FIFTY YEARS ON NATO’S SOUTHERN FLANK

A HISTORY OF SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE

1954 – 2004

By

WILLIAM M. BUTLER
Sixteenth Air Force Historian

Office of History
Headquarters, Sixteenth Air Force
United States Air Forces in Europe
Aviano Air Base, Italy

1 May 2004
FOREWORD

The past fifty years have seen tremendous changes in the world and in our Air Force. Since its inception as the Joint U.S Military Group, Air Administration (Spain) responsible for the establishment of a forward presence for strategic and tactical forces, Sixteenth Air Force has stood guard on the southern flank of our NATO partners ensuring final success in the Cold War and fostering the ability to deploy expeditionary forces to crises around our theater. This history then is dedicated to all of the men and women who met the challenges of the past 50 years and continue to meet each new challenge with energy, courage, and devoted service to the nation.

GLEN W. MOORHEAD III
Lieutenant General, USAF
Commander
PREFACE

A similar commemorative history of Sixteenth Air Force was last published in 1989 with the title *On NATO’s Southern Flank* by previous Sixteenth Air Force Historian, Dr. Robert L. Swetzer. This 50th Anniversary edition contains much of the same structure of the earlier history, but the narrative has been edited, revised, and expanded to encompass events from the end of the Cold War to the emergence of today’s Global War on Terrorism. However, certain sections in the earlier edition dealing with each of the countries in the theater and minor bases have been omitted. In place of those, I have provided updated narratives to some of our major operating bases and units, as well as emblems and photographs that were not included in the 1989 edition.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Ms. Tammy Skipper, an Aviano volunteer, who was responsible for bringing the history into the electronic age and who provided much needed assistance in gathering materials to update the history. In addition, Senior Airman Tony Constantine of the 31st Civil Engineer Squadron spent a month of reserve duty digitizing most of the images found within. Without the assistance of those two individuals, this history would not have been possible. I also wish to thank my wife Jennifer Bommelje-Butler, Mrs. Pat Parrish, a United States Air Forces in Europe staff historian, and TSgt Nik Waller, the 31st Fighter Wing historian, for their helpful suggestions and kind editorial assistance. Finally, the many years of diligent work by all previous Sixteenth Air Force and subordinate unit historians must be acknowledged as the foundation for this 50th Anniversary edition.

WILLIAM M. BUTLER
Historian
Office of History
CONTENTS

FOREWORD .................................................................................................................................... iii
PREFACE ........................................................................................................................................ iv
CONTENTS ..................................................................................................................................... v
HISTORY OF SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE ................................................................................... 1
  Standup and Strategic Air Command Mission .......................................................................... 1
  Assignment to USAFE for Tactical Missions ............................................................................ 3
  Dual-hatting and Period of Trial ............................................................................................... 5
  A Warfighting Mission ............................................................................................................ 6
  New Home and New Focus ...................................................................................................... 8
  Expeditionary Era .................................................................................................................. 10
AIRCRAFT HISTORY ................................................................................................................. 12
BRIEF HISTORIES OF MAJOR BASES AND UNITS .............................................................. 14
  Torrejon Base History ........................................................................................................... 14
  401st Tactical Fighter Wing ................................................................................................. 16
  Zaragoza Base History ......................................................................................................... 18
  406th Tactical Fighter Training Wing .................................................................................... 20
  Morón Base History ............................................................................................................. 21
  Aviano Base History ............................................................................................................ 23
  40th Tactical Group and 40th Tactical Support Wing ......................................................... 25
  31st Fighter Wing ................................................................................................................ 27
  Comiso Base History .......................................................................................................... 28
  487th Tactical Missile Wing ................................................................................................. 29
  Decimomannu Base History ................................................................................................. 30
  San Vito dei Normanni Air Station History ........................................................................... 30
  Hellenikon Base History ...................................................................................................... 32
  Iraklion Air Station History .................................................................................................. 33
  Ankara Air Station History .................................................................................................. 34
  Headquarters The United States Logistics Group (HQ TUSLOG) ......................................... 35
  Incirlik Base History ............................................................................................................ 36
  39th Tactical Group and 39th Wing ....................................................................................... 38
  Izmir Installations and Cigli Base History ............................................................................ 39
  Nouasseur Base History ..................................................................................................... 40
  Wheelus Base History ......................................................................................................... 42
SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE LINEAGE & HONORS ................................................................. 43
SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE COMMANDERS ........................................................................ 45
NATO SOUTHERN REGION AIR COMMANDERS (COMAIRSOUTH) ......................... 46
The organization known as Sixteenth Air Force came into existence on 16 July 1956. Even though the headquarters and command had no previous peacetime or wartime record, its lineal predecessor was the Joint United States Military Group (JUSMG), Air Administration (Spain), established in Madrid on 20 May 1954 by the direction of Headquarters, United States Air Force (USAF). JUSMG, Air Administration (Spain), had as its mission directive “to administer Air Force personnel on duty with Joint United States Military Group, Spain, and to provide area administrative jurisdiction over U.S. Air Force personnel in Spain.” The new headquarters was directly subordinate to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) and had the procedural functions and responsibilities of a major air command. Its raison d’etre was to implement the U.S.–Spanish Defense Agreement of 26 September 1953, which authorized the U.S. to construct and operate air bases in Spain. The key Air Force representative in Spain during this period was Major General August W. Kissner, who negotiated the original agreement and was the first Chief, Joint United States Military Group, Spain. He also assumed command of JUSMG, Air Administration (Spain) and was Sixteenth Air Force’s first commander.

Headquarters USAF first planned to move the 5th Air Division from French Morocco to Spain in order to operate the Strategic Air Command (SAC) bases to be created there, but later decided on a numbered air force (NAF) as the appropriate organizational level. The first choice, Sixth Air Force, was not available since it had been redesignated as Caribbean Air Command in 1946. Consequently, the Air Staff selected Sixteenth Air Force. Accordingly, on 16 July 1956, USAF redesignated Headquarters JUSMG, Air Administration (Spain), as Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force. The organization was assigned directly to the CSAF as a Special Operating Agency (SOA), and retained the same basic mission as its predecessor. General Kissner, who also continued to serve as Chief, JUSMG, Spain, began preparing for the SAC mission in Spain. Sixteenth Air Force assumed command responsibility for each base as it neared completion. The first to activate was Zaragoza Air Base (AB), on 14 February 1956, with the 7603d Air Base Squadron (ABS) as the host unit. Both Morón and Torrejon ABs were activated on 1 June 1957 with their initial host units being the 7202d and 7600th Air Base Groups (AGB), respectively.

Upon completion of base construction in Spain, Headquarters USAF reassigned Sixteenth Air Force to SAC to be effective on 1 July 1957. Major General Henry K. Mooney took command of Sixteenth Air Force at its downtown Madrid headquarters, while General Kissner retained his position as Chief, JUSMG, Spain. Headquarters SAC replaced the old Sixteenth Air Force host units in Spain with new designations: the 3970th ABG at Torrejon, the 3973d ABG at Morón, and the 3974th ABS at Zaragoza. Headquarters, Sixteenth Air Force moved to Torrejon on 1 February 1958, and its bases became fully operational shortly thereafter.
thereafter. Strategic Air Command’s Operation Reflex rotational B-47 alert program began at Zaragoza on 29 May 1958, and at both Morón and Torrejon in July 1958. Sixteenth Air Force gained another unit on 8 April 1957 when SAC activated the 65th Air Division (Defense) at Torrejon AB. The air division assumed command of a seven-site aircraft control and warning (AC&W) system and three fighter interceptor squadrons to provide air defense of Spain. Later, United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) took responsibility for all air defense activities in the theater and assumed command over the 65th Air Division on 1 July 1960.

With its assignment to SAC, Sixteenth Air Force assumed command of SAC units and bases in Morocco in early 1958. The major SAC unit in Morocco, the 5th Air Division, was replaced on 15 January 1958 by the 4310th Air Division, which was assigned directly to Sixteenth Air Force. Under the division were the 3926th ABG at Ben Guerir AB, the 3906th ABG at Sidi Slimane AB, and the 3922d ABG at Nouasseur AB. All three of these units were later redesignated as Combat Support Groups (CSG) under a 1959 SAC-wide reorganization plan. Air Material Command’s 3153d Air Base Wing (ABW) at Nouasseur handled logistical support in Morocco, while USAFE’s 316th Air Division (Defense) at Rabat provided air defense. The Moroccan bases, some of which had hosted SAC rotational bomber units since 1951, went on B-47 Reflex alert beginning with Sidi Slimane in July 1957, to be followed by Ben Guerir and Nouasseur in February 1958.

Sixteenth Air Force’s primary mission until 1965 was to support and conduct SAC strategic operations from its bases in Spain and Morocco and from its ground detachments at such locations as Adana AB, Turkey, in an area which encompassed almost one quarter of the earth’s surface. In addition to the Reflex B-47s, Sixteenth had operational control of B-52s and B-58s on airborne alert as well as rotational KC-135 tanker aircraft stationed at its bases to support such deployments.

Coincident with this period of intense mission activity, Sixteenth Air Force implemented mandatory base closures and budget cuts. The fact that the Reflex force in Spain, Morocco, and England helped face down the Soviets in both the 1961 Berlin and the 1962 Cuban missile crises had no effect on the future disposition of the bases. Having gained independence from France, Moroccan King Mohammed V insisted that the U.S. withdraw from all Moroccan bases. In a December 1958 meeting at Nouasseur AB, President Dwight D. Eisenhower personally met with the king and promised to close the bases by the end of 1963. After a period of nearly five years, the bases were closed in December 1963, as promised. At the same time, the U.S. retained the Spanish bases for another five years through the renewal of the 1953 agreement. In order to help secure the agreement’s renewal, the U.S. promised to provide a wing of F-104 aircraft to the Spanish Air Force.

Also in 1963, after the U.S.-Spanish base rights agreement was renewed, USAFE responded to Kennedy Administration Project Clearwater budget cuts by turning the Spanish air defense system over to the Spanish Air Force on 1 July 1964 and inactivating the 65th Air Division (Defense) on 1 January 1965. Headquarters SAC followed suit with the closeout of its B-47 Reflex operations at Zaragoza on 29 May 1964, at Torrejon on 31 March 1965, and at Morón on 1 April 1965. The impact of the end of Reflex operations was minimal given that the B-47s were being phased out of the Air Force active inventory, and their targets were assigned to B-52s, theater tactical air forces, and U.S. Navy Polaris submarines.

