



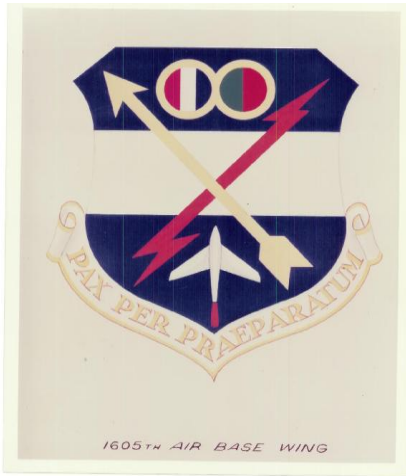
A
Short History
of
Lajes Field, Terceira Island,
Azores, Portugal

65th Air Base Wing History Office

A SHORT HISTORY OF LAJES FIELD

MISSION: *Enabling expeditionary movement of war fighters, warplanes, and global communications to combatant commanders; supporting joint, coalition, and NATO operations; promoting regional partnerships.*

1956-1989



1990-2007



2007 to Present



A SHORT HISTORY OF LAJES FIELD

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History Office
65th Air Base Wing
Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal
United States Air Forces in Europe Command

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Cover Photo: Cargo and tanker aircraft filled the Lajes flight line during the mid-1950s.

Please address comments and corrections to:

65 ABW/HO
Unit 7710
APO AE 09720
DSN 535-2501

A SHORT HISTORY OF LAJES FIELD

LAJES FIELD, TERCEIRA, AZORES, PORTUGAL

Introduction

The islands of the Azores have played an important part in trans-oceanic navigation since their colonization in the 15th Century. The Azores were a logistical point for the discovery of new worlds, a port of call for ships engaged in trade between Europe, America, and India, where galleons laid at anchor bringing the wealth of the new world back to the old world. The Azores, known as the gem in the Atlantic for ocean travelers, is located 900 miles from the coast of Portugal and 2,000 miles from the Americas. Over the years these islands became a bastion of Portuguese power protecting lines of communications to its overseas empire. The advent of flight did not diminish this role for the Azores in the twentieth century. Lajes Field, on the island of Terceira, became a crossroads in the Atlantic as the air connection between Europe and the Americas developed. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s Lajes Field became a port of call for weary air travelers and a significant means to project U.S. air power worldwide. The following is a brief history of Lajes Field from the early days as a packed strip of earth, to its role in operations in the 21st Century.

The Origins of Air Base 4

From the early days of oceanic aviation the Azores proved to be a reliable rock in the middle of the Atlantic. As aeronautics evolved and aircraft technology improved aviators began to look at trans-oceanic travel as an obtainable goal. In May 1919, the first successful transatlantic flight took place from the United States to Great Britain by three U.S. Navy “Curtiss Flyer” flying boats. They used the harbor of Horta on the Azorean island of Faial as a critical stopover in their flight. In the 1930s Pan American Airways flew the first regularly scheduled commercial airliners, “Pan-Am Clippers” (Sikorsky S-40 flying boats), from Norfolk, VA to the Azores and then on to Europe.¹

The first interest in Terceira island for a mid-Atlantic landing strip came about when the Portuguese government weighed the feasibility of constructing an airfield on Terceira in 1928. Lieutenant Colonel Cifka Duarte, a Portuguese aeronautics officer, was

¹ James H. Guill, A History of the Azores Islands, Vol. 5 (Tulare, CA: Golden Shield Publications, 1993), pg. 508, 510.

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After stopping at the Port of Horta 17 May 1919, The U.S. Navy NC-4 Curtiss Flyer made its way to Ponta Delgado on Sao Miguel Island during the first transatlantic flight.

in charge of the study and decided upon Achada, a tableland zone between the town of Angra and Lajes, for the airstrip.²

The Junta General (the local administrative board) of the Autonomous District of Angra do Heroismo funded the airfield project and carried out the necessary leveling work. Soon a small landing strip of packed earth was created. On October 30, 1930, Captain Frederico de Melo, a Terceira island native, took off from this

airfield flying an AVRO single engine biplane. However, the Achada airfield was condemned only a few years after completion due to its inadequate dimensions and adverse weather conditions. Nevertheless, the need for an airfield did not diminish with the demise of the Achada airfield.³

Using a detailed report by Colonel Gomes da Silva, another Terceira native, a different site was chosen on the island in 1934. This site was on the plain of Lajes, the present site of Air Base 4 and Lajes Field where the Portuguese Military Service first constructed a landing strip of packed earth with a small group of support facilities. The location of this airfield proved critical as conflict exploded over Europe as World War II erupted in September 1939.⁴

World War II

Nazi advances throughout Europe galvanized both support and opposition among the nations of Europe as World War II began in 1939. As German forces under Adolf Hitler advanced throughout Europe the Fascist Portuguese government saw neutrality as its best role to play in the brewing battle between world powers. The government of Portugal, headed by the Fascist dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, expanded the runway and sent additional troops and equipment to Lajes: including antiquated Gladiator

² Manuel de Meneses Martins, *Base Aerea Das Lajes*, 2^a Edicao (Angra do Heroismo: Tipografia Acor, 2006), pg. 16-17.

³ Martins, *Lajes*, pg. 18-21.

⁴ Martins, *Lajes*, pg. 19-22; Guill, *Azores Islands*, pg. 510-511

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aircraft. The Salazar government sold these developments to Hitler and the Germans as the Portuguese contribution to the defense of Europe, while at the same time Portuguese officials communicated to President Franklin D. Roosevelt that these moves contributed to securing British lines of communication to the Mediterranean. The Portuguese then declared the base capable of air defense against potential invaders on 11 July 1941.⁵

Germans were not the only ones interested in exploiting the advantageous location of the Azores. Early in the war, the Allied Powers of Great Britain and the United States recognized a critical need for operating aircraft out of the Azores. Britain saw the need to conduct anti-submarine operations from the islands since German U-boats had wreaked havoc on transatlantic shipping via the “Azores Gap” during the first years of the war. As the U.S. became increasingly involved in the war, American military leaders looked for the fastest means to get men and material to North Africa and Europe. The Azores offered that opportunity. However, the Portuguese government initially maintained strict neutrality. The challenge for the Allies remained to convince a Fascist Portuguese government to allow Allied operations to flow from Portuguese sovereign territory.⁶



Aerial View of Lagens Field, Terceira Island Ca. 1940s. Lagens Field was the original British designation for Lajes Field. The U.S. used that name until 1953 when the name Lajes Field became the official designation. For simplicity, Lajes Field will be the name used throughout this history.

