

65 AIR BASE GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

65 Troop Carrier Wing, Medium established, 26 May 1952

Activated in the Reserve, 14 Jun 1952

Inactivated, 1 Apr 1953¹

Redesignated 65 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Medium, 1 Apr 1953. Unit remained inactive

1605 Military Airlift Support Wing established and activated, 1 Jan 1982

65 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Medium and 1605 Military Airlift Support Wing consolidated,
1 Jan 1992

Redesignated 65 Support Wing, 27 Jan 1992

Redesignated 65 Air Base Wing, 1 Oct 1993

Redesignated 65 Air Base Group, 14 Aug 2015

STATIONS

Mitchel AFB, NY, 14 Jun 1952-1 Apr 1953

Lajes Field, Azores, 1 Jan 1982

ASSIGNMENTS

¹ Department of the Air Force 322 (AFOMO 26lh) dated 15 Dec 1952 says 1 Feb 1953.

First Air Force, 14 Jun 1952-1 Apr 1953
Twenty-First Air Force, 1 Jan 1982
Eighth Air Force, 1 Oct 1993
Third Air Force, 1 Oct 2002
United States Air Forces in Europe, 1 Nov 2005
Air Command Europe, 18 Nov 2005
Third Air Force (Air Forces Europe), 1 Dec 2006
86 Airlift Wing, 14 Aug 2015

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-46, 1952-1953

COMMANDERS

Col Charles K. Nelson Jr., 14 Jun 1952
Col Howard C. Stelling, 31 Jul 1952-1 Apr 1953
Brig Gen Duane H. Erickson, 1 Jan 1982
Brig Gen Donald C. Smith, 25 Jun 1982
Col Donald A. Rigg, 22 May 1984
Brig Gen Larry D. Wright, 15 Jul 1986
Brig Gen James C. McCombs, 27 Jul 1987
Brig Gen Charles C. Barnhill Jr., 7 Jul 1989
Brig Gen Thomas D. Pilsch, 22 Aug 1992
Col Brian A. Arnold, 20 Aug 1993
Col Melvin M. Reeves Jr., 28 Jul 1995
Col John M. Calvert, 2 Dec 1996
Unkn, 1 Jan 1997-12 Jul 1999
Col Wilhelm F. Percival, 13 Jul 1999-31 Dec 2000
Col Judith A. Fedder, 14 Aug 2001
Col Barbara Jacobi, 7 May 2003
Col Robert D. Winston, 4 May 2005
Col Jack L. Briggs, 20 Jun 2007
Col Paul Suarez, Aug 2008
Col Margaret B. Poore, Sep 2008
Col Jose Rivera, Aug 2010
Col Martin Rothrock

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jun 1988-31 May 1990
16 Jan 1993-31 Mar 1994
1 Apr 1994-1 May 1995
1 Jun 1997-31 May 1999
1 Jun 1999-31 May 2001
1 Jun 2001-31 May 2003
1 Oct 2008-30 Sep 2010
1 Oct 2010-30 Sep 2012

Bestowed Honors

Authorized to display honors earned by the 65 Observation (later, 65 Reconnaissance) Group prior to 14 Jun 1952

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Antisubmarine, American Theater

Decorations

EMBLEM



1605 Military Airlift Support Wing emblem, approved, 6 Aug 1987

65 Air Base Wing emblem: Sable, issuant from base a demi-globe Azure, gridlined, 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. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "65TH AIR BASE WING" in Blue letters.

SIGNIFICANCE: 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 Jun 2007)



MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Reserve training toward proficiency with troop carrier aircraft, 1952-1953. Never fully manned or equipped. Provided enroute support for aircraft transiting Lajes, 1982- Also provided base support to elements of the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy in the area. Wing commander also serves as Commander, United States Forces, Azores. Supported deployment of personnel and equipment through Lajes during operations in the Persian Gulf, Aug 1990-Apr 1991.

65 Air Base Wing Mission 1940's Primary mission was moving troops and equipment to and from Europe and the Pacific. Operation Green Project (Santa Maria) moved aircraft and personnel between Europe and the States. Operation White Project (Lajes) serviced aircraft and troops moving to the Pacific.

12/13/2012 Department of Defense officials announced today that Lajes Field will transition from an air base wing to an air base group with a reduction of more than 400 military personnel and 500 family members by the end of fiscal year 2014. "The drawdown of the 65th Air Base Wing is part of a larger Air Force effort to shape the force," said Col. Chris Bargery, 65th Air Base Wing commander. The Secretary of Defense has mandated cost-cutting efficiencies across the U.S.

forces. In turn, the United States Air Force identified potential structure changes to fulfill the mandate. Force-structure changes at Lajes Field are estimated to garner savings of \$35 million annually.

