from a port located a long way from the base); there is also an alternative runway at Moron.

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US deployment in Spain originally had three air bases: Torrejón, Zaragoza and Moron, the latter being the least important of the three. During the Cold War, the USA’s main base of operations was Torrejón de Ardoz. After that, in 1991, during the Gulf War, B-52 Stratofortress bombers were stationed there. In 1994, a reduction of forces in Europe left Moron to bear the responsibility for supporting the USAF units in Spain, Italy and Greece. In 1998, during operations in Kosovo, the base was home to most of the aerial refuelling aircraft. Operations in Afghanistan first and later in Iraq caused the Base to be upgraded once again, in view of the amount of use to

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<sup>18</sup>“Rota: the launching pad for the shield” El País” 09/02/2014 [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/02/08/actualidad/1391882934\\_034605.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/02/08/actualidad/1391882934_034605.html)

<sup>19</sup> Colom Piella, Guillem. “The geopolitics of military bases (i): Rota, Moron, Sebastopol, Hainan, Gulf of Aden”. [www.ieeee.es](http://www.ieeee.es)

<sup>20</sup> “Global En Route Strategy, the Pentagon document that confirms the United States commitment to Rota” ElConfidencial.com

which it was being put to transport both troops and material, the deployment of jet fighters or refuelling in flight. In 2003, more than 7,000 soldiers passed through the installations, the biggest movement of military personnel since the Second World War. It currently manages one third of world traffic.<sup>21</sup>

Moron Air Base, constructed in 1941, is equipped with one of the longest runways in Europe, 3,600 metres. It has a zone for storing material and aircraft covering a surface area of over 48.7 million m<sup>2</sup>, which makes it a major logistical hub. The Base lies on completely flat terrain, it is free of obstructions that could complicate aircraft manoeuvres and has only slight light pollution. Furthermore, it is sufficiently far away from major population centres to make noise restrictions unnecessary, is not fraught with air congestion problems and the weather conditions are good.<sup>22</sup>

At the base are 496 Squadron for maintenance and supervision under the command of the 96<sup>th</sup> Operations Group based at Ramstein; it includes units of the Air Mobility Command and the Space Command, as well as the Africa Command (AFRICOM). These forces take up 80% of the Base.<sup>23</sup>

Traditionally used by Spain for Air Defence and sea patrol of the Southern Flank, this base receives on average around 30% of the US air transport traffic in the region. It is likewise equipped with the only operations centre not on US territory, the Ground Based-Electro-Optical Deep Space Surveillance System (GEODSS) whose purpose is to monitor and control satellites objects and space debris, its achievements at the beginning of this decade being locating 6.8% of all the objects in outer space and 8.7% of geosynchronous satellites.<sup>24</sup>

The Spanish units installed at Moron Air Base are the 11<sup>th</sup> Wing, composed of Typhoon, fighters, the 211<sup>th</sup> Squadron equipped with P-3 Orion Maritime

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<sup>21</sup> Izquierdo, Alfonso. "Moron Air Base, hidden "jewel" of the Pentagon's world deployment", defensa.com 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 <http://www.defensa.com/frontend/defensa/base-aerea-moron-joya-oculta-despliegue-mundial-pentagono-vn9978-vst169>

<sup>22</sup> Colom Piella, Guillem. "The geopolitics of military bases (i): Rota, Moron, Sebastopol, Hainan, Gulf of Aden". www.ieeee.es

<sup>23</sup> Colom Piella, Guillem. "The geopolitics of military bases (i): Rota, Moron, Sebastopol, Hainan, Gulf of Aden". www.ieeee.es.

<sup>24</sup> The Space Control Centre, under the authority of the United States Strategic Command. It is the responsibility of the 18<sup>th</sup> Space Surveillance Squadron (USAF), which is equipped with telescopes installed at four operations centres at the bases in Socorro (New Mexico), Maui (Hawaii), Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean) and Moron. Izquierdo, Alfonso. "Moron Air Base, hidden "jewel" of the Pentagon's world deployment", defensa.com 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 <http://www.defensa.com/frontend/defensa/base-aerea-moron-joya-oculta-despliegue-mundial-pentagono-vn9978-vst169>

Surveillance aircraft, and as support for the force, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron Air Deployment. A Customs Vigilance Service Detachment is also based there, as well as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the UME.<sup>25</sup>

As has already been pointed out, Moron is also host to the SP-MAGTF, a *Special Crisis Response Force* belonging to the Marine Corps, which was referred to above; this is a force composed of 550 troops in 2013, which was increased to 850 a year later. Midway through 2015, approval was given to enable this force – comprising a maximum of 2,200 military personnel, 500 civilians and 26 aircraft, including convertiplanes (planes-helicopters) MV-22 Osprey and KC-130 Hercules transport aircraft – to be permanently deployed at Moron.<sup>26</sup> This has made it possible to provide greater opportunities for joint training, no less than 80 bilateral military exercises having taken place in the last two years.<sup>27</sup>

By way of conclusion, the Moron Base is essential not only to defend the Southern Flank of the Iberian Peninsula and project air power beyond our frontiers, but also as a top-level logistical hub in the US projection strategy Rota and Moron together have once again become a strategic pillar in the world today and it is necessary to make the most of their potential. It is possible to guarantee maritime and aerial sovereignty throughout the entire Strait, control the shipping lanes and carry out maritime interdiction operations, project power, manage crises or conduct joint-combined command and control operations.

## Conclusion

The recent US request to station about twenty non-military aircraft at Rota is proof of the strategic and essential nature of the agreement between the two countries.