The British negotiated for the use of the Azores through a 570-year-old treaty: the Treaty of Windsor (1373). Under an agreement signed on 17 August 1943, Prime Minister Salazar agreed to the British request for Azorean basing rights “in the name of the alliance that had existed ... between Portugal and Great Britain.” The British were given use of the Azorean ports of Horta on the island of Faial, and Ponta Delgada on Sao Miguel, in addition to airfields on Terceira and Sao Miguel islands.⁷

⁵ Walter L. Hixson, ed. *The American Experience in World War II: The United States and the Road to War in Europe*, vol.1 (Routledge, 2002), pg. 130.

⁶ Guill, *Azores Islands*, pg.521, 523.

⁷ Guill, *Azores Islands*, pg.524.

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On 8 October 1943, British Royal Air Force units disembarked at Angra, unloaded equipment and supplies, and trucked them over a narrow, rough road a distance of 11 miles to what was originally known as Lagens Field. The British built hangars, developed a large power plant, and set up living

quarters. Their main task was preparing a surface that would allow heavy aircraft to land. The British brought 60,000 U.S.-supplied Marston mats (standardized, perforated steel plates 10 feet long and 15 inches wide, pierced by 87 holes per plate) to Terceira. When these mats were linked together, an all-weather, heavy-aircraft surface 150 feet wide and 5,000 feet long was created. Just two weeks after their arrival, British fighters (P-47s) and bombers (*Hudsons, Lancasters, Flying Fortresses, Yorks, and Wellingtons*) began to operate against German U-boats around a 500-mile radius of the Azores. This central part of the Atlantic known as the “Azores Gap” had previously been out of range of British and U.S. land-based air cover. The new airbase permitted British aircraft to extend the scope of their vigilance in the protection of Allied shipping in the Atlantic. Over the course of the succeeding months RAF bombers destroyed a number of German U-boats in the waters surrounding the Azores.⁸

The first U-boat “kill” came when a B-17 from Squadron 220 of the Number 247 Group Royal Air Force, Coastal Command attacked an exposed submarine on 9 November 1943 just one month after British Forces arrived at Lajes Field. The contributions of the Azores and the three British anti-submarine squadrons at Lajes helped turn the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943. For example, in 1942, 5,480,000 tons of shipping had been lost in the North Atlantic alone. In the last quarter of 1943 with the British conducting operations out of Lajes, only 146,000 tons of shipping were lost. The British U-boat hunters sank 53 submarines and frightened away many others from

⁸ Guill, [Azores Islands](#), pg.524.

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formerly safe refueling areas around the Azores. The Battle of the Atlantic had finally turned in the Allies favor.⁹

U.S. Enters the Azores

The British use of the Azores was only one half the contribution Lajes Field made during World War II. As early as May 1941, the U.S. recognized the importance of the Azores as a staging point for bombers and air transports to Europe. However, Portuguese neutrality prevented its use. After the British Forces arrived at Lajes Field, Portugal did grant permission for a handful of U.S. military advisors to give technical assistance to the British. On 1 December 1943, British and U.S. military representatives at Lajes Field signed a joint agreement outlining roles and responsibilities for the U.S. military presence at Lajes Field. The plan set forth guidelines for U.S. ferried and transport aircraft to make a limited number of landings at Lajes Field. In return, the United States agreed to assist the British in improving and extending existing facilities at Lajes. On 9 December 1943, the first U.S. bomber, a B-17, was ferried through Lajes Field. As Portuguese approval looked imminent, the U.S. designated Lajes Field as Station Number 15 in the North Atlantic Wing. Finally on the last day of 1943, Salazar gave his consent to the arrangement with the understanding that the Americans would be under British supervision.¹⁰

The first American unit, the 96th Naval Construction Battalion (Seabees), arrived at Angra Harbor on 9 January 1944 aboard the *SS Abraham Lincoln*. This unit was largely responsible for the development of the harbor basin in Praia, the unloading of vessels, the laying down of the gasoline pipeline in Praia Bay and the construction of two taxiways adjacent to the runway. Eight days later, the 928th Engineer Regiment and 801st Engineer Battalion (U.S. Army) with 800 more American personnel arrived aboard the *SS John Clark* with 4,064 tons of machinery and building material with the mission to “build an air base.” In addition to construction of facilities, roads, a fuel tank farm, water



Engineers from the U.S. Army 801st Engineer Battalion constructed a runway at Lajes in 1944.

⁹ Norman Herz, Operation Alacrity: The Azores and the War in the Atlantic (Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), pg. 221-223.

¹⁰ Herz, Operation Alacrity, pg. 245-271.

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storage, and power plant generation, the army engineers constructed three paved runways in an “A” shaped pattern. One of these runways was over 10,000 feet long, the longest in the world at this time. On 24 January 1944, Colonel Albert D. Smith assumed command of all U.S. Army Forces in the Azores.¹¹

By using Lajes Field American aircraft could reduce the flying time between the United States and North Africa from 70 hours to 40 hours. This considerable reduction in flying hours enabled aircraft to make almost twice as many crossings per month between the United States and North Africa and demonstrated clearly the geographic value of the Azores during World War II. From November 1943 to June 1945, 8,689 U.S. aircraft transited through Lajes including 1,200 B-17 and B-24 bomber aircraft en route to various destinations across the Atlantic. Cargo aircraft flights carried vital personnel and equipment to North Africa, the United Kingdom, and mainland Europe. Flights returning from Europe often carried wounded servicemen where medical personnel at Lajes handled approximately 30,000 air evacuations en route to the United States for medical care and rehabilitation. This volume of air traffic necessitated the operation of a second base. Prior studies revealed Santa Maria island as the best choice for another airfield site. Prime Minister Salazar allowed the United States to construct a supplementary base on the island of Santa Maria, but only under specific conditions.

Santa Maria

Before the ink had dried on the agreement for the American use of Lajes Field, U.S. military planners were busy planning an airfield for another location in the Azores. Only six months after the first American arrivals in the Azores Salazar granted the Americans use of Santa Maria island under the strictest secrecy. To uphold the base’s secrecy and for diplomatic purposes Pan American Airlines fronted the construction of Santa Maria Air Base for the US Army Air Force, and on 4 August 1944, the 1391st Army Air Force Base unit was activated at Santa Maria. Under this blanket of secrecy a civilian construction company, under the direction of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, undertook what was called project 111. Movement of Air Transport Command operations to Santa Maria from Lajes Field commenced in April 1945 and on 15 May 1945, the base reached completion on 15 May 1945. The new field replaced Lajes as the main base for passenger and cargo planes routed through the Azores, even though U.S. operations at Lajes Field continued.¹²

¹¹ Herz, Operation Alacrity, pg. 267-287.

¹² Herz, Operation Alacrity, pg. 288-318.