Thus, by the end of 1965, Sixteenth Air Force saw its peacetime mission responsibilities greatly reduced. Nonetheless, the Spanish bases retained an important role in wartime operations planning. In addition, KC-135 tankers continued to operate out of Torrejon with the task of refueling airborne alert B-52 and B-58 bombers in the European area. Unfortunately, it was during such a routine refueling operation on 20 January 1966 that a B-52 carrying nuclear weapons collided with a KC-135 tanker in mid-air. Both aircraft crashed near the small village of Palomares on the southeastern coast of Spain, and U.S. forces made an immediate effort to carry out recovery and cleansing actions. The ensuing operations, directed by the Sixteenth Air Force commander, to recover radioactive material and the “lost” nuclear weapon from the sea gained worldwide attention and profoundly affected U.S.-Spanish long-term relations.
Assignment to USAFE for Tactical Missions

It was under the shadow of Palomares that the Air Force announced the assignment of Sixteenth Air Force from SAC to USAFE, to be effective on 15 April 1966. The 401st Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) equipped with F-100 fighters, moved from its U.S. base to Spain to take command of Torrejon AB and to assume the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alert commitment at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. The alerts were formerly manned by rotational elements (ROTE) from Tactical Air Command (TAC). Third Air Force and Seventeenth Air Force assumed similar commitments at Aviano AB, Italy, and Cigil AB, Turkey, respectively. As of April 1966, Zaragoza AB was placed in “modified caretaker” status and administered by the newly designated 7472d Combat Support Squadron (CSS). Morón was retained as an active training base run by the 7473d Combat Support Group (CSG). As a consequence of its assignment to USAFE, all of Sixteenth Air Force’s four-digit subordinate units were redesignated from a 3900 series nomenclature to a 7400 series, as was the case with Morón’s 3973d CSG, which became the 7473d CSG.

Upon assignment to USAFE, Sixteenth Air Force’s area of responsibility included only the Iberian Peninsula, the Balearic Isles, Morocco, and the Canary Islands. In 1968, impelled by Soviet naval and air buildups in the Mediterranean area, USAFE reorganized its command lines in NATO’s Southern Region. Formally designated as the 7217th Air Division and commanded by a brigadier general, The U.S. Logistics Group (TUSLOG) supervised USAFE units in Greece and Turkey. In addition, Seventeenth Air Force initially commanded all USAFE units in Italy and Libya, as well as those in Western Europe’s Central Region. After a yearlong phase-in period for the reorganization, USAFE assigned Sixteenth Air Force full command responsibility for units and bases in Spain, Italy, Libya, Greece and Turkey on 1 April 1969. All of these countries rested along the strategic west-to-east Mediterranean lines of communication (LOCs).

Although Headquarters TUSLOG became a subordinate organization of Sixteenth Air Force on 23 October 1968, it still retained direct command of the units in Greece and Turkey. These were the 7206th Support Group at Athenai Airport, Greece; the 39th Tactical Group (TACG) at Incirlik AB; the 41st TACG at Cigil AB; the 7250th Support Group at Ankara; and the 7241st Support Squadron at Istanbul. Under a system known as the Turkey cover plan, each of the units serving in country were to be publicly referred to as TUSLOG numbered detachments. For example, the 39th TACG was known as TUSLOG Detachment 10, and the 41st TACG as TUSLOG Det 116. In addition to meeting NATO Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force (SIXATAF) alert commitments at Cigil and Incirlik, TUSLOG provided logistical support to all U.S. Government personnel and agencies in Turkey. The 7206th bore a similar responsibility in Greece.

Having acquired Wheelus AB, Libya, in December 1968, Sixteenth Air Force became USAFE’s training range manager in the Mediterranean area. However, 1969 also witnessed a major change in this new mission. Only a few months later, in September 1969, a group of radical young officers overthrew the government of King Idris I of Libya, and they immediately demanded that the United States withdraw its forces from their country. After a rapid drawdown, USAFE discontinued the 7272d Flying Training Wing (FTW) and closed Wheelus on 11 June 1970. This closure led USAFE to examine its base resources in order to find a replacement for Wheelus’ training range. Eventually, with Spanish concurrence, USAFE selected Zaragoza for its nearby Bardenas Reales range. Accordingly, USAFE returned Zaragoza AB to main operating base status and activated the 406th Tactical Fighter Training Group on 1 July 1970, and later, upgraded it to wing level on 15 July 1972. Meanwhile, on 1 January 1970, as part of the Project REDCOSTE reductions, USAFE placed Morón AB in standby status, ending the fair weather deployments.
of its tactical reconnaissance aircraft to that base. Hence, the 7473d CSG at Morón became a Combat Support Squadron.

In addition to the Zaragoza Weapons Training Site (WTS), USAFE had other ranges in the Sixteenth Air Force area available for use. An early favorite as an alternative to Zaragoza was Decimomannu AB on the island of Sardinia. A detachment of the 401st TFW became the operator of the WTS at Decimomannu by utilizing the Italian Air Force (IAF) Capo Frasco range for Third Air Force and Seventeenth Air Force Weapons Training Detachments (WTDs). However, USAFE found the cost of expanding the base for such operations to be prohibitive, and it effectively closed the WTS in November 1971 with the withdrawal of the last Third Air Force WTD. Meanwhile, WTDs from Third and Seventeenth Air Forces began deploying to Aviano to use the IAF’s Maniago range, while the 401st TFW rotational squadron at Incirlik continued training on the Turkish Air Force gunnery range at Konya.

Although the use of Spanish ranges was negotiated separately, the command’s dependence on these facilities highlighted the problem of continued availability of Spanish basing. The 1953 agreement ran out in 1968 without the United States and Spain reaching an accord. Then in 1969, the two countries extended the agreement retroactively for a two-year period in order to negotiate an entirely new agreement. This took the form of the Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation (AFC), signed on 9 August 1970. The AFC was to run for a basic five-year period and could be renewed for another five years if both sides agreed. For use of the bases, which ceased being “joint-use” by completely coming under SAF command, the United States gave Spain credits to buy a wing of F-4Cs in Project PEACE ALPHA and agreed to participate in the modernization of the Spanish air defense system in Project COMBAT GRANDE. The AFC also established a high-level Joint Committee and an operational-level U.S.-Spanish Joint Air Control and Coordination Center (JACCC). Headquarters USAFE activated the American segment of the JACCC on 15 October 1971 and assigned it to Sixteenth Air Force.

At the other end of the Mediterranean, the United States and Turkey signed a new Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) on 1 July 1969. This new agreement, which replaced a plethora of former accords, specified that the two countries would negotiate individual implementing agreements for each base or facility required by the United States. The implementing agreement negotiations proved difficult, continuing until the DCA itself was suspended.

Over the years, TUSLOG had been subject to an uncertain organizational future and a target for a seemingly endless series of plans for reorganizations and reduction. Then, on 10 September 1970 after an 11-year existence as a divisional headquarters, HQ TUSLOG was reduced to a detachment of Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force. Interestingly, the rank of its commander was increased from a brigadier general to a major general within the same time frame. Earlier, on 30 June 1970, USAFE inactivated the 41st TACG (TUSLOG Det 116) and turned Cigili AB over to the TAF as a standby base with operations and maintenance (O&M) funding provided by Headquarters USAF. The 7241st ABG (TUSLOG Det 118) replaced Det 116 as the responsible unit at Izmir on 1 July 1970. Its mission was to maintain war readiness materiel (WRM) at Cigili AB and to support the Izmir area NATO headquarters of SIXATAF and Allied Land Forces Southeast Europe (LANDSOUTHEAST). Both the 39th TACG and the 7241st ABG were assigned directly to Sixteenth Air Force, while TUSLOG’s detachment at Istanbul fell victim to Project REDCOSTE cutbacks in force structure and manning.

The same reorganization action also affected Greece as USAFE reassigned the 7206th Support Group from TUSLOG to Sixteenth Air Force on 10 September 1970. Later, the unit redesignated as the 7206th ABG on 1 January 1973, and the Greeks renamed the base Hellenikon AB in February 1976. Also in 1973, the group acquired a new mission when the U.S. Sixth Fleet determined to “home port” certain components of its forces at Athens. Earlier, the 7206th had been subjected to Project REDCOSTE cuts, but it now became necessary to assign additional manpower authorizations at Athenai to provide emerging support to U.S. Navy elements.

A year after the organizational reductions, the pendulum swung the other way in Turkey, when on 15 October 1971, USAFE upgraded TUSLOG to a wing-level “named” organization under Sixteenth Air Force. The TUSLOG commander again assumed supervisory responsibilities for units in Turkey. Efforts
to phase down USAF activities as Ankara continued, and on 30 March 1973, Headquarters USAFE eliminated the 7250th Support Squadron (TUSLOG Det 30) at Ankara by combining its residual base support functions with the HQ TUSLOG staff.

The Air Force instituted a service-wide reduction in intermediate command headquarters in 1972. As a result, many functions formerly performed by Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force transferred to Headquarters USAFE. At the same time, headquarters strength fell from 160 to 49 authorized positions. The Sixteenth Air Force commander and his staff were charged with being “the eyes and ears” of the Commander in Chief, United States Air Forces in Europe (CINCUSAFE) in the Southern Region.

Dual-hatting and Period of Trial

A further change in the Sixteenth Air Force organizational structure followed quickly. In the face of growing Soviet influence in the Mediterranean-Middle East area, and in an effort to enhance the West’s air power response capability, CINCUSAFE named Lieutenant General Richard H. Ellis, Commander, Allied Air Forces Southern Europe (COMAIRSOUTH), Naples, Italy, to the additional-duty “dual-hat” position of Commander, Sixteenth Air Force effective 14 May 1973. His main task was to improve USAF-NATO cooperation in the areas of wartime planning, base structure, WRM, and joint exercises. General Ellis, who later went on to become CINCUSAFE, delegated responsibility for day-to-day operations of Sixteenth Air Force to his vice commander at the Torrejon headquarters, then Major General Sanford K. Moats.

Sixteenth Air Force’s ability to perform its mission had always been affected by political-military events in the command area, such as the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 and the Libyan coup. However, the crisis having the most profound effect on the NAF was the Cyprus dispute. In July 1974, Greek officers overthrew Cypriot President Makarios causing Turkey to invade the island the following month and bringing the two NATO allies to the brink of war. As a result, NATO suspended its alert program in both countries, and the USAF temporarily withdrew its fighters from Turkey. Greece officially left the NATO military organization, ended U.S. Navy home-porting, and demanded that U.S. base rights in that country be negotiated anew. Following the U.S. Congress’ embargo on military assistance to Turkey, the Turks suspended the 1969 DCA, took over U.S. non-NATO installations, and imposed stringent mail and customs restriction on U.S. personnel. In 1976, the United States reached a basic agreement with both countries, but congressional opposition delayed completion until after the new Carter Administration took office.

Culminating after more than a year of hard bargaining and marked by the death of Spain’s Chief of State, Generalísimo Francisco Franco, the U.S. and Spain signed a new Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on 24 January 1976. Major General Edwin W. Robertson II, then Sixteenth Air Force vice commander, served as the USAF representative on the negotiating team. Both the U.S. Congress and the Spanish Cortes ratified the treaty, and it went into effect on 21 September 1976. The treaty provided for continued U.S. use of the three air bases plus the U.S. Navy base at Rota. In return for these base privileges, the U.S. granted Spanish credits to include money for arms purchases and further improvements in the Spanish Air Control and Warning (AC&W) system. In conjunction, the U.S. agreed to move the SAC KC-135s out of Torrejon, but was allowed to maintain a five-ship rotational unit at Zaragoza. Accordingly, SAC’s 98th Strategic Wing, which had been reactivated at Torrejon in 1966, inactivated on 31 December 1976. A new wing, the 306th Strategic Wing, based at Ramstein AB, Germany, and Royal Air Force (RAF) Station Mildenhall, England, assumed operational control of the Zaragoza KC-135s through its Det 1 on 1 October 1976. Later, the 34th Strategic Squadron replaced Det 1 as the tanker unit at Zaragoza.