"The U.S. force posture is being adjusted to meet fiscal challenges, while maintaining a strong, capable relationship with our Portuguese allies and partners," said Bargery. "Lajes Field's strategic mission is important and valuable and will not change. But, the footprint with which we accomplish our mission will change." Services will be reduced proportionally to support one-year "unaccompanied" tour lengths for Airmen. Upon completion of the drawdown, a Department of Defense Dependents School will no longer operate at Lajes Field. Some changes to facilities are scheduled to begin immediately. The goal is to accomplish right-sizing of costs, personnel and facilities by October 2014.

The 65th Air Base Wing will deliberately plan the reduction of its footprint at Lajes Field. Reduction of the number of military and civilian employment positions required to meet the new group's mission will be conducted in a phased approach, said Bargery. An immediate elimination of employment positions is not being planned. "We have yet to officially identify the military and civilian positions that will be eliminated as part of this drawdown. Our intent is to scrutinize every, single position and fully understand how it helps us meet our mission," said Bargery.

"Just as importantly, we will do our best to support and help prepare anyone affected by this transition. We value and recognize the relationships that we have with our local national employees and all Azoreans affected by this change." Lajes Field is scheduled to achieve its end-strength in personnel and footprint by mid-2014.

We expect all families to depart by summer 2014 or shortly thereafter," said Bargery. We are committed to implementing these changes in the right way, and to taking care of our Airmen, families and Portuguese local national employees throughout." Portuguese Air Base #4, commonly known as Lajes Field, is a Portuguese Air Force installation. The 65th Air Base Wing and other U.S. military organizations and support functions are hosted at the base by Portugal's Headquarters Azores Air Zone and Air Base #4 staff.

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. 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.

Officials with the 65th Air Base Wing at Lajes Field in the Portuguese Azores announced changes to base services due to the base's demographics shift. Since August 2013, Lajes' population has changed from a 3:2 ratio of accompanied airmen and families to unaccompanied airmen to a 2:3 ratio, with the expectation that the ratio will become 1:4 later this year, states an April 23 release. "Right-sizing our services is about understanding who we are as a community and tailoring our services, stores, and functions to meet airmen's needs," said Col. Chris Bargery, wing commander. "Yes, our airmen now arrive here unaccompanied, but many families still remain here," he said. Among the changes, the physical therapy clinic and optometry clinic will close on May 15 and June 30, respectively; the child development center and Lajes' youth programs will merge on June 13; and the Atlantic Island Kennels will close on Sept. 30. The Air Force has plans to reduce its presence at Lajes, transitioning the 65th ABW to a group. 2014

The European Infrastructure Consolidation determined that the number of US military and civilian personnel at Lajes Airfield, Portugal, will decrease by about 500 over the next five to seven years, but the mission is not going away, emphasized US Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa boss Gen. Frank Gorenc. "When people talk about Lajes they talk about it in the context of closure, but that's not correct." Gorenc told Air Force Magazine in an interview at AFA's Air Warfare Symposium last week. "It's really streamlining because there are good things about Lajes that can be leveraged and that's really what we're working." The airfield, air traffic control tower, and crash-fire rescue will continue to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The 65th Air Base Group will only be manned to operate the flight line for eight hours a day, seven days a week. "The ABRIG GEN commander can alter the duty hours of his team if mission requirements dictate," said USAFE-AFAFRICA spokesman Jerry Renne. "If a US aircraft needed to land outside of duty hours; due to an emergency, for example, the aircraft would be able to land." 2015

The 65th Air Base Wing at Lajes Field in the Portuguese Azores redesignated on Aug. 14 as a group in line with ongoing efforts to streamline base manning and services. "This is not a shift in the commitment of the United States to the Portuguese people," said Lt. Gen. Timothy Ray, 3rd Air Force-17th Expeditionary Air Force commander. Portugal "is an incredible strategic partner and we remain committed to that relationship, both as a bilateral friend and ally, and as part of the NATO Alliance," he added. The rechristened 65th Air Base Group now falls under the administrative control of the 86th Airlift Wing at Ramstein AB, Germany, according to officials. Lajes retains its air traffic control and crash and fire rescue capabilities but will reduce normal flightline operations to eight hours a day as part of the Defense Department's overall European Infrastructure Consolidation plan. 2015

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

Unit yearbook. *Lajes AB, Azores, 1984*. Walsworth Publishing Co. Marceline, MO. 1984.