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Green and White Project

The end of the war in Europe brought about a rapid demobilization of troops and equipment from Europe. With the war over, the post European operations mission of the two Azorean bases became known. Santa Maria would serve the enormous number of transport aircraft moving passengers and cargo back to the United States. The Green Project, as it was called, moved over 50,000 veterans of the war back home through Santa Maria. From May until September 1945, more than 7,000 C-54s transited through Santa Maria. Lajes, on the other hand, participated in the White Project servicing tactical aircraft from the European Theater to the Pacific Theater. Lajes set a record during the White Project when 600 U.S. aircraft landed in a single day.¹³

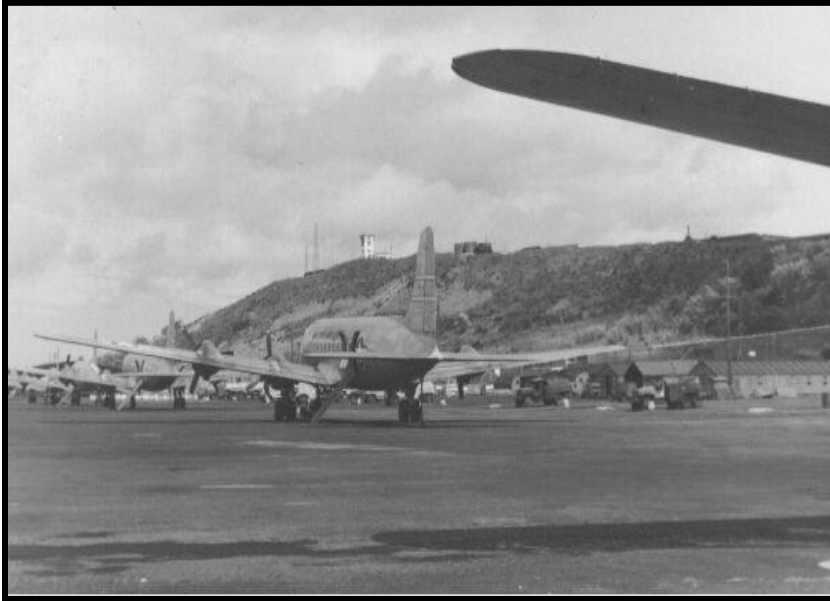
Post-War

The United States and the United Kingdom transferred control of both Lajes and Santa Maria bases to Portugal on 2 June 1946. The preliminary agreement between the U.S. and Portugal regarding bases in the Azores was terminated at that time. The Portuguese redesignated Lajes as Air Base 4 and assigned it to the air branch of the Portuguese army whereas Santa Maria was relinquished to civilian control. During this transition American flights across the Atlantic could not be abruptly halted and negotiations began between the U.S. and Portugal about extending the American stay in the Azores. On 10 July 1946, the Portuguese government announced that if the Americans were to remain in the Azores it must be at Lajes Field. On 1 September 1946, the 1391st Army Air Force Base Unit and the Azores Base Command was transferred from Santa Maria Island to Lajes Field. Nine days later a temporary agreement was reached between the U.S. and Portuguese governments giving the U.S. military rights to Lajes Field. This cooperative relationship became codified 5 years later within the Defense Agreement of September 6, 1951. The 1951 agreement between Portugal and the United States has been renewed twice: 1983-4, and again in 1995. In fact, the current bi-lateral relationship between these two countries stems directly from the 1995 “Agreement on Cooperation and Defense Between the United States and Portugal.” Under the terms of this agreement U.S. military forces reside at Lajes under tenancy status while Air Base 4 (Lajes Field) remained under the control of the Portuguese Air Force under the overall command of Headquarters Azores Air Zone headed by a Portuguese Air Force major general.¹⁴

¹³ Herz, Operation Alacrity, pg. 325-328.

¹⁴ Herz, Operation Alacrity, pg. 319-333.

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These C-54s contributed to more than 3,000 sorties that transited Lajes Field during Operation VITTLES.

Berlin Airlift

At the end of World War II Germany was occupied by the four victorious Allied Powers: U.S., Great Britain, USSR, and France. The city of Berlin was also divided among the Allies 110 miles within the Soviet occupied zone. In an attempt to consolidate control and force the Western powers out of the city, the Soviet Union cut land routes between West Germany and Berlin. Two million West Berliners were cut off from essential supplies. On 26 June 1948, the U.S. and Britain began airlifting supplies to the city under the code-name Operation VITTLES. The operation lasted until 30 September 1949 when the Soviets reopened land routes. The Berlin Airlift became the largest humanitarian airlift in history and was a significant test for the young U.S. Air Force and the first major challenge of the Cold War.

Lajes played a key supporting role that led to the success of the Berlin Airlift. Throughout Operation VITTLES, C-47, DC-4 and C-54 aircraft transited Lajes Field en route to Germany. More than 3,000 aircraft passed through Lajes during Operation VITTLES. Lajes Field also supported U.S. military personnel returning from airlift duties, where thousands were put up in base billeting and many base agencies were open 24 hours a day. Perhaps one of Lajes Field's greatest contributions to the airlift was in the maintenance and repair of participating aircraft. During the airlift, Lajes Field maintenance crews were noted for their quick turn-around of aircraft and in making repairs and obtaining parts that kept several C-47 and DC-4 aircraft flying until the operation ended in 1949.

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Over the course of Operation VITTLES Lajes Field once again demonstrated the base's strategic importance in projecting American air power throughout the world. This capacity was also demonstrated in March 1949, when four KB-29 tankers staged from Lajes in the first aerial refueling for a B-50, (the *Lucky Lady II*) on the initial leg of the first non-stop aerial-refueled flight around the world.¹⁵



The B-50 Lucky Lady II refueling from a modified B-29 during the record breaking non-stop flight around the world in February, 1949. The aircraft received a total of 4 aerial refuelings: Lajes, Azores; Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; Clark Air Base, Philippines; and over Hickam Airfield, Hawaii before returning to the United States after the 94-hour flight.

Mission Changes

On 11 August 1952, Headquarters Atlantic Division initiated correspondence to Headquarters, Military Air Transport Service requesting that the 1605th Air Base Group at Lajes be permitted to enlarge to wing status. The justification for this was that the group organization was unrealistic and inadequate to effectively accomplish the mission of the Azores Air Transport Station (as Lajes was referred to). Headquarters Atlantic Division believed that the location of the group in a foreign country involved problems of liaison with local government and military activities and that the prestige of the command would be greatly enhanced by the establishment of a wing. Permission was granted and on 1 February 1953, the 1605th Air Base Group was redesignated as the 1605th Air Base Wing.