Two highly destructive earthquakes rocked the Sixteenth Air Force area during 1976. The first struck northern Italy in May 1976, and strong aftershocks continued through September. The 40th TACG at Aviano responded rapidly, sending medical teams, civil engineers, volunteer workers, tents and other supplies into the disaster area in a coordinated relief effort. Then, in November 1976, eastern Turkey was the scene of another devastating earthquake. This time, U.S. assistance was channeled through the 39th TACG at Incirlik.
During 1977, the Greek-Turkish dispute continued to hamper Sixteenth Air Forces’ mission capabilities. The Carter Administration’s abrupt withdrawal of an already agreed upon $1 billion Defense Cooperation Agreement with Turkey, submitted by outgoing President Ford, did not improve the situation. Later in the year, President Carter sent a special envoy to Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus in an effort to get talks moving again. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Greece resumed defense cooperation talks on 23 April 1977, with the new DCA initiated on 26 July 1977.

In Italy, the 40th Tactical Group at Aviano prepared for the establishment of its Detachment 4 at Decimomannu, Sardinia, to operate the new Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumented (ACMI) range being developed there in 1978. The ACMI was a newly developed system for controlling, instructing and evaluating air combat training missions.

The problems facing the Sixteenth Air Force in the eastern Mediterranean moved one step closer to a resolution when the U.S. Congress voted in 1978 to lift the embargo placed on Turkey. The Turkish government reciprocated in kind by withdrawing many of the restrictions which it had placed on the U.S. Forces in Turkey because of the embargo. At the same time, Greece began a concerted effort to reintegrate its forces under NATO command. The year 1978 also saw an increase in the number of units under the command of Sixteenth Air Force. As part of the Air Force’s decision to inactivate the USAF Security Service (USAFSS), support functions at three of its bases were transferred to USAFE. As a result of this action, Sixteenth Air Force took command of the newly activated 7275th ABG at San Vito dei Normanni AS, Italy, and the 7276th ABG at Iraklion AS, Crete, on 1 October 1978.

The continued reliance of European-based U.S. forces on training opportunities in Spain was demonstrated when USAFE, U.S. Army, and U.S. Navy elements took part in CRISSEX-79, the largest Spanish-American joint exercise since the PATHFINDER EXPRESS series of 1967-1968.

In mid-1979, Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force began developing a concept plan (CONPLAN) for an enhanced role in the command of wartime and contingency operations in the southern area. With all required coordination complete, the NAF submitted the CONPLAN to USAFE at the end of 1980. In addition, CINCUSAFE ordered studies on the return of full management responsibilities to its numbered air forces. Sixteenth Air Force took a strong lead in this planning effort by forwarding its suggestions to USAFE during the latter part of the year.

As part of its expanded role, USAFE tasked Sixteenth Air Force to designate the on-scene commander (OSC) for Exercise PROUD PHANTOM. This exercise was the result of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s public offer for American forces to use Egyptian facilities in the event of contingency operations in that area. During the course of a 90-day period, a squadron of F-4Es from Moody AFB, Georgia, deployed to Cairo West, Egypt to take part in the exercise. PROUD PHANTOM gave USAF personnel much needed experience in deploying under austere conditions to the Middle East and helped the Egyptian Air Force improve the operational readiness of its F-4 fleet.

A Warfighting Mission

On 1 July 1981, the dual-hat command arrangement came to an end when Major General Robert W. Clement assumed command of Sixteenth Air Force. His immediate predecessor, Lieutenant General Walter D. Druen, Jr., continued to serve as COMAIRSOUTH and also gained a new U.S. title of Deputy CINCUSAFE for the Southern Area (DEPCINCUSAFE-SA). The Sixteenth Air Force commander’s role was further refined in 1980 and 1981 when he was selected as the USAFE mission commander for all Southern Region exercises. At the same time, a new integrated command arrangement for 401st TFW operations at the forward bases of Aviano and Incirlik was tested and implemented with Exercise QUANTUM JUMP. Further, in relation to Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) planning, in 1981 USAFE redefined the Sixteenth Air Force area of responsibility to comprise Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey. Thus, by mid-1981 significant changes were being made to define Sixteenth Air Force’s basic mission and to refine its combat capability in the Mediterranean area.
The U.S.-Spanish Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was set to expire in September 1981. However, at the last minute signatories extended the treaty for eight months to allow for further negotiations, specifically in regard to Spain’s planned entry into NATO. Then in October 1981, the U.S. and Spain conducted their Combined Military Coordination and Planning Staff (CMCPS) sponsored exercise CRISEX-81, which had been in preparation for over a year. It was the largest such exercise conducted to date in Spain and proved to be highly successful.

Based on CINCUSAFE’s initiative to expand the peacetime and wartime involvement of his NAF commanders, in 1982 USAFE began defining and implementing some of these new roles. Among Sixteenth Air Force’s tasks would be the reception, beddown, and support of augmentation forces in the Southern Region. To facilitate such an expanded role, USAFE activated a Sixteenth Air Force NAF Combat Operations Staff (COS) on 15 January 1982. Six months later, on 1 July 1982, Sixteenth Air Force established a Plans function. Additionally, Headquarters USAFE recognized that a large percentage of the required NAF manning forces would need to be logistical resources, so their next priority was to establish a Sixteenth Air Force Logistics Readiness Center (LRC). Expanding the headquarters even further, an Engineering and Services officer was added on 12 November 1982, assigned initially to the Sixteenth Air Force logistics function. The Sixteenth Air Force commander assumed authority to convene general courts-martial in 1981, one of the main justifications for returning the command position to Torrejon. Consequently, a new Staff Judge Advocate function was established on 2 July 1982.

At Headquarters TUSLOG, an upgrade program was also in progress. Fortunately, the Turkey cover plan that had caused much confusion over command responsibilities was finally eliminated on 1 October 1982, when the “TUSLOG DET” designations were dropped. Thereafter, all U.S. units in Turkey became known by their true organizational names. Additionally, efforts continued to upgrade HQ TUSLOG again to air division level, and this was realized in September 1984.

Sixteenth Air Force finally achieved a longstanding goal on 1 December 1983 when CINCUSAFE assigned the NAF its first wartime mission statement since the reassignment from SAC to USAFE in 1966. This came at a time when Sixteenth’s war fighting capability was strengthening noticeably. On 24 March 1982, for example, USAFE officially acquired the ground launched cruise missile (GLCM) base on Sicily, designated as Comiso Air Station (AS). The activation of the 487th Tactical Missile Wing (TMW) at Comiso on 1 July 1983 marked a significant increase in NATO’s deterrent capability. Similarly, the 401st TFW at Torrejon had begun upgrading its aircraft fleet from F-4D aircraft to the more sophisticated F-16A/B aircraft; its first squadron became fully operational on 1 October 1983.

Under the NAF Enhancement Program, transferring manpower positions and responsibilities from Headquarters USAFE to the Sixteenth Air Force began in earnest during 1984, thus expanding its peacetime and wartime mission planning. USAFE tested the Southern Region Logistics Readiness Center (SRLRC) concept at Ramstein AB, Germany, during Exercise DENSE CROP 84. The objective was to delegate Southern Region logistical support responsibilities previously the domain of the over-extended USAFE Operations Support Center.

Also in 1984, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) selected Morón AB and Zaragoza AB as potential transatlantic abort landing sites for U.S. shuttle orbiter missions launched from the Kennedy Space Center. From 26-30 March 1984, a 10-man NASA team conducted site surveys at both locations and found the 12,000-foot runway at Morón the most acceptable location for the primary abort-landing site.

Pleased with the results experienced with the SRLRC during Dense Crop 84, USAFE held a follow-on test at Naples during Exercise WINTEX-CIMEX 85, held in March 1985. Capitalizing on the lessons learned during these exercises, Sixteenth Air Force began planning for the expansion of the concept to include airlift and other support disciplines in a Southern Region War Support Center (SRWSC) to be located at Torrejon. The SRWSC concept received its first full-scale test in Exercise DENSE CROP 86 in February 1986.
In 1985, the specter of international terrorism rose to an unprecedented height within the Sixteenth Air Force area of responsibility. A total of eleven major terrorist acts were committed in the region with restaurant and hotel bombings in both Greece and Spain and the hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro being among the most prominent. The bombings in Greece and Spain wounded service members assigned to Sixteenth Air Force units at Hellenikon and Torrejon Air Bases. The threat of terrorism continued to remain a serious issue for the command for the remainder of the decade.

With the goal of improving coordination between Sixteenth Air Force and AIRSOUTH, especially for wartime support, USAFE activated Det 1, Sixteenth Air Force at Naples, Italy, on 1 December 1985. The detachment commander, who acted as a liaison between the headquarters and DEPCINCUSAFFE-SA, helped to resolve differences between NATO requirements and U.S. capabilities. In a step designed to enhance the ACMI training unit at Decimomannu AB, the 7555th Tactical Training Squadron (TTS) replaced Det 4, 40th TACG on 15 October 1985. The new squadron was assigned directly to Sixteenth Air Force.

The Sixteenth Air Force staff continued to expand during 1986, with the addition of revived Security Police and Engineering and Services functions as well as added personnel in many of the other existing functional areas. The need for this augmentation was punctuated by the increasing tempo of problems and challenges being faced in the Southern Region. Terrorism, labor disputes, and increasing difficulty with host nation authorities were only a part of these. Exceedingly difficult base utilization talks were underway with three of the four countries in the region, namely Greece, Spain, and Turkey.

Throughout 1987, the operational environment slowly deteriorated. The Greeks threw obstacles in the way of construction, the Turks interpreted the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA) to the detriment of U.S. deployment opportunities, and the Spaniards insisted on the removal of the 401st TFW and its aircraft from Spain. Undaunted, Major General Winfield S. Harpe, Sixteenth Air Force Commander, adopted a new slogan for the command to emphasize his positive thrust: “In Sixteenth Air Force—there is a way!” Sixteenth Air Force lived up to its new battle cry by improving the quality of life of its personnel at all bases through such measures as energetic self-help programs.

By the close of 1988, the course of events to come was becoming evident. The new U.S.-Spanish base agreement called for the removal of the 401st within three years of its ratification. The Italians had offered and NATO accepted a new base near Crotone, Italy, for the wing, which had just completed reequipping with F-16C/Ds. In Greece, it appeared that Hellenikon AB would eventually be closed. Under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, Comiso’s operational days were also numbered as the USAF began standing down its GLCM units. Sixteenth Air Force, which had been located at Torrejon for over 30 years, searched for a new home as the winds of change blew once again across the ancient Mediterranean world.

