

Mizar shines bright for all to see

Story and photos by
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In a tucked away corner of the flightline, a small group of Spaniards are fighting the war on terror along side their French and U.S. counterparts.

"The first Spanish Detachment, named Gemini, was established at then Peter Ganci Air Base in February 2002 with 3 C-130s deployed as part of the Spanish contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom," said Maj. Santiago A. Ibarreta, commander of the Spanish detachment.

The Mizar detachment, named after the first binary star ever discovered, is in Manas supporting Spanish troops stationed in Afghanistan as part of International Security Assistance Force Operation and provides tactical intra-theatre airlift, particularly MEDEVAC.

The detachment is comprised of 52 personnel from their 31st Airlift Wing, Zaragoza AFB, Spain.

Just like members of the Air Force, members of the detachment are trained in a variety of different specialties and come from many different areas of the country including Moron AFB, Zaragoza and Torrejon AFB.

Mizar and its C-130 Hercules has accomplished more than 350 missions, airlifted more than 15,000 personnel and approximately 1.5 million kilograms of cargo, and has flown more than 2,800 flying hours.



Airman 1st Class Jesus Utrilla, (left), maintenance technician, gives a Spanish C-130 Hercules crew a pre-mission brief.



Members of the Mizar Spanish Detachment load cargo onto a C-130 Hercules aircraft. The detachment is in Manas supporting Spanish troops stationed in Afghanistan as part of International Security Assistance Force Operation and provides tactical intra-theatre airlift, particularly MEDEVAC.

On any given day, the Spanish Hercules can find itself flying vital supplies to troops at Haert, Spanish-Italian FSB, Qal'eh-Now and other remote places in the Afghanistan. The team not only supports Spanish forces but Coalition forces as well.

Major Ibarreta and his team contribute much of the detachment success and progress to the generous support they have received from their American counterparts.

"The members of the 376th AEW have been very kind and are straight-forward," he said. "They have continuously provided critical support and services to us."

"This is my first time at Manas and, so far, I have enjoyed my time here," said Airman Victor Torres. "It has been a very rewarding and enriching experience learning the many different ways to work with many different personalities and cultures."

Although they are only deployed to Manas for two months, the team is constantly supporting missions throughout the AOR and around the world, which keeps them away from their families for extended periods of time.

"It is hard being away from my family," said Airman Juanjo Sandoval. "This is my sixth time at the detachment. My family and I handle the separation pretty well, but it is still tough to be away."

"Always being on the move is hard and gets harder for the family each time," said 2nd Lt. Alejandro Nimo. "I try to call home everyday and I send them pictures and emails to keep in touch, but mostly I try to keep busy because it seems like the time passes quicker if I do."

Even though their time here at Manas has been short compared to others, the members are grateful for what they have learned and the assistance they have received from their Coalition partners.

"I would like to give thanks for letting us work in that marvellous group of people," Major Ibarreta said. "Special people do things special, and Liberandos are special. The work that you have here is special, the sacrifice that your families and friends make is special, the moments you are living are special, and the people who are around you are special, too. We have established a special brotherhood among us and it has been the result of working together. We are proud and honored to be sharing the same principles of freedom and democracy that we are defending."