This was not the only change in U.S. military leadership in the Azores. On 16 March 1953, the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Command organized a subordinate unified command in the Azores in U.S. Forces Azores (USFORAZ) and assigned the 1605th Air Base Wing commander over all U.S. Forces Azores (COMUSFORAZ). A small staff of Navy, Army and Air Force personnel comprised the joint staff of USFORAZ. The command was responsible for contingency planning, and, as the local representative for the U.S. Ambassador to Portugal, COMUSFORAZ was the liaison between the U.S. and the Portuguese in the Azores. The command's mission was to support allied forces in the area, to assist in local defense, if requested, and to protect and evacuate U.S. citizens from the Azores, Europe, Africa, and Southwest Asia, or other

¹⁵ Herz, Operation Alacrity, pg. 327-328..

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Tactical Air Command F-100 fighters sit on the Lajes flight line during the late 1950s. These fighters were en route to an exercise in Europe.

areas of the world. COMUSFORAZ assumed operational control of all assigned U.S. military forces in the Azores region until the command was inactivated in 2004.

The U.S. Air Force was not the only military organization established at Lajes during the 1950s. A U.S. Army Port Battalion assumed control over the loading and unloading of supplies in Praia Bay in 1952 that today constitutes the Terminal Transportation Unit (TTU). During this period two U.S. Navy units also came aboard. The Naval Security Group Activity (NSGA), activated in 1954, provided high frequency communications to all Department of Defense forces operating throughout the Azores area. The Naval Air Facility, established in 1957, supported naval aviation operations through the Azores operational area. While these naval units went away in the 1990s, the Resident Officer In Charge of Construction (ROICC) remained on the island until December 2009.

Tactical Air Command (TAC) also established a rotational tanker unit in the late 1950s along with a liaison office on the island. This liaison office coordinated TAC aircraft movements through the area en route to and from training exercises. TAC tanker units were flying the KB-50 tanker aircraft. These tanker units left Lajes in 1965, while the liaison office remained at Lajes until 1992.

The following statistics illustrate periodic increases in wing mission demands and personnel. In 1952 4,059 aircraft departed from Lajes; by 1959, there was a 300 percent increase in air traffic with 16,360 aircraft departures. The increase in mission performance directly influenced manning levels at Lajes. At the start of 1952 there was 1,020 U.S. military personnel at Lajes Field. In 1959, this number reached 3,020 U.S. military personnel. This increase in personnel served to support the increasing use of Lajes Field. Lajes had been instrumental in providing support to many exercises and operations in the 1950s and 1960s. Exercises with names such as Spearhead (1960),

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Long Thrust (1961) and Big Lift (1963) continued to bring many aircraft and troops through Lajes. Many operations supported both UN and NATO operations that included the 1958 U.S. peace-keeping efforts in Lebanon, and the 1961 United Nations peace initiative in Congo.

By the mid-1960s, SAC and TAC rotational tanker units at Lajes stopped. This coupled with newer aircraft such as C-135, C-130 and C-141 with over flight capabilities caused a gradual decline in Lajes air traffic. There were only 5,559 departures in 1965; Lajes could not escape consequences from the decline in mission aircraft transiting the airfield. In 1967, a rotational P-3 mission was established by the Naval Air Facility to monitor Soviet submarine activity around the Azores. The sortie rates generated by the Navy were exceeding those of the Air Force during the late 1960s and early 1970s as Cold War tensions flared. The Department of Defense made plans to transfer U.S. military command at Lajes from the USAF to the Navy in 1974. But before this change occurred, a significant event in the Middle East would have a profound impact on Lajes Field.

Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1973

On 6 October 1973, the countries of Egypt and Syria launched an attack on Israel. The Soviet Union took up the task of resupplying the aggressors in this conflict that became known as the Yom Kippur War. President Richard Nixon committed U.S. help to the Israelis. On 12 October 1973, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) received orders to move supplies and ammunition to Israel. U.S. allies in Europe, fearful of losing oil supplies from the Arab oil-producing nations, denied the U.S. use of air bases for the operation. Only Portugal agreed to cooperate fully with the airlift giving U.S. landing rights at Lajes Field. Within two days of receiving the orders (14 October 1973), the first flight unloaded in Israel. During the initial 48 hours of the Operation NICKEL GRASS airlift, an unprecedented 136 landings and 88 departures were directed, managed, and supported by Lajes Field. C-141s and C-5s flew a distance of about 6,500 nautical miles, landing to refuel only at Lajes. The airlift lasted until 14 November 1973 and resulted in the delivery of 22,395 tons of cargo. There were a total of 312 C-5 and 845 C-141 sorties through Lajes during the operation.

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A C-5 takes off from Lajes Field over parked F-4 Phantoms in support of Operation NICKEL GRASS

The Yom Kippur War ended with a cease fire between the warring nations while Operation NICKEL GRASS sustained Israel and outperformed the Soviet's supply effort to Egypt and Syria. Soviet transport aircraft (AN-12s and AN-22s) moved barely 15,000 tons of cargo even though they only had to cover a distance of 1,700 miles.

This airlift had a two-fold effect on the future of the U.S. Air Force. First, the Air Force modified the C-141 fleet for mid-air refueling and renewed interest in the C-5s aerial refueling capability. The second lesson confirmed the importance of the Air Force maintaining basing facilities at Lajes. In January 1974, the Department of Defense reconsidered the U.S. Navy command at Lajes Field. The 1605th Air Base Wing earned the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its effort during Operation NICKEL GRASS and retained control over Lajes Field. This same year also brought even more high-profile attention to Lajes when the Commander-in-Chief, President Richard M. Nixon, visited the island for the second time.

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President Nixon waves farewell to Lajes Field after attending a conference with the President of Portugal Antonio de Spínola

Distinguished Visitors

From its earliest days Lajes Field had the pleasure of hosting many distinguished visitors. Lajes provided an ideal location for dignitaries and heads-of-state to stop, refuel, and rest during transatlantic trips. President Dwight D. Eisenhower was the first acting American president to stop at Lajes in 1960, but almost every President since has made an appearance. Lajes has frequently been on the world political stage beginning back to 1945 when peace delegates from Europe and Africa stopped at the airfield en route to the San Francisco Peace Conference. Perhaps one of the most talked about visits was in December 1972 when President Richard Nixon met with French President Georges Pompidou, and Portuguese Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano for a high-level conference in the City of Angra. Less than two years later Nixon became the first president to visit

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Lajes twice as he met with the new President of Portugal, Antonio de Spínola, following the Carnation Revolution in Portugal.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter and Egypt's Prime Minister Anwar Sadat stopped at Lajes en route to high-level Middle East peace talks. In addition to kings, queens and other heads-of-state, Lajes hosted commanders from all major commands, Air Force, NATO and other allied military leaders, where these distinguished visitors have always been given full honors.