New Home and New Focus

The new Spanish/U.S. Defense Cooperation Agreement was ratified by both Spain and the U.S. in 1989, and it mandated the withdrawal of the 401st TFW from Spain by 1992 and of the Sixteenth Air Force headquarters by 1997. Headquarters USAF decided to withdraw both the 401st and Sixteenth Air Force by the earlier date, inactivate Sixteenth Air Force’s 406th Tactical Fighter Training Wing, and terminate USAF activities at Zaragoza AB. These events also coincided with the end of the Cold War, which also demanded a reexamination of the roles that NAFs played while Sixteenth Air Force searched for a new home.
The rapid collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent dismemberment of the Warsaw Pact accelerated the U.S. Congress’ desire to reduce the size of and expenditures on military forces. The drawdown in the military began affecting Sixteenth Air Force directly when in January 1990, the Department of Defense (DoD) announced the closure of twelve overseas bases to include Hellenikon AB and Comiso AS. However, with a realignment of communications function from the Air Force Communications Command (AFCC) to other Air Force major commands (MAJCOM), Sixteenth Air Force gained the 1989th Communications Wing at Torrejon AB. Yet later, as part of the effort to reduce costs, USAFE notified the IAF that it would stop operating the weapons training installation at Decimomannu AB by September 1991.

Organizational changes were also underway across the Air Force, as in February 1991, the CSAF announced the restructuring of multi-wing bases under the “objective wing” concept. In conjunction with this effort, USAFE renamed most of its units by eliminating the word “tactical” from the unit designation, and as a result, Torrejon’s host unit became the 401st Fighter Wing (FW) on 1 October 1991. Further changes were forthcoming when in May 1991, the CSAF also directed all of the MAJCOMs to streamline the NAFs by reducing the number of assigned personnel and removing the NAFs from the list of DoD management headquarters. The CSAF declared that NAFs would only be a “strictly tactical, highly operational echelon.” The latter directive would have a tremendous impact on Sixteenth Air Force and its mission scope, and USAFE adopted the structure in October 1992.

In the midst of these significant changes, a new conflict erupted in the Middle East that would demand much of Sixteenth Air Force units. On 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded its smaller neighbor Kuwait declaring it a lost province. Five days later, President Bush ordered aircraft and ground troops to defend Saudi Arabia in what was named Operation DESERT SHIELD. Sixteenth Air Force units were some of the first to respond to the call, and several were critical to the movement of forces to the Persian Gulf region. On 29 August 1990, 24 F-16s from the 401st TFW’s 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) deployed to Doha, Qatar, under the 401st TFW (Provisional). Weeks later, the 614th’s sister 612th TFS deployed 20 F-16s to join four of its F-16s already in place at Incirlik AB, where they had been conducting a WTD. These two 401st units would both later fly combat operations during the subsequent Operation DESERT STORM. Incirlik AB itself became a significant site of combat operations when in January 1991 it hosted the Joint Task Force-PROVEN FORCE that conducted the air war over northern Iraq.

In supporting roles, Torrejon, Morón, and Zaragoza all served as major transit points for the thousands of military personnel and a massive tonnage of equipment flowing to bases in the Middle East. These latter bases continued to support the return flow of people and materiel back to the U.S. after the end of combat operations in March 1991, and Incirlik AB continued to be a focal point for missions in Iraq with the follow-on Operation PROVIDE COMFORT.

As the Persian Gulf War grew to a close and the Air Force reconstituted itself after the conflict, plans for the movement of the 401st and Sixteenth Air Force proceeded ahead at a relatively rapid pace. Although a new NATO base was to be built initially at Crotone, Italy, which would serve as both units’ new home, the costs involved proved to be prohibitive, especially in the aftermath of the war. As an alternative, USAFE selected Aviano AB to be the temporary home for the 401st and Sixteenth Air Force because it possessed some permanent facilities and represented a cheaper investment at the time. Shorn of its operational fighter squadrons, the 401st was the first to make the transition when it inactivated at Torrejon on 4 May 1992, and stood up the same day at Aviano, assuming the personnel and resources of the 40th Support Wing. Through the ensuing months, Sixteenth Air Force prepared to move with its staff reduced to a mere 30-person command element, and USAFE reassigned Sixteenth’s operational missions to Seventeenth Air Force at Sembach AB, Germany. In the last two weeks of July, the remaining Sixteenth Air Force staff completed their closeout tasks at Torrejon, bid their home of over 36 years a fond Adiós, and moved to the new Italian location. On 10 August 1992, Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force completed its move to Aviano and declared itself operational once again.

In this period many changes were occurring in the command, as TUSLOG also suffered a reduction in its function and mission. In late July 1992, USAFE assigned TUSLOG’s units to the new Det 2, 39th TACG, and in August, TUSLOG’s responsibility for Air Force support issues shifted to the Joint
U.S. Mission for Military Assistance to Turkey (JUSMMAT) in an effort to economize on joint force expenditures. TUSLOG essentially remained in name only until it was officially inactivated a year later. Another unit, the 406th TFTW at Zaragoza, inactivated in June 1992, and Morón’s status reverted to a pre-Gulf War standby base. Other functions and bases in the command appeared to be in danger of imminent closure as well, and there was even discussion at this stage of inactivating Sixteenth Air Force entirely. However, as events in the Middle East continued to simmer and new crises arose in the nearby Balkans, Air Force and NATO leaders recognized the need to retain a continued command presence in the much troubled Southern Region.

Expeditionary Era

Not long after establishing its new home at Aviano, the Sixteenth Air Force looked to the task of rebuilding its slim staffing in order to handle the day-to-day business still required of it and of the demands in dealing with a new host country. The 401st also looked to the future as it prepared Aviano for the beddown of a permanent F-16 presence at what had previously been only a rotational facility. The 39th TACG at Incirlik continued to deal with the humanitarian missions of PROVIDE COMFORT, which actually increased the amount of deploying forces with the establishment of a no-fly zone over northern Iraq to ensure the safety of the native Kurds. In fact, the mission grew so much larger that the unit was redesignated as the 39th Wing in order to handle the task of large rotational forces and reflect the functions of other base operating wings. Sixteenth Air Force also began to look to a new mission not far from its new home. Although not directly involved in the initial PROVIDE PROMISE operations in the Balkans, events there would soon demand more than a humanitarian effort.

In March 1993, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolutions on Yugoslavia in an attempt to end the ethnic violence running rampant in its former republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The resolutions required the establishment of safe areas and a no-fly zone over Bosnia, for which NATO assumed responsibility. Thus, in April 1993, USAFE began deploying aircraft and personnel to Aviano as the U.S. contribution to the new Operation DENY FLIGHT. Sixteenth Air Force and Aviano’s host units, the 401st FW and later 31st FW, were quickly involved in the support of this first of several peacekeeping missions over the next decade to involve the Balkans. Through the end of 1993 and well into 1994, Sixteenth Air Force supported DENY FLIGHT, enforcing the United Nations (UN) ordered no-fly zone over Bosnia. Sixteenth Air Force aircraft participated in the raid on the Bosnian-Serb held airfield at Ubdina in November 1994. In the fall of 1995, Sixteenth Air Force supported Operation DELIBERATE FORCE, the UN-sanctioned and NATO executed attacks on Bosnian-Serb forces. In 1995, Sixteenth Air Force supported JOINT ENDEAVOR, the NATO peacekeeping mission to the former Yugoslavia, through operations in Croatia, Hungary and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It was also during this new expeditionary period that the Sixteenth Air Force commander once again filled the role of COMAIRSOUTH. In January 1994, Lieutenant General Joseph Ashy began serving as the new dual-hatted commander. However, the strain that this reorganization placed on the chain of command soon became apparent. With COMAIRSOUTH’s headquarters located in Naples, the commander spent the majority of his time there, and he had to fly back to Aviano whenever Sixteenth Air Force matters required his presence. As a result, the Sixteenth Air Force vice commander often handled most of the day-to-day operations, as would become the custom for the organization as long as the commander remained doubly committed. The next dual-hatted commander, Lieutenant General Michael Ryan, proposed a solution to the awkward arrangement by moving Sixteenth Air Force headquarters alongside COMAIRSOUTH at Naples. However, costs, high operations tempo, and limited facilities in Naples prevented the move, and the organizations remained at their respective locations.

Other command arrangements also emerged at this stage as a result of the ever increasing demands of the Balkans contingencies. On 31 December 1994, Sixteenth Air Force acquired another general officer when Major General Hal Hornburg, who was serving as the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) director in Vicenza for NATO Operation DENY FLIGHT, became dual-hatted as the Sixteenth Air Force deputy commander. The Sixteenth Air Force vice commander’s position remained to manage the day-to-day activities of the NAF, and the deputy commander position was an entirely new one that was solely responsible for overseeing U.S. contribution to the CAOC. Thus Sixteenth Air Force became integrally
linked to the operations in the Balkans by solidifying its NATO relationship, thereby assuring its future at Aviano.

The years 1996 through 1998 saw continued high tempo operations for Sixteenth Air Force. It was the first Air Force organization to employ the expeditionary wing concept in 1997. The 16th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force (ASETF), consisting of the 16th and 31st Air Expeditionary Wings (AEWs), activated in support of Operation JOINT GUARD, and its air component, Operation DELIBERATE GUARD, employing air power to enforce peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These operations continue today as Operation JOINT FORGE, and its air component, Operation DELIBERATE FORGE. As part of ongoing friction with Iraq, the 39th Air and Space Expeditionary Wing (ASEW) activated in September 1997 to support Operation NORTHERN WATCH (ONW), which enforced a no-fly zone over northern Iraq. These expeditionary units stood as the models for presentation of air forces for the rest of the world.

In other expeditionary efforts, Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force formed the joint force air component command (JFACC) for Operation SILVER WAKE, the successful evacuation of Americans and allied noncombatants from Albania. The 31st FW was the first F-16 Falcon unit to fly combat missions utilizing night vision goggles, and wing aircraft provided close air support during Pope John Paul II’s historic visit to Sarajevo. The 31st and 16th AEWs remained major participants in Balkan air operations. In addition, the 39th Wing at Incirlik AB, deployed a flying ambulance surgical team to Dhahran AB, Saudi Arabia in response to the Khobar Towers terrorist attack in 1996. The wing also assisted in the evacuation of nearly 6,500 pro-U.S. Kurds from northern Iraq.

Beginning in March 1999, the 16th ASETF met its newest expeditionary challenge when it grew to ten AEWs with over 450 Air Force aircraft based in 10 countries supporting NATO's Operation ALLIED FORCE, also known by the U.S. name of Operation NOBLE ANVIL. The operation was NATO’s air campaign to stop Serbian forces from annihilating the ethnic Albanian majority in the province of Kosovo. The Sixteenth Air Force commander, Lieutenant General Michael Short, wore many hats during this campaign: one as the 16th ASETF commander in its role as the Air Force Forces (AFFOR) element responsible for supporting USAF assets in the campaign; a second as the JFACC coordinating the air efforts of all U.S. joint air elements; and a third as the Combined Force Air Component Commander (CFACC) responsible for leading the entire NATO air coalition. Although initially conceived as a limited, phase-objective air campaign, ALLIED FORCE quickly became a major effort, as air power became the primary tool to force the Serbian military out of Kosovo. Over the ensuing month, the 16th ASETF was engrossed in bedding down approximately 13,200 additional airmen, on top of over 32,000 airmen already deployed throughout Europe in support of this major confrontation. The end result of the 78-day air campaign led to the Serbian withdrawal of forces from the province of Kosovo, all through the use of airpower alone.

