

Spain-United States: A Strong Partnership

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Relations between Spain and the United States are rooted in historical ties that date back to 1778, when Spain provided military and financial assistance to the fledgling nation during the American War of Independence. Since that time and following several historical developments, Spain and the United States have become friends and allies. We share the same values; we deal with the same threats. Our strategic vision of the world is similar, and we work together to meet today's global challenges.

Over the years, the governments of both nations have undertaken extensive efforts to promote bilateral relations. The success of these efforts is manifested in the many agreements and high-level contacts and visits between Spain and the United States, as well as Spain's acceptance of specific military commitments to contribute to world security and the fight against international terrorism.

Evidence of the positive state of relations is the fact that, in recent months, the President of the Spanish government has met several times with President Obama, and King Juan Carlos I has paid His most recent visit to the White House on February 17, 2010.

In the economic arena, Spanish investment in the United States reached US\$ 38.66 billion in 2008. Spanish investment increased by 40.53 percent over 2007, and Spain now ranks ninth among foreign investors in the United States. According to US sources, commercial trade volume between the United States and Spain reached \$16.61 billion in 2009 (\$7.86 billion in Spanish exports and \$8.75 billion in Spanish imports). Spain is number 29 on the list of all countries exporting to the United States and number 24 on the list of countries importing from the United States.

Our bilateral relations are reinforced by the great demand in the United States for Spanish language and culture. To meet this growing demand, the Spanish government intends to promote the opening of new centers of the Instituto Cervantes in the United States. We also intend to sign more agreements with State Education Boards and encourage cooperation and exchange programs with American universities and research centers. Spain has an extraordinary opportunity to increase its presence in the United States in the economic, cultural and political arenas by developing relations with American Hispanic communities. These communities represent more than 42 million people—constituting the largest minority group in the United States—and are proving to be tremendously dynamic.

Furthermore, Spain's cultural ties and heritage complements America's desire to see further integration of the Western Hemisphere in the global economy. Spain has traditionally been one of the most important sources of foreign investment in Latin America, i.e. the first in Europe and second in the world after the United States, and one of the few countries that has maintained that engagement during good and bad economic times. The United States can rely

on Spain as a strategic partner in fostering political and economic stability and promoting development in this important region.

Spain also plays a significant role in transatlantic relations, particularly in relations between the United States and the European Union. Given its history and values, the United States is the ideal partner for the European Union and vice versa. The United States is the only power with which the Union maintains such an extensive array of strong historic, social, economic, political and security ties. We share the same values of democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression, etc. It is for this reason that Spain, which held the Presidency of the EU Council in 1995, worked hard to promote the New Transatlantic Agenda, which continues to govern transatlantic relations today. It is also the reason why Spain, which currently holds the Presidency of the EU Council, supports a modification of the Agenda to recognize both changes in the international arena (i.e., the role of emerging powers) and the new areas which require common action (i.e., the fight against international terrorism, the financial and economic crisis, environmental protection, food security, etc.).

In the struggle against terrorism, I would proudly underscore that Spain and the United States work as a team. Our two countries share a direct experience and are equally sensitive to the issue of terrorism. Sadly, we also share tragic events—September 11 and March 11—which will be remembered forever in historical records as two of the world’s most infamous events. But we also share—and this is a priority for both governments—the deep determination and the will to fight decisively against terrorism. A recent example of this ongoing cooperation has been our decision to receive in Spain five former inmates from Guantanamo. Similarly, we hosted earlier this year in Toledo an EU-US meeting on air security, a matter of the greatest interest on both sides of the Atlantic in light of the attempted terrorist act onboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 last December.

Relations between the United States and Spain in defense, strong and traditionally good in this area, deserve special recognition and analysis. They have been reinforced, in recent times, by the visit between our Minister of Defense and Secretary Gates last July.

The Agreement on Defense Cooperation, which was signed in 1988 and amended in 2002, will remain in force until February 12, 2011. After that date, it will be renewed automatically each year, unless one of the parties terminates the agreement. The agreement authorizes the joint use of Spanish bases and facilities and establishes a Permanent Spain-United States Committee to ensure coordination between the parties in the implementation of the agreement. Further, the Bilateral High Level Defense Committee, created in 2002 and chaired by the respective Defense Ministers, is the responsible body for political consultations in the area of defense and security. The Committee’s executives, at the level of the General Secretary for Defense Policy, have met on five occasions, and the frequency of meetings has increased from biannually to annually.

The Agreement on Defense Cooperation also authorizes a permanent presence of United States Armed Forces in Spain with a maximum limit of 4,750 soldiers and 1,075 civilians, and a temporary additional presence of a little more than 2,000 soldiers. The

reality is that these maximum levels have not been reached. The actual presence of US armed forces during the past year has been about 25 percent of the maximum.