One of the most historic international meetings to take place on the island occurred in March 2003, when the wing received less than 48-hour notice of an unprecedented meeting on Lajes of 4 heads-of-state: President George W. Bush (U.S); Prime Minister Tony Blair (U.K.); Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso (Portugal); and Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar (Spain). On 16 March 2003, Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso hosted a one-day summit at Lajes Field with the afore-mentioned heads of state. Following a brief consultation at the Top of the Rock Club (TORC) the leaders then adjourned to conduct a news conference at the Community Activities Center (CAC). During this news conference the four chief executives delivered two joint statements on "Transatlantic Solidarity" and "A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People" before departing Terceira Island.

This historic meeting on the island served two purposes for two separate audiences. First, the summit was intended to show the world that in spite of French, German, Russian, and Chinese reluctance to give Saddam Hussein a direct ultimatum there were western nations lined up with the U.S. to confront the Iraqi regime. Second, a clear attempt was made to communicate to the Iraqi people an idea of what life for their nation could be without the tyrannous Hussein regime.¹⁶ In retrospect, the summit could also be seen as a clearing of the decks for the military action that would commence less than four days later as U.S. and British forces pushed into Iraq in the early morning hours on 20 March 2003, as the Iraq War began.¹⁷

¹⁶ Presidential Papers, pg 274-276; Artel "Allies prepare for Azores summit," CNN, John King, Robin Oakley, Al Goodman, Jim Bitterman, 14 March 2003.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/14/sprj.irq.international>.

¹⁷ This perspective is illustrated by Kenneth Katzman, Congressional Research Service Specialist on Middle Eastern Affairs, in "Iraq; Post-Saddam Governance and Security," 20090608, pg 8. Mr. Katzman erroneously included Bulgaria and excluded Portuguese participation in the summit and he placed the

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While President Bush specifically thanked Prime Minister Barroso for all the preparations prior to the summit, he failed to publicly acknowledge the considerable details that the 65 ABW performed within 48 hours to make the event happen. The wing received notification at 1000 hours local time on March 14th concerning preparation for the summit. Within 48 hours the Lajes team had converted the Lisbon Room at the TORC ("Top of the Rock Club") into a summit meeting room with furniture and communications connections with translation facilities for all four heads-of-state. In addition, 140 international commercial telephone lines with a half-mile of cable were laid to accommodate the diplomatic delegations and media representatives. The media contingent alone was estimated at 250 reporters who were provided workspace and internet connectivity at the base fire department and the Portuguese hanger.¹⁸



From left to right: Prime Minister Barroso; Prime Minister Blair; President Bush; Prime Minister Aznar meet in the TORC

beginning of the war on the 19th of March when the war actually began in the early morning of the 20th in Iraq.

¹⁸ Artel "Presidential preparations," *Crossroads*, vol.8, no. 11, 21 March 2003, pg 8.

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It was not always the serious visitor who stopped at Lajes Field. USO tours were a popular entertainment treat for U.S. service members separated from family back home. Many entertainers stopped in to give shows at Lajes where performers came to make the troops laugh, and forget about life for a while. A pattern that has continued on through to this day.



Frank Sinatra was just one of the many entertainers to play Lajes Field during World War II. From left, film director Saul Chaplin, singer Fay McKenzie, Sinatra, British actress Joan Miles and comedian Phil Silvers.

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Humanitarian Efforts

On 1 January 1980, an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale struck Terceira Island. Damage to Lajes Field was minimal, however there was extensive destruction to Portuguese communities throughout the island. Military personnel responded to the local crisis with food, shelter, equipment and manpower. The 1605th Air Base Wing Crisis Action Team became the focus for disaster relief operations by all U.S. forces and a coordination point with Portuguese military and civil authorities. Teams of U.S. Air Force, Army, Navy, civilian and dependent personnel were organized and dispatched into the communities hardest hit by the quake. These teams were engaged in clearing roads, digging through rubble and helping Portuguese families move their belongings to protected shelters. The base set up the gymnasium as a reception point for displaced Portuguese and American families. Dining facilities went on a 24-hour schedule feeding earthquake victims and emergency relief volunteers. Temporary housing was provided on base in dormitories. By 15 January, 150 families were housed in base facilities. Heavy equipment was used extensively by Civil Engineers to supplement the Portuguese machines that were clearing roads, moving rubble, toppling dangerous structures and in other ways facilitating the emergency operations. Base civil engineers provided generators to restore power to the Angra hospital, Angra bakery, and the Praia telephone system. For two weeks, U.S. forces assisted disaster recovery until Portuguese agencies could effectively take over the relief efforts.

The 1980 earthquake was just one of the many relief efforts made by American personnel in the history of Lajes Field. In 1963, six weeks of severe wind prevented Portuguese supply ships from reaching Santa Maria Island. The 1605th Air Base Wing coordinated to divert a C-124 to Lajes where it was loaded with five tons of food. The C-124 then airdropped the food to Santa Maria helping the residents survive until the next shipment arrived. In 1964, a series of earthquakes struck the island of Sao Jorge destroying homes and leaving thousands of people homeless. Many Sao Jorge residents made their way to Terceira Island. The 1605th Air Base Wing provided blankets, mattresses, pillows, and sheets to Terceira's hospitals and relief centers. Other Military Air Transport Service (MATS) and Air National Guard (ANG) units flew in clothing from California to Lajes. The clothing was loaded onto U.S. Army port landing craft that delivered the clothing to Sao Jorge. In addition, housing for 200 Portuguese families from Sao Jorge was provided by the USFORAZ through a People-to-People project. The housing was in the form of 100 Quonset huts provided by the U.S. Navy. Since that time USFORAZ invited a Marine unit to deploy to the Azores for training to repair flood damage on the island of Sao Miguel in 1998. The 65th Airbase Wing also stepped up to assist flooding victims in local communities across the island following the damaging rain and wind storms that struck the island in December 2009.

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It was not only in times of trouble that the U.S. personnel at Lajes assisted the local community. The People-to-People program was a foreign aid program initiated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 made up of civic leaders and businessmen. U.S. Forces Azores command coordinated many of the People-to-People projects throughout the Azores Island. Some of the projects included constructing local water wells, stocking trout in Furnas Lake on Sao Miguel Island, and airlifting different breeds of livestock to the island. The Lajes Chapel Base Charitable Organization has collected foodstuff and items for delivery to local families in need. In 1998, a Marine construction unit deployed to Lajes to construct a fire-training tower for local civil protection authorities. The U.S. military has always tried to be a good neighbor with our Portuguese hosts in good times and in times of trouble. In 1998 a precedent was establish when Lajes Field conducted an exercise (Strong Partner I) with Portuguese military and civic authorities to practice relief efforts for an earthquake. As seen with the 1980 earthquake, it was an all too real situation and one in which preparedness could make the difference.



An Air Force bulldozer clears rubble from a road after the 1 January 1980 earthquake.