The end of ALLIED FORCE certainly did not mean the end of Sixteenth’s involvement in the Balkans, as the Operation JOINT GUARDIAN peacekeeping mission in Kosovo began at the termination of the air campaign. The previous Balkans mission of JOINT FORGE continued in Bosnia, and air elements in both of these efforts were supported by the 16th AEW, that would be replaced in June 2003 by a reemerging 401st, this time bearing the designation of 401st AEW. The 39th ASEW also continued its support for ONW over Iraq, although that mission would soon come to an end. The ominous deeds of Islamic terrorists on 11 September 2001 marked the beginning of a new larger campaign, the Global War on Terror. Even though Sixteenth Air Force units did not immediately participate in combat under Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, bases such as Morón and Incirlik provided much needed logistical support to the transit of personnel and materiel to the campaign in Afghanistan that began in October 2001. However, just over a year later, the expeditionary experience of Sixteenth Air Force would once again be called upon in a new campaign in Iraq.

During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM that began on 19 March 2003, Sixteenth Air Force formed the core of two staffs that were central to execution of air and space operations against the Iraqi regime. The first was as the Combined Air Forces-North (CAF-N) serving under the leadership of Lieutenant General Glen W. Moorehead III and headquartered at Incirlik AB. As a combined staff, CAF-N
coordinated the operations of U.S. and allied forces supporting U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in several NATO and European countries. CAF-N forces included approximately 4,700 U.S. personnel and 100 U.S. aircraft assigned to eleven forward operating locations in seven countries. The staff primarily served as the focal point for coordination between USCENTCOM's CFACC and coalition forces operating from the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) area of responsibility. The staff mission included airspace and air defense coordination with European and NATO countries.

In a second role, Lieutenant General Moorhead commanded the 16th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force (16 AETF) that was headquartered primarily at Aviano and exercised administrative control over USAF personnel operating under CAF-N. The staff's key responsibilities included coordinating logistical sustainment and host-nation support of U.S. operations. The work done by these two staffs supported the CENTCOM CFACC and Commander of Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR) and enabled the movement of coalition aircraft from and through the European theater. The actions of both staff essentially made coordination of operations with friendly governments in the EUCOM area of responsibility transparent to USCENTCOM planners. These two aspects of its role in IRAQI FREEDOM validated Sixteenth Air Force's mission to serve as a war-fighting staff for theater operations, helped speed the end of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, and continued to provide expert leadership in the Air Force's expeditionary era.

The end of operations in Iraq by no means ended Sixteenth Air Force's involvement in new challenges. While continuing to forge itself into a command element for expeditionary air forces, Sixteenth Air Force can look back on a proud half century of service to the nation and our allies. For fifty years, Sixteenth Air Force has faithfully stood guard on NATO's southern flank and maintained a critical forward presence for the USAF and the United States.

AIRSOUTH HISTORY

On 4 August 1951, Lieutenant General David M. Schlatter, USAF, became the first Allied Air Forces, Southern Europe (AIRSOUTH) Commander during official ceremonies in Rome. Under orders from the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) “to prepare to conduct the air portion of the defense of Southern Europe,” he met a small group of Italian and U.S. Air Force officers and airman in Florence, Italy on 5 August where they established the first AIRSOUTH Headquarters at the Hotel San Paolo. Later, on 31 August, the Republic of Italy assigned the 56th Tactical Air Force, commanded by Major General Giuseppe Casero, IAF, to this new NATO command.

Initial growth was slow for the command. Obsolescent aircraft and other equipment had to be replaced with more modern equipment, NATO airfields had to be constructed, and an extensive network of telephone, teletype, and radio communications had to be installed. In addition, specially qualified Italian, American, British, and French personnel were selected to staff the expanding AIRSOUTH headquarters. Paralleling this expansion, AIRSOUTH instituted an elaborate training program for the specialists that were needed to operate the newer aircraft and equipment.

Greece and Turkey joined NATO in February 1952, and this extended the boundaries of NATO to a point east of Moscow. This more than doubled AIRSOUTH’s area of responsibility and required a defense of a 1,700 mile border stretching from the Italian Alps through Italy and Greece to eastern Turkey – the largest area in any of the NATO air commands. Planning then began for the organization of air units.
into two Allied Tactical Air Forces (ATAFs). Each was to parallel an army group, and each was to consist of two or more national tactical air forces committed to NATO. The ATAFs would be responsible for the planning and operation of forces in their area of responsibility.

Sixth ATAF began operations on 14 October 1953, with its headquarters at Izmir, Turkey. Assigned to this subordinate international command were three air units – Turkish Air Force’s 1st and 3rd Tactical Air Forces (TAF) and the Royal Hellenic Air Force’s 28th TAF. This greatly strengthened AIRSOUTH but also added tremendous problems of communications and supply. The Sixth ATAF area of responsibility included Greece, Turkey, and the surrounding seas.

Pending the activation of the Fifth ATAF, Italy’s 56th TAF performed the ATAF functions on an interim basis. Throughout AIRSOUTH, all the NATO-committed TAFs, made up primarily of fighter-bomber wings, pressed forward with conversion to jet-propelled F-84G aircraft. This conversion was virtually completed by 1954. Later, F-86E, F-84F, F-100, Fiat G-91, Canberra MK-9, F-104, F-5, and F-4 aircraft were introduced in NATO air units of Italy, Greece and Turkey along with NIKE, Hercules, Ajax, and HAWK surface-to-air missiles.

In May 1953, AIRSOUTH headquarters moved from Florence to the Bagnoli Post near Naples. Operations began there on 9 June 1953 with the international headquarters staffed by military and civilian personnel from France, Greece, Italy, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. On 1 January 1956, Fifth ATAF was finally activated at Vicenza, Italy, to provide unified control of NATO air forces in Italy.

The period of the late 1950s and early 1960s was one of force improvement and refinement of the AIRSOUTH mission. Although many units were converting to more modern aircraft, most countries other than the U.S. continued to use obsolescent and limited capability aircraft, which affected the overall readiness and effectiveness of the command. Throughout the remainder of the decade, AIRSOUTH commanders sought to make improvements in the command’s air offensive and defensive capabilities, as well as augment its logistics.

Even though formed with the intention of building an airpower coalition capable of working together, AIRSOUTH did suffer from the rising tensions between two of its partner members, Greece and Turkey. The year 1967 was especially challenging as a spring military coup in Greece was quickly followed by the Arab-Israeli Six Day War in June. These two events were also followed by a crisis in November between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus. This event severely strained relations between the two members, although both continued to participate in command exercises and retain positions in the air command elements.

The decision by the NATO Council in December 1967 to change its basic strategy from that of immediate nuclear response to one of conventional conditioned response had a significant impact on the structure and makeup AIRSOUTH. The development of a conventional capability became the command’s most important responsibility, although it was to be accomplished without any additional resources. Throughout the late 1960s, increased Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean and Soviet interest in the Middle Eastern and North African nations prompted AIRSOUTH and its sister commands to review their defense posture and ability to defend from the south as well as maintain their traditional focus on the Soviet forces in central Europe.

Following the Cyprus invasion of 1974, Greece withdrew from active military participation in NATO. Sixth ATAF was then limited to the two Turkish TAFs, while the Greek TAF later coordinated directly with Headquarters AIRSOUTH. However, Greek officers remained on duty in Headquarters AIRSOUTH, and both countries continued to participate to varying degrees. Following agreements in October 1980, Greek forces reintegrated into the NATO and AIRSOUTH military structure.
For the remainder of the 1970s and into the 1980s, AIRSOUTH continued in its mission to defend the Southern Region against air attack, to train its assigned NATO forces through regular exercises, and maintain operational readiness and control of air forces and facilities in the region. 1989 marked a turning point and the beginning of the end of the Cold War. Even with these significant changes, the command continued to maintain its readiness.

In the early 1990s, AIRSOUTH and NATO turned their attention toward the emerging crises in the former Yugoslavian republics. As demanded by the UN resolution to provide peacekeeping forces over Bosnia-Herzegovina, NATO aircraft under the control of AIRSOUTH began Operation DENY FLIGHT to enforce a no-fly zone over disputed territory. It was during DENY FLIGHT that AIRSOUTH conducted NATO’s first bombing missions, as they struck Bosnian Serb forces violating the security provisions. The tempo in the Balkans quickly increased as more demands were placed on the command through Operations JOINT ENDEAVOR, JOINT GUARD, and JOINT FORCE. COMAIRSOUTH served continuously as the air component commander to first the Implementation Force (IFOR) and later Stabilization Force (SFOR), all involved in maintaining the peace in Bosnia.

Conditions in the Balkans continued to be a focus for NATO well into the late 1990s, particularly in the Serbian province of Kosovo. AIRSOUTH sent personnel to Belgrade, Serbia, to establish the NATO Air Liaison Team (NALT), while at the same time Serbian representatives were sent to the CAOC in Vicenza, Italy. These two teams coordinate NATO surveillance sorties that were flown over Kosovo to monitor Serb compliance with UN provisions. With the follow-on Operation EAGLE EYE, AIRSOUTH continued to monitor the situation between the Serbs and Kosovo’s Albanian majority.

For 78 days, from 24 March through 10 June 1999, NATO conducted the largest combat effort in its history, known as Operation ALLIED FORCE. Leading the coalition effort, COMAIRSOUTH served as the Combined Forces Air Component Commander and directed all air operations over Serbia. Today, AIRSOUTH still serves as the air component command supporting NATO operations in the Balkans.

Currently, AIRSOUTH is involved in major changes and a command restructuring, as announced by NATO in June 2003. Most importantly for AIRSOUTH are the move of the Southern Region’s air component to the former LANDSOUTHEAST headquarters at Izmir, Turkey; and the reduction of its CAOCs to only two permanently manned centers, with two deployable elements in reserve.

### BRIEF HISTORIES OF MAJOR BASES AND UNITS

#### Torrejon Base History

In 1952, the United States entered into negotiations with Spain in order to obtain bomber and naval bases near the strategically important western Mediterranean. With the phase-out of the long range B-50 and B-36 bombers, SAC needed additional forward operating bases for its new B-47 medium bombers and required tanker support. Accordingly, when the two nations signed the Defense Agreement of 26 September 1953, the United States obtained the rights to build and “jointly use” air bases in Spain. Torrejon was to be one of three main bases selected for construction. Spanish authorities chose Torrejon, located near their national capital, in order to demonstrate their country’s new found friendship and close cooperation with the United States. The U.S accepted the site despite the potential for future conflicts with the commercial field at Barajas and Spanish fears of Madrid becoming sited as a target for Soviet nuclear bombers.

Construction of the base began almost immediately following signing of the 1953 agreement. American authorities specified that construction of the Spanish bases would not be a “crash project,” as had been the case with the Moroccan bases that witnessed a great deal of unnecessary waste. Dedicated as Torrejon Air Base on 23 September 1956, USAF assigned it to Sixteenth Air Force on 15 December 1956. Constructed at a cost of about $66.7 million, Torrejon was activated on 1 June 1957. A month later,
Sixteenth Air Force and U.S. facilities at the Spanish base were reassigned to SAC, and the command activated the 3970th Air Base Group as the host unit. The NAF headquarters moved from downtown Madrid to Torrejon on 1 February 1958, and SAC rotational B-47s assumed alert at the base on 1 July 1958.