The importance of the Spanish bases has increased since the beginning of US operations in the Middle East. Spanish bases are located exactly halfway between the West Coast of the United States and the area of operations, enabling stopovers and thereby helping to avoid the costly operation of refueling while in flight. Along with these advantages, there is also the fact that, in contrast to the rest of Europe, there is plenty of open air space in Spain, leading to intensive utilization of the bases. Approximately 6,500 aircraft—the majority being transport planes—used them in 2009. In addition to aircraft, we must add US Navy vessels, which use the bases for layovers. The average number of layovers per year exceeds 100, with the majority occurring at the base in Rota. In addition to these operational activities, we have to mention the participation of military personnel from both countries in training exercises and the important exchange of students in military academies from both nations.

The Spanish Armed Forces initiated participation in international operations in 1989. Since then, more than 100,000 soldiers have been deployed in 50 missions on four continents. Currently, our forces, committed to peace and international law, work with the United Nations, NATO and the United States to achieve a more just, peaceful and secure world through missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea), Líbano (UNIFIL) and Somalia (ATALANTA).

However, the most significant collaboration takes place in Afghanistan, where Spain participates in NATO's International Stabilization Force (ISAF) under the umbrella of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and within the framework of several United Nations Security Council resolutions. This participation, initiated in January 2002, has continued to grow gradually ever since, both in the number of actual soldiers on the ground and in the number of responsibilities they carry out.

Spain currently has deployed a significant contingent in the province of Badghis with the objective of guaranteeing security and freedom of movement in the area. It is also currently in charge—for six months—of the management and security of the Kabul Airport. In addition, Spain is responsible for the advanced support base of Herat, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Qala-i-Naw, and the Rapid Reaction Unit in the western zone of Herat, and leads two Operational Monitoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) for the training of the Afghan Army. These operations combined bring the current number of Spanish forces present in Afghanistan to a total of 1,060 soldiers.

Spain has an important commitment to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. In a few months, we are going to increase significantly the number of our forces in the zone. This reinforcement is Spain's response to the requests we have received both from the United States and from NATO. Following the completion of the deployment of a permanent contingent of 220 soldiers on November 26, 2009, with which the number of our soldiers reached the aforementioned 1,060, the Spanish Parliament—or Cortes—approved the sending of a new permanent reinforcement contingent of 511 soldiers and 40

members of the “Guardia Civil” (military police). Their deployment has already begun. These 511 soldiers will enable the creation of additional OMLTs, increasing the number of teams from two to five, which will help, instruct and support the Afghan National Army. They also will carry out better protection and security assignments and make an important contribution to the structure of the NATO General Headquarters in Afghanistan.

The 40 members of the “Guardia Civil” will facilitate the creation of a Police Monitoring and Liaison Team dedicated to the training of the Afghan Police Force while also reinforcing the Spanish Military Police presence. It is worth noting that, since July 2008, the Spanish Defense Ministry, following an agreement with the Afghan Defense Ministry, has provided 14.5 million euros for the financing, equipping, and training of a company of the Afghan Army along with the construction of a “Forward Operating Base” in Qala-i-Naw for an Afghan Army Battalion. In addition to this permanent contingent, Spain has twice sent, albeit on a temporary basis, a battalion to increase security during Afghan elections.

With respect to cooperation in the area of development, Spain committed 150 million euros for the years 2006-2010 at the International Donors Conference for Afghanistan held in London in 2006. At the International Conference at The Hague in 2009, Spain promised an additional 60 million euros for the years 2011-2012. Finally, at the recent London Conference last February, Spain equally advanced its commitment to contributing to the Peace and Rehabilitation Program presented by the Afghan government, allocating ten million euros to the new “Peace and Re-Integration Fund.”

Another aspect of US-Spain bilateral relations that should not be forgotten is cooperation in the area of armaments. Since 1982, a new dimension has been achieved with a supplementary Agreement on Defense Industrial Cooperation, which allows for cooperation between the Spanish and US governments and industries through research and development programs, engineer and scientist exchanges, etc. Currently we are working on programs of common interest, as has been done for years in the European Union, in order to reach a new level in bilateral relations. During the course of this decade, Spanish defense/military acquisitions from the United States have placed Spain among the top 20 clients in the world per volume, with some two billion dollars in sales. In this same period, Spain’s sales to the United States totaled approximately 300 million dollars.

While it is difficult to summarize in a few pages the long and lasting relationship between Spain and the United States, it is easy to draw a short conclusion: our relationship as friends and allies continues today, and there is no doubt that it will have a long standing future.