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Lajes in the 80s

As Lajes entered the 1980s, a change in the organizational structure of the Wing took place. On 1 January 1982, the 1605th Air Base Wing was redesignated the 1605th Military Airlift Support Wing. The major change involved reassigning the Air Terminal Operations section, formerly under the 1605th Transportation Squadron, and the Wing Command Post and Station Operations sections to Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and redesignating that squadron the 1605th Military Airlift Support Squadron. This move would also take Lajes away from being an en route aircraft maintenance facility to an en route support facility. However, station air traffic continued along at a steady rate. Transiting aircraft, crews and personnel participating in exercises such as Bright Star and the annual REFORGER (Return of Forces to Germany) were still making their way through Lajes.

The 1980s were also marked with a high construction growth. A new addition was placed on the gymnasium and a new commissary was built. In addition, many of those 1950s-era facilities were refurbished. The construction of Beira Mar housing and new dormitories made life at Lajes more comfortable for Airmen and their families.

Silk Purse

In the summer of 1984, Lajes undertook a new mission. EC-135s began operating out of Lajes Field. This operation, known as the Silk Purse Control Group, functioned as an airborne command post for U.S. Commander-in-Chief of Europe. Along with the aircraft came U.S. European Command battle staffs and flight crews from United States Air Forces in Europe. Each crew included communication system operators and aircraft maintenance personnel. Also, additional security forces personnel were assigned to protect the area. The Silk Purse mission was highly classified and little was known of its activities at Lajes, but overall, this mission focused on deterring aggression from the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Silk Purse mission was deactivated and the last Silk Purse mission rolled out in late August 1991.

Lajes and the 1990s

The 1990s witnessed the abrupt end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War. This disruption in the global balance of power allowed recently liberated nations to choose their own course of action. However, for some nations this course led to disputes between neighbors and unrest among their own citizens. Also with the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. military budget shrank. The U.S. military was faced with

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reducing its force and infrastructure while at the same time answering the world's call for help.

The Gulf War

The first such test of the 1990s was when Iraq invaded its neighboring country Kuwait on 2 August 1990. Immediately the world took action and began positioning forces in Southwest Asia to stop this act of aggression in what became known as Operation DESERT SHIELD. On 17 January 1991, the U.S. opened Operation DESERT STORM with a massive bombing campaign against Iraqi targets. This air war pounded Iraq for 39 days before the ground troops moved into Iraq and Kuwait pushing the Iraqis back to their own borders in less than 100 hours.

Lajes supported the massive airlift during the Gulf war. On the first day of the deployment over 90 aircraft transited Lajes. Strategic Air Command staged a provisional tanker wing at Lajes to support the airlift. At the height of the operation a peak of 33 tanker aircraft and 600 troops deployed to Lajes. At one point during Operation DESERT SHIELD there was a maximum of 56 aircraft on the ramp – which included SAC, MAC, Guard, Reserve, Marine, Navy, and several fighter aircraft drop-ins. Despite having the airfield close to capacity, not one aircraft was refused landing or service. During the entire Gulf War, Lajes provided quality en route support for over 12,000 aircraft operations. Military Airlift Support Squadron personnel handled over 15,000 tons of essential cargo needed for the war effort. With the second largest fuel disbursement facility in the Air Force, Lajes pumped five times the normal amount of fuel. Fuels personnel issued over 40 million gallons of petroleum products without a major safety incident or delay in aircraft departures. Throughout the campaign, civil



A tanker task force occupied the Lajes Flight line during Operations Desert Storm/Shield.

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engineering personnel worked over 9,450 man-hours to maintain an antiquated, 35-year-old hydrant refueling system.

Throughout this period over 75,000 personnel passed through Lajes Field. Over 10,000 of them were billeted during both operations. To accommodate them all, the base gymnasium was converted into a 330-bed overflow facility. Services personnel ensured all transitory aircrews and troop movements bound for the Gulf region had a clean and comfortable place to sleep. The in-flight kitchen prepared over 18,000 flight meals and set up a 24-hour dining service operation for crews on call. The 600 deployed personnel at Lajes were treated as part of Team Lajes. The challenges of Operations DESERT/STORM were met head on with determination and pride that far exceeded expectations. The 1605th Military Airlift Support Wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its support of operations during the Gulf War.

Reorganizations, Redesignations and Rewards

Soon after the Gulf War ended, the Air Force underwent a massive reorganization. The strategic and tactical assets of SAC and TAC were combined to form Air Combat Command (ACC). MACs airlift operations and SACs refueling capabilities were shaped into Air Mobility Command (AMC). The Air Force was moving from composite wings to the whole wing concept. Lajes Field underwent a significant change as a result. The Lajes U.S. base command changed from the 1605th Military Airlift Support Wing to the 65th Support Wing in January 1992. The Wing remained under Air Mobility Command, however plans were made to transfer the Wing to Air Combat Command. On 1 October 1993, the transition from AMC to ACC took place. Since the Americans first arrived at Lajes in January 1944, Lajes had been under the leadership of an airlift major command (ATC, MATS, MAC, and AMC). The Wing under ACC formed a more natural chain of command. The commander of U.S. Forces Azores reported to U.S. Atlantic Command, and ACC was a component of U.S. Atlantic Command.¹⁹ Along with the change in command, the 65th Support Wing was redesignated the 65th Air Base Wing (65 ABW), the designation of the unit today. AMC still kept a support squadron at Lajes to coordinate AMC flights. The unit is the largest tenant unit at Lajes and is designated the 729th Air Mobility Support Squadron.

The U.S. military was also downsizing its forces. This had an impact at Lajes Field. The two Naval units, mainstays since the 1950s, were both deactivated by 1994. Lajes U.S. military manning levels dropped below 1,000 -- the lowest level since 1950.

Beginning on 1 October 1999, the Air Force transitioned into an expeditionary aerospace force in order to meet the national security requirement of the 21st Century.

¹⁹ U.S. Atlantic Command was redesignated as U.S. Joint Forces Command on 1 October 1999. U.S. Forces Azores remained a subordinate unified command under U.S. Joint Forces Command.

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The relatively large organizational structure of the Air Force in the Cold War era, sized to respond to major war conditions, had been replaced by a “light, lean and lethal” force able to deploy and respond in aerospace expeditionary force (AEF) contingencies. Lajes has continually supported these large AEF movements across the Atlantic. Lajes also has hosted B-52 and B-1 bomber aircraft en route from global air missions. Supporting these missions and aircraft movements has required a total Team Lajes effort. Team Lajes consists of the dedicated men and women of all branches of the military services, civilians, including the hardworking Portuguese workforce, and the dependents who give much to the success of Lajes. Throughout the years, Lajes was recognized with many awards from USAFE and the Air Force. In 1998 the wing received the ACC nomination to compete for the Commander-In-Chief Installation Excellence Award and was chosen as a runner-up at the Air Force level. In 2002 ACC honored the wing with another opportunity, this time the wing successfully brought to Lajes the Commander-In-Chief’s Installation Excellence Award as the top base in the United States Air Force.