During the ensuing years, the host 3970th underwent a series of redesignations, first becoming a Combat Support Group and then a Strategic Wing. Rotational SAC bombers and tankers continued to operate out of the three Spanish bases until 1965, when the U.S. Air Force phased out B-47s from its active inventory both for budgetary considerations and equipment modernization requirements.

From 1958 until 1965, Torrejon also supported the 65th Air Division (Defense), which had responsibility, in conjunction with the Spanish Air Force for the air defense of Spain. The 65th Air Division maintained a rotational F-86 fighter squadron at Torrejon and ran the Combat Operations Center for the Spanish Air Defense System at Torrejon. Although the 65th initially served under Sixteenth Air Force, USAFE assumed control of air defense for Spain in July 1960. However, four years later, USAFE began transferring responsibility for the air defense mission to the Spanish military. Although stripped of its operational air defense mission in June 1964, the 65th Air Division continued to provide air control and warning training to the Spanish Air Force until USAFE inactivated it in January 1965. Thus by the mid-1960s, the base’s original purpose had all but disappeared. However, SAC continued to maintain a large tanker force under the 3970th Strategic Wing at Torrejon in order to support its airborne alert program, and the command still planned to use the base in wartime. Concurrent with the closure of USAFE’s bases in France, it became the main airlift access point to the Southern Region and U.S. bases around the Mediterranean.

Torrejon also served as a center for communications in the western Mediterranean, first by hosting the Spanish Communications Region Headquarters (SPANCOM), and later by supporting the Mediterranean Communications Region (MEDCOM) activities. The 1989th Communications Wing at Torrejon subsequently performed that same function from 1986 until 1992 when most USAF communications operations were moved to other Mediterranean bases.

In the early 1960s, Tactical Air Command (TAC) began supporting NATO strike commitments at forward operating bases in NATO’s Southern Region through the rotation of fighter squadrons from the U.S. to bases in Italy and Turkey. By 1966, TAC could no longer support the NATO rotational program because of its commitments in Southeast Asia. Therefore, Headquarters USAF decided to realign permanently one of TAC’s fighter wings to Torrejon for NATO support. Accordingly, in April 1966, the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) deployed from England AFB, Louisiana, to Torrejon with three of its fighter squadrons. The 401st replaced the 3970th as the base’s host unit. At the same time, Headquarters USAF transferred Sixteenth Air Force and Torrejon from SAC to USAFE. Although originally scheduled to remain at Torrejon Air Base for only five years, the 401st TFW extended its stay indefinitely because of strategic and political requirements. The withdrawal of U.S. forces from France in 1966 led to Torrejon’s filling the gap in the resupply routes to the Mediterranean region, and the base became Military Airlift Command’s (MAC) main terminal for the area.

Torrejon’s long-running strategic tanker mission disappeared in 1976 as a result of a new treaty with Spain. Strategic Air Command inactivated the 98th Strategic Wing, which had replaced the 3970th Strategic Wing in June 1966; SAC moved its main tanker force to RAF Mildenhall in the United Kingdom. Five tanker remained at Zaragoza Air Base to fulfill Southern Region air refueling needs.
Although the renewal of the U.S.-Spanish Agreement on Defense Cooperation in 1989 eventually led to the departure of the 401st TFW and other USAF units at Torrejon by the early 1990s, the base continued to play a significant role in the theater. When Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait prompted Operation DESERT SHIELD and subsequent Operation DESERT STORM, Torrejon became a critical staging base for the large number of airlift missions required to move forces to the Middle East and maintain them there.

Even with the end of the Gulf War and the departure of all major USAF units from the base, Torrejon still played a significant part in Operation RESTORE HOPE, the humanitarian relief effort in Somalia in the spring of 1993. As the 401st TFW moved to Aviano in May 1992, USAFE activated the 600th Air Base Group (ABG) at Torrejon to oversee the base until it closed. On 1 October 1994, the 600th ABG inactivated, and only a token presence of U.S. personnel permanently remained to provide limited support to transient airlift operations.

401st Tactical Fighter Wing

The 401st Tactical Fighter Wing gained the 401st Bombardment Group (Heavy) as its lineal predecessor when the two organizations were consolidated in 1984. The bomb group activated at Ephrata Army Air Base, Washington, on 1 April 1943, and it later trained in B-17s at Geiger Field, Washington, and Great Falls Army Air Field, Montana. In November 1943, the 401st moved to Deenethorpe, England, where it served under the Eighth Air Force by launching attacks against strategic targets. Bombing missions against German aircraft factories on 11 January and 20 February 1944 earned the Group two Distinguished Unit Citations. The 401st also participated in aerial support of the Normandy invasion, the Allied breakthrough at St. Lo, and the Battle of the Bulge. Ending its service in the European theater of operations at the end of April 1945, the group returned to Sioux Falls Army Air Base, South Dakota, to begin training with the newer B-29 heavy bomber. However, the training mission ended with the victory over Japan, and the 401st inactivated on 28 August 1945.

Later the group reactivated in the Air Reserve on 26 June 1947, at Brooks Field, Texas, and redesignated as the 401st Bombardment Group (Medium). The USAF called the group to active service in May 1951 and assigned it to SAC. However, the 401st quickly inactivated the following month. Later, the USAF redesignated the unit as the 401st Fighter-Bomber Group, activated it on 8 February 1954, and attached it to the 366th Fighter-Bomber Wing at Alexandria AFB, Louisiana. The unit flew F-86 Sabrejets and served under TAC’s Ninth Air Force. Later in June 1957, the unit converted to F-100 Super-Sabres.

Not long after the conversion to F-100s, the group inactivated and was replaced by the newly activated 401st Fighter-Bomber Wing on 25 September 1957. The wing later became the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing on 1 July 1958. Along with the activation of the wing, the 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron reactivated to serve under the 401st. This action joined the previously inactive squadron to its three sister
squadrons, the 612th, 613th and 614th, which had been serving under the 401st Fighter-Bomber Group since 1954. All four squadrons had served under the 401st Bombardment Group in WWII. During its tenure at Alexandria AFB, later known as England AFB, the 401st and its squadrons participated in numerous exercises, deployments, and combat training events. During the Cuban Missile crisis in late 1962, the wing responded by deploying to Homestead AFB, Florida, and remained on alert there until the crisis had passed. Regular NATO exercises and squadron deployments to the emerging conflict in Vietnam filled the remainder of the time until early 1966. Because TAC was unable to support both the NATO rotations and the growing demand for airpower in Vietnam, the USAF selected the 401st for reassignment to Spain as Sixteenth Air Force’s resident tactical fighter unit to providing permanent support to NATO needs.

When the wing arrived at Torrejon Air Base in April 1966, the unit gained the 307th and 353d Tactical Fighter Squadrons in order to replace the 612th, 614th, and 615th Tactical Fighter Squadrons. The 612th had earlier deployed to serve in Southeast Asia, and the 614th and 615th were reassigned to the 834th Air Division at England AFB, Louisiana. Of the 401st’s original four squadrons, only the 613th accompanied it on the deployment to Spain. The 612th and 614th Tactical Fighter Squadrons returned to the 401st in 1971, and the 307th and 353d were retired to Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina, for inactivation.

Periodic NATO support missions, rotational deployments to bases in Italy and Turkey, and exercises with its Spanish hosts were the wing’s primary responsibilities at its new home. In July 1970, the wing completed its conversion from the F-100 fighter to the new McDonnell-Douglas F-4E Phantom II, the most advanced USAF fighter aircraft at the time. In September 1973, for logistical and budgetary considerations, the wing converted once again by swapping to F-4C-model Phantoms in order to eliminate from having more than one model assigned to the unit. In August 1978, the wing began upgrading to F-4D model aircraft, which included new weapons ranging and release computers, thereby increasing accuracy in air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons delivery.

On 3 February 1983, the wing celebrated the arrival of its first F-16 Fighting Falcon, the newest generation fighter aircraft in the Air Force inventory. Later, in the autumn of 1987, the wing began another aircraft conversion, when it started to receive the advanced F-16C and D models to replace the earlier A and B models. Throughout the 1980s, the 401st continued its missions of rotational deployments, exercises with allied air forces, and maintaining Sixteenth Air Force’s permanent combat presence on NATO’s southern flank.

The governments of Spain and the United States announced on 15 January 1988 that the newly signed Agreement on Defense Cooperation required the 401st to leave Spain by May 1992, to be followed by Sixteenth Air Force in 1997. Over the next three years, both organizations underwent an intense search for a new home. However, that work was interrupted by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Because of its forward presence and key position enroute to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region, Torrejon and the 401st played a significant role in logistically supporting over 10,000 airlift sorties carrying
over 80,000 troops and 130,000 tons of cargo to the combat zone. In addition, the wing’s 614th TFS was the first American force to deploy to Doha, Qatar where the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing (Provisional) stood up alongside British, Qatari, and French forces. During combat operations in DESERT STORM, pilots of the 614th logged over 1,300 sorties and dropped over three million tons of ordnance on Iraqi troops and military installations. The 401st effort from Qatar was mirrored in the north, where the 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron deployed to Incirlik AB, Turkey as part of EUCOM’s Joint Task Force PROVEN FORCE. In the northern air war, the 612th launched 1,093 combat missions and dropped nearly four million pounds of bombs.

As DESERT STORM ended and with tensions with the former Soviet Union declining rapidly, the 401st returned to the task of searching for a new home, and the Air Force began to streamline its operations and organizational structure. As part of CSAF’s year of organization and the new objective wing concept, USAF redesignated the unit as the 401st Fighter Wing on 1 October 1991. Later that year, USAFE announced that Aviano would become the wing’s new home, thus maintaining a permanent combat presence in the Southern Region. In preparation for the move to Italy, the wing’s squadrons were incrementally inactivated, and its aircraft reassigned to other units across the service by the end of 1991. The first few months of 1992 saw final preparations for the transfer, and finally on 4 May 1992, USAFE inactivated the 401st at Torrejon and subsequently reactivated the wing at Aviano on the same day. Thus ended over 25 years of 401st operations in Spain.

Upon activating at Aviano, the 401st assumed the personnel and resources of the resident 40th Support Wing, which USAFE inactivated on 4 May 1992. The 401st immediately began preparing for the permanent beddown of two fighter squadrons at what had been previously just a rotational alert base. In the midst of establishing a new presence at Aviano, the 401st quickly became involved in supporting the opening stages of USAFE’s and Sixteenth Air Force’s operations in the Balkans. In April 1993, the wing oversaw the deployment to Aviano of additional NATO, USAF, Marine, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard units participating in Operation DENY FLIGHT to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. The wing and Aviano continued to be the primary host of forces involved in DENY FLIGHT for the next year, which included the first combat engagement in NATO’s history in late February 1994. Although finally receiving its first permanently assigned F-16s at the end of March, the 401st’s continued involvement in operations was to be short-lived. On 1 April 1994, the 401st inactivated, and its personnel and resources were assumed by Aviano’s new host, the 31st Fighter Wing. At the time of its inactivation, the 401st had served Sixteenth Air Force for almost 30 years, longer than any other wing in the NAF.