The truth of the matter is that military agreements traditionally prove to be very stable. The reasons for this are that they are only signed when there are no disputes between the parties, and that there is also a community of values, of vital interests, a

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<sup>25</sup> Colom Piella, Guillem. “*The geopolitics of military bases (i): Rota, Moron, Sebastopol, Hainan, Gulf of Aden*”. [www.ieeee.es](http://www.ieeee.es)

<sup>26</sup> Colom Piella, Guillem. “*The geopolitics of military bases (i): Rota, Moron, Sebastopol, Hainan, Gulf of Aden*”. [www.ieeee.es](http://www.ieeee.es)

<sup>27</sup> Bulletin issued by the United States Embassy. “Amendment to the Defense Cooperation Agreement between Spain and the United States.”



shared view and even a common threat. Furthermore, military agreements tend to expand and enter new areas: economic, industrial, social, technological, etc. The recent request is clear.

And they withstand better than any other, the vicissitudes to which other types of relations are exposed, effectively helping them to recover after they have become strained. And the strain that they are subjected to is better, in the long run, than the alternative, which is submission, which is bad, very bad for all.

All in all, they are an expression of State policies that guarantee perpetuation, which is why they are associated with reliability. Therefore, they are long-term projects: nobody is going to provide a country with bases and technology if that country is going to use them against the supplier in the short or medium term.

The strategic alliance between Spain and the United States has lasted for 63 years and has overcome all the national and international circumstances and situations, thus making it one of the keystones of Spanish Security & Defence architecture. All of this is due to the fact that there is a concurrence of interests between the two countries and that the alliance is in harmony with different Intergovernmental organisations.

Signed in 1953, the Pacts then served to legitimise the previous regime enabling it to return to the international scenario. Renewal took place in 1976 in the form of an International Treaty after the restoration of the Monarchy and they were reformulated again as an Agreement in 1982 after Spain joined NATO. The latter agreement included for the first time, a list of US installations and facilities in our country.

They were renegotiated yet again in 1989 in accordance with the mandate received after the 1986 Referendum confirming Spain's membership of NATO, which involved a reduction of US presence in our country, which was limited to the Moron and Rota Bases; these were to be Spanish sovereign bases where the US Authorities were responsible for their own forces. However, successive additional protocols have increased the range of activities, reverting to the previous situation, albeit without increasing the number of facilities on the Peninsula.

At the end of 2002, 5,871 persons were under US control at the Spanish bases.

2,621 were military, 1,419 belonged to the civil service and 1,831. The highest number of employees at the US bases in country was in 1963, when 13,148 people were posted to Spain. In 1954, the personnel working at the bases amounted to 5,895.<sup>28</sup> At present, over 4,000 US citizens coexist with the Spanish Armed Forces, considerably less than in other European countries.<sup>29</sup>

This relationship has made it possible to modernise and democratise the Armed Forces by exposing them to the real international situation and permitting them to become familiar with other States, which enabled them to go abroad before many other social sectors could, which, in turn, made it possible for them to become familiar with other political systems that, in the long run, helped to facilitate the implementation of the Social and Democratic Rule of Law. Therefore, it has had effects both on domestic and foreign policy.

These policies were also conducive to industrial development and technological transfer, but above all they provided a flexible communication channel and the political backing of a major power in the many political organisations of which both States are members.

An agreement between two States cannot be measured in economic terms and a balance can certainly not be made in such terms. It is not to be regarded as “renting”, at least since before the advent of democracy; the objective is not to receive economic benefits in return. This alliance, for example, improves Spain’s negotiation capacity by increasing the range of options and a balance of forces with Germany, France or the United Kingdom.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, this is a long-term political agreement, one which transcends and goes far beyond merely economic factors. What is more, it is a “victory” in a negotiation process that will be appreciated and moderated in time. It is a strategic alliance that if it is to last, must provide all of the stakeholders with similar and comparable advantages in political terms. That is why it is not possible to “capture” Spain’s

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<sup>28</sup> Marcos, Pilar. “Half a century of military cooperation” El País, Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2003

<sup>29</sup> Bulletin issued by the US Embassy 17/06/2015. “Amendment to the Defense Cooperation Agreement between Spain and the United States”.

<sup>30</sup> Viñas, Ángel. “Negotiation and Renegotiation of the Spanish - US Agreements, 1953-1988: A structural view” *Contemporary History Notebooks* 83 2003, 25 83-108. ISSN: 0214-400X, p 85.

interests or its alignment in isolation from any situation, which generates cycles of healthy tension that are limited by the international organisations to which both countries belong.

Spain, by virtue of its position and its security conditions – reliability with respect to foreign matters (welfare state, physical security and technological development that facilitate logistics and support) on a domestic level – offers from Europe itself, an excellent platform for projection to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and also serves as an intermediate stepping stone for transit from North America. Its capacities are for mutual benefit.

Furthermore, the move towards a reduction of US troops that is taking place in Europe (with a reduction in units and troops in Italy and France) after the end of the Cold War and even with the change of direction in its policy towards Pacific Asia, have not been followed in Spain where, by contrast, there has been an increase.

As can be seen, the Rota-Moron duality is a strategic pillar in Western defence, an intermediate point for US movements to the Mediterranean and a springboard lying in a secure environment with Western standards of quality right on Africa's doorstep, which without having to face adverse climate conditions that limit their operability or have to operate from that sea, also protect it and make it possible to send forces to the North and west of the African continent, meaning that importance no longer has to be attached to any other bases in the zone, such as Gibraltar, which become irrelevant.

During the second half of 2015, the visits paid by the Secretary of Estado, Kerry, and the Secretary of Defense, Hagel, to our country and the King's visits to the United States are proof not only of the validity and importance of the alliance, but also of the harmony relations between the two nations.

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