Operations

Changes in unit designation, major commands, and personnel levels did not have an impact on the wing’s mission as evident during operations in the 1990s and into the 21st Century. In the following operations in Europe, Southwest Asia, and Africa, Lajes has played a significant supporting role:

PROVIDE COMFORT (1991): Supported cargo aircraft providing humanitarian relief for the Iraqi Kurds.

RESTORE HOPE (1992-93): Reception and bed down of 12 KC-135s that formed a tanker task force providing a mid-Atlantic air refueling station for cargo aircraft bound for and returning from Somalia.

DENY FLIGHT (1993): Already heavy with Navy P-3 and C-130 deployments, the Wing received deployment orders for 6 KC-135Rs in support of Bosnia no fly zone.

SOUTHERN WATCH (1992-2003): Hosted a 15 aircraft Tanker Task Force that supported increasing requirements of aircraft patrolling southern Iraq.

SUPPORT HOPE(1994): Provided refueling support to cargo aircraft supporting the humanitarian relief operation to Rwanda.

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VIGILANT WARRIOR (1994): Supported transiting fighter aircraft in the protection of U.S. vital interests and the promotion of Southwest Asia regional stability.

JOINT ENDEAVOR (1995): Provided support for transiting aircraft to the Bosnia Airlift.

ASSURED RESPONSE (1996): During the evacuation of American citizens from Liberia, Lajes hosted 8 Tanker Task Force aircraft. Also, the last C-5 carrying U.S. Embassy personnel and equipment landed at Lajes.

DESERT THUNDER (1998): The 629th Air Mobility Support Squadron turned around C-17s staging from Lajes during the movement of equipment from Southwest Asia. The 629 AMSS was tasked with preparing the C-17 for flight in one hour and 45 minutes. This unit not only met the goal, but on several occasions had the aircraft ready to go in 39 minutes.

ALLIED FORCE (1999): In light of Serbian aggression against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1203 on 24 October 1998. This resolution allowed for air verification missions that evolved into air strikes against Serbian forces in Kosovo on 23 March 1999. U.S. fighter aircraft transited through Lajes field in support of this mission.

ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) (2001 - Present): Following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaida forces were targeted in this coalition effort to eliminate terrorist havens in Afghanistan. Lajes has supported the movement of aircraft to and from the operation's theater of operations. In addition, Lajes Airmen have deployed to the theater in direct support of OEF.

IRAQI FREEDOM (2003-2010): U.S. and coalition forces joined together in an effort to rid the Middle East of the menace of Saddam Hussein armed with weapons of mass destruction. Lajes supported the movement of aircraft to and from this conflict, in addition, Airmen deployed from Lajes in direct support of the operation.

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NEW DAWN (2010-Present): On 1 September 2010, direct combat operations ended with the close of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and the primary focus for American forces in Iraq transitioned into a mission to train, equip, and hand over control of key installations and assets to Iraqi forces. This effort will ultimately lead to the scheduled withdrawal of the U.S. military presence from Iraq by December 2011. Once again, Lajes Airmen deploy in support of this operation while also providing essential support to aircraft transiting through the Azores en route to the CENTCOM AOR.

ODYSSEY DAWN (19 Mar-04 Apr 2011): On 18 March 2011, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973 instituting a No-Fly Zone in response to the civil unrest in Libya and to deter the aggression of the Muammar Qadhafi regime against civilians located in rebellious cities: principally Benghazi. The next day French, British, and American military forces in the Mediterranean unleashed a preemptive strike on Libyan air defenses via air attack from fighter/bombers and Tomahawk cruise missiles. Lajes Airmen deployed in support of the operation and Lajes Field hosted aircraft transiting the Azores in support of the UN-sanctioned operation.

UNIFIED PROTECTOR (04 Apr 2011-Present): On 4 April 2011 the U.S. handed over command of Libya operations to NATO. Under NATO, operations in Libya supporting UN Resolution 1973 became Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR. Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States contributed aircraft, ships, and forces in support of the operation.

Conclusion

For over 65 years, Lajes has been the Crossroads of the Atlantic bridging the gap of the wide-open ocean expanse. In most contingencies that required U.S. aircraft and allied forces to cross the Atlantic, Lajes had a supporting role. From B-17s and C-47s to B-1s and C-17s, Lajes was, and will continue to be the mid-Atlantic stop that gets the aircraft, crews, equipment, and personnel where they need to go to “fly, fight, and win.”

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A B-1B lands at Lajes after a global power mission in 1994.



While cows grazing on the flight line may not be a normal occurrence at most Air Force bases, it is part of the island that makes Lajes a unique place for transient personnel and those stationed here.

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U.S. BASE OPERATING UNITS

US Army Air Force

Station #15, North Atlantic Wing (29 December 1943 – 28 July 1944)

Station #15, North Atlantic Division (28 July 1944 – 1 August 1944)

1390th Army Air Force Base Unit (1 August 1944 - 1 November 1945)

1391-1Y Operation Location (1 November 1945 - 1 September 1946)

1391st Army Air Force Base Unit (1 September 1946 –26 September 1947)

US Air Force

1391st Air Force Base Unit (26 September 1947 – 1 June 1948)

523rd Air Base Group (1 June 1948 - 1 October 1948)

1605th Air Base Group (1 October 1948 - 1 February 1953)

1605th Air Base Wing (1 February 1953 - 1 January 1982)

1605th Military Airlift Support Wing (1 January 1982 - 1 January 1992)

606th Support Wing (1 January 1992 - 27 January 1992)

65th Support Wing (27 January 1992 - 1 October 1993)

65th Air Base Wing (1 October 1993 - present)

MAJOR COMMANDS TO WHICH ASSIGNED

Air Transport Command - 29 December 1943

Military Air Transport Service – 1 June 1948

Military Airlift Command – 1 January 1966

Air Mobility Command – 1 June 1992

Air Combat Command – 1 October 1993

United States Air Forces in Europe – 1 October 2002

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CURRENT UNITS ASSIGNED

65th Air Base Wing (USAFE)

65th Comptroller Squadron

65th Operations Support Squadron

65th Mission Support Group

65th Civil Engineer Squadron

65th Communications Squadron

65th Contracting Squadron

65th Logistics Readiness Squadron

65th Force Support Squadron

65th Security Forces Squadron

65th Medical Group

65th Medical Operations Squadron

65th Medical Support Squadron

Tenant Units and Associate Units

729th Air Mobility Support Squadron (Air Mobility Command)

Azores Det., Military Traffic Management Command (US Army)

Detachment 6, Air Force News Agency

Detachment 250, Air Force Office of Special Investigation

Army and Air Force Exchange Services (AAFES)