As fortune would have it, the 401st’s active career did not end in 1994. Just nine years later in the spring of 2003, it was recalled to serve in a provisional role as the 401st Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW). The unit’s new mission was to conduct refueling and reconnaissance during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Later in June 2003, the 401st AEW replaced the 16th AEW at Aviano AB and assumed the role of administrative and logistical support for the numerous expeditionary locations and units that continue to support Operations JOINT FORGE and JOINT GUARDIAN. Thus the wing returned to service not only at Aviano under the command of Sixteenth Air Force, but it continued to oversee operations in the Balkans that it had helped to begin nearly a decade before.

Zaragoza Base History

Zaragoza Air Base is located approximately ten miles west of the city of Zaragoza, in the Spanish province of Aragon. The base was first established as Sanjurjo Aerodrome during the early days of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Among the first aircraft at Zaragoza were German built Heinkel He-51s of the “cazas de cadena” fighter units supporting nationalist forces loyal to General Francisco Franco. Since the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, Zaragoza has been the home of several Spanish Air Force units.
By virtue of the 1953 Spanish-American agreements, the history of the USAF at Zaragoza began with the construction of additional facilities in 1954. In January 1955, the 7603d Air Base Squadron activated under the administration of the Joint U.S. Military Group (JUSMG) Spain. At that time, the headquarters for the 7603d was located in downtown Zaragoza until the arrival of additional USAF personnel in late 1955 and early 1956. Finally, on 15 February 1956, Headquarters USAF officially activated Zaragoza Air Base, and on 1 July 1957 the base transferred from the control of JUSMG to the SAC’s 3974th Combat Support Group, a subordinate of Sixteenth Air Force. The mission at that time was to support SAC’s B-47 Reflex alert force. From September 1958 until February 1964 the base also supported F-102 Delta Dart alert fighters of the 431st Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS). However, in 1964 the base’s strategic support mission came to an end with the withdrawal of the B-47 alert force and the interceptors. On 1 June 1964, the 3972d ABS activated to assume host base support duties in place of the inactivating 3974th CSG. A month later, SAC placed the base in standby status, and remained so when it transferred to USAFE in April 1966. The host 3972d redesignated as the 7472d ABS on 15 April 1966 and continued to provide caretaker support of the base for the next four years.

In an effort to reduce its preponderant dependence on Wheelus AB in Libya, Headquarters USAFE searched for an alternative training range in the Southern Region. This effort accelerated after the September 1969 coup in Libya and the impending closure of Wheelus AB. On 7 November 1969, the Spanish Air Ministry granted USAFE permission to regularly use El Poligono de Tiro De Las Bardenas Reales Range for the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing at Torrejon Air Base and for other units on a temporary basis. The negotiation tempo between the United States and Spanish officials increased in an attempt to get approval for a continuous range operation. In February 1970, USAFE declared Zaragoza an active base once again, and initiated Project CREEK STEP to begin the rapid re-building of the base for use as a weapons training site. The first Weapons Training Detachment (WTD) of 12 aircraft and 150 personnel was in place at Zaragoza Air Base by 10 March 1970, followed by a second detachment on 1 April.

The aforementioned actions culminated in the activation of the 406th Tactical Fighter Training Group on 1 July 1970, which replaced the 7472d as the base’s host unit. Regardless of the location, whether Wheelus or Zaragoza, the mission of USAFE’s air weapons training center remained constant. On 15 July 1972, USAFE activated the 406th Tactical Fighter Training Wing in place of the group. The base gained additional capability with the establishment of the USAFE Tactical Forces Employment School, organized as a separate entity of the 406th. The school held its first class on 11 September 1972. For the next 20 years, Zaragoza and its range continued the training and WTD missions until USAFE returned the base to the Spanish government in September 1992 as part of the general withdrawal of USAF units and forces from Spain in that year.
406th Tactical Fighter Training Wing

The War Department constituted the 406th Bombardment Group (Dive) on 4 February 1943 and activated it on 1 March 1943 at Key Field, Mississippi. After its activation, the 406th immediately began an intensive training program with the A-24, A-35, P-47 and other aircraft. Following the completion of its training program, the unit redesignated as the 406th Fighter-Bomber Group in August 1943. The transferred to Ashford, England, in April 1944 and entered combat with the Ninth Air Force May 1944. Redesignated once again as the 406th Fighter Group, its newly arrived P-47s provided air cover for the D-Day landings and later flew armed reconnaissance and close air support missions during the Normandy campaign. Moving to a forward base at Tour-en-Bassin, France, in August 1944, the 406th received two Distinguished Unit Citations for combat actions. The first occurred on 7 September 1944, when the group destroyed a large column of German armored vehicles and military transports trying to escape the battlefront. The second happened on 23-27 December 1944, as the 406th provided much needed air cover for beleaguered U.S. forces around Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. Following V-E Day in May 1945, the 406th flew support mission from Nordholz, Germany, as part of the army of occupation until it inactivated on 20 August 1946.

The 406th later reactivated on 10 July 1952 at RAF Manston, England, as the 406th Fighter-Bomber Group and flew the F-84 Thunderjet and F-86 Sabre. In addition, the 406th Fighter-Bomber Wing activated at RAF Manston on the same day and assumed control of the group. In April 1954, Headquarters USAF redesignated both units as the 406th Fighter-Interceptor Wing and the 406th Fighter-Interceptor Group. Later, the group inactivated on 7 September 1956, and the wing took direct control of the 512th, 513th, and 514th Fighter-Interceptor Squadrons (FIS). Two years later in May 1958, USAFE inactivated the wing and transferred its squadrons to bases in Germany.

On 1 July 1970, USAFE reactivated the group as the 406th Tactical Fighter Training Group (TFTG) at Zaragoza AB, Spain. Assigned to Sixteenth Air Force, the group provided weapons training for USAFE tactical units at the Barredas Reales Air-to-Ground Range. In 1971 this mission expanded to include air-to-air gunnery training, known as DART, at the Ibiza Air-to-Air Range. On 12 July 1972, USAFE inactivated the group and replaced it with the newly reactivated and redesignated 406th Tactical Fighter Training Wing (TFTW). Later in September 1972, the wing became responsible for the operation of the USAFE Tactical Employment School. For the next few years, the wing continued to provide training for F-4 units from throughout Europe. Higher headquarters recognized the effectiveness of this training by twice honoring the 406th with the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA).

On 31 May 1976, the wing became responsible for the operation of the USAFE Instructor Pilot School. During November the wing began to provide training for F-5 and OV-10 aircraft in addition to the F-4s. Also during November of that same year, a detachment of KC-135 aircraft belonging to SAC arrived on base, and their maintenance became the wing’s responsibility. In 1977, another facet was added to the wing’s training operations when it conducted the first Dissimilar Air Combat Tactics (DACT) training missions with USAF and U.S. Navy aircraft on 12 September of that year.

In 1979, two significant events took place, which had an effect on the wing’s operation. The first was the closing of the Instructor Pilot School in July, due to broad changes in USAFE’s mission and budget restraints. The second event took place in February when the 406th began to implement the Production Oriented Maintenance Organization (POMO) concept. Headquarters USAF designed POMO to establish a maintenance management system which would enhance sortie production by improving the utilization of maintenance personnel.

On 1 January 1980, the support mission expanded when the 406th assumed responsibility for various functional areas in support of the four USAF tropo-scatter radar sites at Humosa, Mencora, Soller,
and Inoges. The wing provided this support in cooperation with the 401st TFW assigned to Torrejon AB. Foremost among the accomplishments of the 406th TFTW during 1981 was the preparation and planning for reception of the F-16 Weapons Training Detachments which began in 1982. The 512th TFS of the 86th TFW at Ramstein AB, Germany, recorded its first F-16C fighter deployment to the Bardenas Reales Range on 3 April 1986. This represented the initial use of the C-model F-16 aircraft at the range since the newer F-16s were introduced to the European theater.

On 15 October 1986, heavy rainfall resulted in flash floods across the base causing heavy damage to facilities and base homes. As much as 15 inches of water and mud flooded into many facilities, causing nearly $1 million of damage. Assigned base personnel as well as temporarily assigned weapons training detachment personnel joined in the massive clean-up effort, and fortunately no injuries occurred. In a show of strength and comradeship in overcoming obstacles, Zaragoza also earned the prestigious USAFE Base Appearance Award during that same month.

For the rest of the 1980s, the 406th continued to provide support for USAFE crew training and range training exercises. August 1990 ushered in a period of intense activity, as the 406th and Zaragoza provided major air and ground support for Operation DESERT SHIELD, conducted in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Thousands of military personnel and tons of equipment passed through Zaragoza enroute to the crisis in the Middle East. The base and the wing continued to act as a major aerial port providing support during and after Operation DESERT STORM.

Although its involvement in support of DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM had demanded much of its attention, the 406th faced a drawdown of its operations the following year. Subject to the same provisions requiring the removal of other units from Spain, the 406th began efforts to end its operations and return Zaragoza to the Spanish Government in 1992. The use of the training range ended in December 1991, followed by the turnover of base operations to the Spanish in April 1992. Finally, on 15 June 1992, the 406th and its subordinates inactivated ending its 20 years of fighter training in Spain.

Morón Base History

The airfield began functioning in 1941 as a training field for Spanish Army Air Force fighter pilots. Since that time, the Spanish have used the base as a headquarters for bomber, fighter, and tactical command organizations. American involvement with Morón began during the negotiations for bases in Spain between June 1951 and September 1953, under the direction of a Joint United States Military Group, commanded by Major General Kissner. The negotiations were formalized in September 1953, and construction of Morón Air Base, under the field direction of the Naval Bureau of Yards and Docks, continued for three years. On 1 June 1957, the 3973d Air Base Group at Morón Air Base formally activated as part of Sixteenth Air Force assigned to Strategic Air Command.

On 13 May 1958, the first flight of B-47s were assigned to Morón AB to conduct Reflex operations, and six weeks later, the first rotational fighter squadron, F-100s from George AFB, California, arrived for temporary duty to conduct air defense alert. Morón continued to operate primarily as a "Reflex" base until 29 April 1962, when the first Chrome Dome KC-135 aircraft arrived. Two days later, the first refueling sortie was generated. April 1963 saw the last B-47 aircraft depart Morón. On 26 September 1963 the U.S.-Spanish bilateral agreement was extended for five additional years, and the host unit redesignated as the 3974th Strategic Wing in February 1964.

On 15 April 1966, with the mission of Sixteenth Air Force, Morón Air Base transferred from SAC to USAFE, with its host unit redesignated as the 7473d Combat Support Group. The mission changed to communications support, "fair weather" flying operations of rotational RF-4 and RF-101 reconnaissance units, and the support of air rescue operations. In 1969, USAFE directed a phase-down for Morón Air Base to that of a Standby Dispersal Base (SDB). The host unit became the 7473d Combat Support Squadron (CSS). In addition, regular flying activities were curtailed and replaced by only the occasional exercise. Phase-down activities were complete in early 1971. In November 1971, USAFE place Morón in a modified caretaker status.
In February 1976, congressional action known as the "Nunn Amendment" identified reductions and realignments, and contracting of most military authorizations at Morón, so USAFE inactivated the 7473 CSS on 31 May 1976, and established Operating Location-A (OL-A), 401 TFW on 1 June 1976. Further reorganization took place when OL-A, 401 TFW deactivated on 31 July 1976, and Detachment 2, 401 TFW was established on 1 August 1976. On 16 August 1976, a USAFE/XP letter implemented the policy of using Morón as a standby dispersal base (SDB), which implemented reduction actions and the expansion of the Base Maintenance Contract (BMC) to include Civil Engineering, Services, Transportation, Supply, Housing Supply, Fuels, Maintenance, Fire Protection and Administration. In September 1976, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Spain and the United States became effective and reconfirmed the standby status of Morón. By September 1977, all phase down actions were completed and the base military, civilian, contractor and tenant population stabilized at 400: more than 300 contractor personnel and approximately 30 personnel from Det 2, 401 TFW.

