

History of Lajes Air Base

The aeronautics evolution, especially during the first decades of this century as the result of World War I, originated a quantity of aerial achievements that amazed the world.

The flights over the Atlantic were undoubtedly the most spectacular events and included, in May 1919, the first successful transatlantic flight of the "Curtis Flyer" seaplanes which flew from the U.S. to the United Kingdom using Horta Bay on the Island of Faial as a stopping point.

One believes that the interest for the Azores as a stopping point in the middle of the Atlantic resulted from an incident involving a Polish airplane on the Island of Graciosa in 1928, while trying to cross the Atlantic. The privileged position of the Azores between Europe and the new continent was evident.

In 1928, the Portuguese considered the possibility of constructing an airfield on one of the Azorean islands and it was decided that the airfield should be constructed in Achada, a flat area located near Cinco Picos in the center of Terceira Island. It was from this improvised runway that the first airplane, a single-engine Avro biplane, took off on Oct. 4, 1930, maneuvered by Capt. Frederico de Melo, a native of the village of Altares in Terceira.

The airfield of Achada was

soon abandoned due to constant adverse weather conditions and it was decided to construct another airfield on the Lajes' flat lands, which became a crucial element with the outbreak of World War II.

In 1934, the Military Engineering Service began the construction of a dirty runway in the Lajes plain.

In 1941, due to the intensification of World War II, the Portuguese government assigned an Expeditionary Corps among which there were two flying squadrons equipped with Gladiator Squadron. These aircraft and personnel were assigned to the Santana airfield on the Island of São Miguel and Lajes airfield on Terceira.

In 1942 they expanded their activity, patrolling the ocean around the archipelago's central group of islands, protecting the convoys traveling in the area and also performing reconnaissance and meteorological flights.

As a result of the quick evolution and with the arrival of more aircraft, the initial squadron was designated Group Fighter Squadron No. 2 and No.4 and ultimately as Air Base No. 5, which was changed later to Air Base No.4.

In August 1943, using an old treaty between Portugal and the Great Britain, both countries signed an agreement, which granted the British Forces military facilities in the Azores.

On Oct. 8, 1943, at the height

of war, the British troops disembarked in Angra do Heroismo. Thirty days after they had disembarked, the first German submarine was sunk.

In February 1944, an agreement with the U.S. allowed the U.S. Army and Navy to use Lajes. The airfield again experienced a big surge and more runways were constructed, but in 1945 the U.S. moved their installation to the island of Santa Maria, where they built the still existent airport.

The end of the war terminated the use of Lajes Field by the Great Britain and on June 3, 1946 the Portuguese flag was again hoisted at Lajes Field. With the departure of the British Forces the U.S. moved their operations from Santa Maria to Terceira.

The airfield's configuration underwent more modifications and the base's structure was reorganized. Aircraft such as the Boeing B-17, Douglas C-54, Albatroz SA-16, Sikorsky SH-19 and Dakota C-47 started operating from Lajes and Air Base No. 4 was tasked with search and rescue missions.


From 1946 to 1961 Air Base No.4 accomplished its missions with dignity and pride despite the reduced assets available, and its role considerably diminished between 1961 and 1976 due to the overseas war.

Air Base No.4 was integrated in the Azores Air Command in 1978



and assigned a mission that included search and rescue, tactical transport and maritime patrol within the Azores' territorial waters. Today, its 711th Squadron with SA-330 Puma helicopters and C-212-100 Aviocar cargo aircraft still has an important role in supporting the local population, namely through humanitarian evacuations and transportation among the islands.

Portuguese Air Base No.4 commemorates its anniversary every year on June 12.



The BIG TICKET

Today: 7 p.m. "Timeline" PG-13. Cast includes Paul Walker and Frances O'Connor. In France, professor Johnston, his son Chris, and a team of archeology students are working on the ruins of a 14th-century castle. Kate and Andre make a startling discovery: They find an old bifocal lens and a letter from professor Johnston. It turns out that the head of the corporation running the dig, Robert Doniger, opened up a wormhole leading to the 17th century. Johnston is now trapped in history, and it's up to his students to find a way to get him back. (Intense battle sequences and brief language; **10 p.m. "Tupac Resurrection" R.** Cast includes Tupac Shakur. Resurrection is the first authorized biopic of the late rapper-actor Tupac Shakur. It includes poetry readings, musical clips and video from his life, including various interviews, private home movies and previously unreleased concert footage. Rated R for strong language and images of drugs, violence and sex.

Saturday: 7 p.m. "Gothika" R. Cast includes Halle Berry and Robert Downey Jr. Criminal psychologist, Miranda hears confessions from a satanic patient Chloe and later has an experience with a mysterious woman. This leads to nightmares, but her life really becomes horrific when she wakes up and discovers she's been locked in her own sanitarium, for a murder that she can't remember committing. While trying to figure out what's happened and separate fact from fiction, her colleague Pete Graham wonders whether she's finally gone crazy. Rated R for violence, brief language and nudity.

Sunday: 2 p.m. "Timeline" PG-13. Second movie 7 p.m. "Gothika" R.

Tuesday: 7 p.m. "Tupac Resurrection" R.

Wednesday: 7 p.m. "Timeline" PG-13.

Thursday: 7 p.m. "Gothika" R.

Dress and Appearance

The dress and appearance tip for airmen comes from U.S. Forces Azores Instruction 1300.01.

Backpacks

"Air Force personnel may carry backpacks/gym bags/attaché cases in the left or right hand or only over the left shoulder. Army personnel may carry backpacks/gym bags/attaché cases in the either hand and both shoulders. Navy personnel may only carry backpacks/gym bags/attaché cases in the left hand. All personnel may wear backpacks using both shoulder straps when riding two-wheeled vehicles or using crutches. Bags will be black, blue or camouflage (matching BDU) in color. Desert BDU color bags are not authorized."

No-hats during high winds

"With the exception of U.S. Navy personnel, hats do not need to be worn during inclement weather when strong winds prevent keeping hats on without the constant use of hands. Hats must be carried in the left hand and available for use as conditions subside."