Defense Commissary Agency (DECA)

Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO)

Department of Defense Dependent School (DoDDS)

LAJES FIELD COMMANDERS

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur F. Callahan (11 December 1943 – 28 December 1943)*

Colonel David A. Morris (28 December 1943 – 24 January 1944)*

Brigadier General A. D. Smith (24 January 1944 – 13 October 1944))

Colonel Harry L. Putnam (13 October 1944 – 17 December 1944)*

Colonel Sigmund F. Landers (17 December 1944 – 19 June 1945)

Colonel George O. Bond (19 June 1945 – 16 December 1945)

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Colonel Sam W. Agree, Jr. (16 December 1945 – 16 March 1947)
Colonel John W. Warren (16 March 1947 – 1 June 1948)
Major Robert C. Morris, Jr. (1 June 1948 – 16 July 1948)*
Colonel Joseph A. Wilson (16 July 1948 – 12 January 1950)
Brigadier General George S. Cassady (12 January 1950 – 1 July 1952)
Colonel Harold L. Smith (1 July 1952 – 16 August 1958)
Major General George B. Dany (16 August 1958 – 9 August 1961)
Brigadier General Eugene B. LeBailly (9 August 1961 – 6 January 1964)
Major General George S. Boylan (6 January 1964 – 19 October 1965)
Major General William H. Brandon (19 October 1965 – 17 July 1967)
Brigadier General John H. Buckner (17 July 1967 – 12 September 1969)
Brigadier General Warren D. Johnson (12 September 1969 – 1 June 1971)
Brigadier General Thomas A. Aldrich (1 June 1971 – 1 June 1973)
Brigadier General William P. Comstock (1 June 1973 – 12 January 1975)
Brigadier General Erskine Wigley (12 January 1975 – 24 October 1977)
Brigadier General Richard T. Drurry (24 October 1977 – 11 June 1980)
Brigadier General Duane H. Erickson (11 June 1980 – 25 June 1982)
Brigadier General Donald C. Smith (25 June 1982 – 22 May 1984)
Brigadier General Donald A. Rigg (22 May 1984 – 15 July 1986)
Brigadier General Larry D. Wright (15 July 1986 – 27 July 1987)
Brigadier General James C. McCombs (27 July 1987 – 7 July 1989)
Brigadier General Charles C. Barnhill (7 July 1989 – 22 August 1991)
Brigadier General Thomas D. Pilsch (22 August 1991 – 20 August 1993)
Colonel Brian A. Arnold (20 August 1993 – 28 July 1995)
Colonel Melvin M. Reeves, Jr. (28 July 1995 – 2 December 1996)
Colonel John M. Calvert (2 December 1996 – 3 March 1997)*
Colonel Rodney E. Gibson (3 March 1997 – 13 July 1999)
Colonel Wilhelm F. Percival (13 July 1999 – 2001)
Colonel Judith A. Fedder (2001 – May 2003)
Colonel Barbara Jacobi (May 2003 – 2006)
Colonel Jack Briggs (2006 – August 2008)
Colonel Paul Suarez (Aug 2008 – Sep 2008)*
Colonel Margaret B. Poore (Sept 2008 – July 2010)
Colonel Jose Rivera (August 2010 – Present)

* Individuals filled the role as acting commanders

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Unit Designation: 65th Air Base Wing (65 ABW)

Previous Designation: Same

Authority: Activated 1 July 1993, SO GAXP-17
HQ AMC, 28 SEPTEMBER 1993

Higher Headquarters: United States Air Forces in Europe
1 Nov 05 - present

Commander: Colonel Jose Rivera
2010 – present

Vice Commander: Colonel Eric Axelbank
2010 - present

Assigned Units: 65th Air Base Wing
65th Comptroller Squadron
65th Operations Support Squadron

65th Mission Support Group
65th Civil Engineer Squadron
65th Communications Squadron
65th Contracting Squadron
65th Logistics Readiness Squadron
65th Force Support Squadron
65th Security Forces Squadron

65th Medical Group
65th Medical Operations Squadron
65th Medical Support Squadron

Units Gained: None

Units Lost: None

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Attached Units: Detachment 6, Air Force News Agency
Detachment 516, Office of Special Investigations
729th Air Mobility Squadron (AMC)
SDDC, Azores Detachment (U.S. Army)
Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES)
Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA)

Attached Units Redesignation: None
Attached Units Gained: None
Attached Units Lost: None
Detached Units Assigned: None
Detached Units Gained: None
Detached Units Lost: None
Internal Reassignments: None

Station: Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores Portugal
APO, AE 09720-5000

Weapon System: None

Awards and Decorations: Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards:
(1 Jun 88 - 31 May 90), DAFSO GB-026/90;
(7 Aug 90-31 Mar 91), DAFSO GB-109/94;
(15 Jan 91 - 15 Jan 93), DAFSO GB-152/93;
(16 Jan 93 - 31 Mar 94) SO GA 324/94;
(1 Apr 94 - 1 May 95) DAFSO GA-308/95;
(1 Jun 97 – 31 May 99) DAFSO GA-050/99;
(1 Jun 1999-31 May 2001) DAFSO GA-010/01;
(1 Jun 2001-31 May 2003) DAFSO GA-060/04

Emblem: See Attached

Motto: “Lajes in the Fight”

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EMBLEM DESCRIPTION

BLAZON

(U) Sable, issuant from base a demi-globe Azure, grid lined, surmounted and issuant at fess point a pair of wings conjoined displayed all Or, charged with a mullet Gules bearing a plate; all within a diminished bordure Or.

(U) Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "65TH AIR BASE WING" in Blue letters.



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EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

(U) Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The field above the globe represents the area of flight and the delivery of air power in the sky, space, and cyberspace. The globe represents support of the world community and embodies the Air Force vision of vigilance, reach, and power. The wings signify the unit mission and values. The extension of the wings symbolizes protection of the crossroads. The star and circle are historic elements, which emphasize the unit's heritage. Symbolically combined the emblem symbolizes the history of the unit and its early connection to the Military Air Transport Service and Military Airlift Command.

Approved: 15 June 2007.

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PREVIOUSLY ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT

Aircraft assigned to unit

B-17 (ca 1946- ca 1950)

C-54 (ca 1950- 1973)

C-47 (ca 1944 – 1970)

C-118 (1972 – 1975)

Aircraft operated by 57th Rescue Squadron

SB-17 (ca 1947 – 1956)

SC-54 (1956 –1965)

SH-19 (1956 – 1964)

SC 130 (1965 – 1972)

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT

There have been no permanently assigned aircraft at Lajes Field since 27 June 1975



An aerial view of Northeast corner of Terceira Island showing Praia Harbor containing the breakwater and Military Port Complex at the bottom and Lajes Field at the top of the photo.