Later, the May 1983 U.S.-Spanish bilateral Agreement of Friendship, Defense and Cooperation authorized the U.S. to station up to 15 tanker aircraft at Morón Air Base. A manpower change request was developed to increase manning, based on the tanker task force and the increased War Reserve Materiel (WRM) requirements. In 1983, Morón began hosting multiple exercises and developed into a major peacetime staging base. Also, in 1984 the base became a NASA Space Shuttle Transoceanic Abort Landing Site. On 1 November 1989, USAFE activated the 7120th Air Base Flight (ABF) at Morón to assume base support responsibilities.

As with the other bases in Spain, Morón became a significant contributor to the deployment of forces in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Initially, SAC deployed tankers to support Operation DESERT SHIELD. However, in January 1991, SAC changed from refueling to bomber operations at Morón AB for DESERT STORM. The 801st Bomb Wing (Provisional) at Morón consisted of B-52s, KC-135s, and over 2,800 personnel; it was the largest deployed bomber wing of the war.

On 1 June 1993, the 7120th ABF was re-designated as the 712th ABF. The 1994 military reductions in Europe resulted in Morón Air Base picking up a regional responsibility for providing support to designated USAF units in Spain, Italy, and Greece with the drawdown of USAFE units at Torrejon AB, San Vito AS, and Iraklion AS. Along with the increased responsibility came a new unit designation. The 712th ABF inactivated and USAFE replaced it with the 496th ABS on 1 July 1994. The 496th initially served under the newly formed 616th Regional Support Group located at Aviano, but when USAFE inactivated the 616th in July 1996, it reassigned the 496th ABS to the 31st FW. Throughout 1996, the base functioned as the staging area for more than 30 contingency missions, including relief operations in Africa and more than a dozen fighter refueling operations.

During Operation ALLIED FORCE in 1999, Morón became the home of the 92d AEW, which provided refueling to combat and airlift missions. Morón held the distinction of being the largest tanker base during the operation. Since January 2000, Morón's mission matured to make the base a critical link in supporting the rotation of Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEF) deploying in EUCOM and CENTCOM theaters. Tanker task forces, USAF and Marine fighter units, and airlifters continue to use Morón as a staging base for AEF operations. On 22 March 2004, USAFE activated the 712th ABG at the base to assume responsibility for the increasingly important roles that the base has undertaken in support of recent operations such as ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. The 712th ABG carries the history of the 712th ABF that previously served at Morón.
Aviano Base History

The Signal Branch of the Italian Army established the Aviano airfield in 1911. A year later, the Italians activated a flying training school at the base, giving it the distinction of being the “cradle of the Italian Air Force.” During World War I, the Italian Air Force used the base for bomber operations against targets in Austrian-held territory. After the Italian retreat from Caporetto in November 1917, Austro-Hungarian air units also used the aerodrome until Italy achieved victory the following year. After the end of the war, the base was renamed Aeroporto Pagliano é Gori in honor of two Italian Air Force aviators killed in action during a raid conducted from Aviano. The base grew in importance during the interwar period, hosting Italian fighters and bomber training and operations. It was also the home base for Italian Air Force’s aerial acrobatic teams.

In World War II, Aviano initially served as a bomber base for the Italian Air Force and, then, as an advance fighter base by the German Luftwaffe. From 5 December 1943 through 2 March 1945, the base was attacked nine times by aircraft of the Twelfth and Fifteenth Air Forces. Allied bombing heavily damaged the base, and Allied forces occupied Aviano following the 29 April 1945 German surrender in northern Italy. The USAAF briefly moved into the base on 15 May 1945; but it was later used by the British Royal Air Force.

Aviano did not fully regain operational status for several years after the war, but by the beginning of the 1950’s it had become the home of an Italian Air Force fighter wing. In 1954, the United States began negotiations for the use of selected Italian air bases. Aviano was one of these, and Detachment 1, Seventeenth Air Force, which was then headquartered in French Morocco and serving as USAFE’s Mediterranean air command, arrived at the nearby city of Udine in November 1954 to take charge of the base’s activation. This became official on 15 February 1955, when USAFE established the 7207th Air Base Squadron at Aviano. On 13 December 1955, TAC rotational fighter squadron deployments began at Aviano. These “TAC Rote” units, as they were termed, served under USAFE operational control to meet NATO alert requirements. On 1 July 1957, the 7227th Support Group moved from Udine to Aviano to become the host unit. The 7227th became a combat support group on 1 July 1962.

On 1 April 1966, in keeping with a move to place units with WWII combat histories in the theater, the 40th Tactical Group replaced the 7227th at Aviano. At the same time, the 401st TFW and other European-based fighter wings took over the alert role formerly performed by the TAC Rote units. In 1969, USAFE reassigned the 40th from Seventeenth to Sixteenth Air Force as part of the realignment of its Southern Area command structure. In 1970, following the closure of Wheelus AB, which had been USAFE’s principal weapons training center, Aviano became one of three weapons training sites in Sixteenth Air Force. Weapons training detachments from northern European bases used the Italian Air Force’s Maniago air-to-ground ranges for fair weather training. In the early 1980s, complaints from the local population caused the Italians to curtail much of the training at Maniago. This factor, as well as
budgetary restraints, caused the Air Force to end Aviano’s status as a weapons training site in 1986. In the interim, the 401st TFW continued to deploy to the base to stand alert and to conduct training at the ranges.

However, not long afterwards, the base began to see something of a revival. The host 40th TACG elevated to wing status in July 1990, and with the Persian Gulf crisis erupting just a month later, the base provided a large amount of materiel and personnel support to the ensuing Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. It was also in this period that the USAF opted to use Aviano as the new home of the 401st TFW and Sixteenth Air Force, which were both scheduled to move from Spain in 1992. The 401st arrived first in May 1992, and it was followed by the much-reduced Sixteenth Air Force headquarters staff in August 1992. Just as these two organizations established themselves at the base and began to focus their attention on making Aviano a suitable operating location for a permanent force of F-16s, a new series of crises erupted in the neighboring Balkan countries that would make Aviano a key installation over the next decade.

On 7 April 1993, American, French, and Dutch aircraft began deploying to Aviano to carry out UN Security Council Resolution 816 calling for the establishment of a peacekeeping zone in war torn Bosnia-Herzegovina. NATO named the ensuing operation DENY FLIGHT. As it intensified over the next year, the operation strained Aviano’s meager resources and facilities just as the base began its efforts to meet the requirements of the newly arrived 401st FW. Although only initially allowed permission to base one squadron of F-16s permanently at Aviano, an initial memorandum signed between Italy and the U.S. in November 1993 granted permission for the basing of a second squadron, thus adding to the requirement to enhance the facilities at Aviano. That memorandum was solidified six months later with the signing of a technical agreement between the USAF Director of Aerospace Operations and the Italian Air Staff. This move doubled the military population from 1,600 to 3,500 at a base that was originally sized for about 1,300 in the mid 1950s. The base never had a permanent flying unit assigned before this time.

Not long after the turn of the New Year, USAF announced that Aviano would gain a new host unit in place of the 401st FW. On 1 April 1994, the 401st inactivated, while at the same time, the 31st FW was reassigned from ACC to USAFE and assumed responsibilities for the base. Activated at the same time as the wing, the 555th Fighter Squadron (FS) was the first permanent F-16 squadron to begin operations at Aviano, and it was quickly followed by the 510th FS that activated on 1 July 1994. Both units quickly became engrossed in DENY FLIGHT operations. Operation DENY FLIGHT was to be but the first among a series of operations and peacekeeping missions that the wing and base would play a role in over the next several years. Subsequent operations included DELIBERATE FORCE, DECISIVE EDGE, DELIBERATE GUARD, DELIBERATE FORGE, JOINT FORGE, JOINT GUARD, and JOINT GUARDIAN.

Aviano’s base facilities had not significantly improved during the Cold War years because the largest threat to NATO came from Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces arrayed across central Eastern Europe. As a result, NATO’s infrastructure investment in the Southern Region fell far behind similar facilities in Germany and other central locations. The base’s facilities and infrastructure were too small and inadequate for the new missions emerging at a rapid pace. When the 401st and later 31st FWs moved in, it was clear major infrastructure expenditures would be needed to allow the F-16s to operate effectively at the base. Air Staff and USAFE planners identified and programmed over $50 million worth of emergency funds to tackle the worst problems in 1994 and 1995, while at the same time soliciting NATO funding. Eventually, NATO and the USAF both contributed funds aimed at supporting the fighter beddown. By mid-1996 emergency construction was underway with architectural and engineering firms working around the clock to turn out several large project designs under the guidance of base civil engineers. Acquisition of additional land and facility space was also a significant effort.

In the midst of and often hindering construction efforts, the wing had to prepare for air combat operations in the Balkans. To manage such a large base expansion program, the Sixteenth Air Force commander wanted to have a single, full-time program office build the base, thus freeing up the wing commander to concentrate on the intense flying mission. The Aviano 2000 Program Management Office (PMO) started to take shape in February 1999 and was formally authorized on 1 July 1999. The task of the PMO was to oversee 97 large NATO construction projects on the base.
At the same time these construction efforts were being undertaken, Aviano gained world-wide notoriety as the hub of air operation in what was to become the Kosovo air campaign known as Operation ALLIED FORCE. From March to June 1999, Aviano units, already in place, received nearly 200 additional aircraft and over 4,000 additional personnel, all supporting the 78-day air campaign, as well as the steady-state operations over the rest of the Balkans. During the campaign, almost 2,000 personnel were housed at Aviano's tent city, known as Caserma Barbarisi.

As ALLIED FORCE drew to a close and the large number of personnel and equipment for that operation left Aviano, the base and the wing returned to their normal course of Balkans peacekeeping operations, base construction under the Aviano 2000 program, and improving the quality of life for permanently assigned personnel. The resident 31st AEW and 16th AEW continued to operate in support of Balkans operations until the newly reestablished 401st AEW took over that role in June 2003. This action returned a unit to Aviano that had done much to initiate the Balkans mission over nine years earlier. The year 2003 was also a very notable period in Aviano history, when the base supported one of the largest airborne assaults in recent history. As part of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in March 2003, Aviano served as the launching pad for the 173d Airborne Brigade from nearby Vicenza. This major airborne effort, not previously a role Aviano had played in the past, highlighted the increased capabilities that the base had achieved as a focal point in a decade full of expeditionary force employment.

40th Tactical Group and 40th Tactical Support Wing

The 40th Tactical Group, first known as the 40th Bombardment Group (Medium), was originally constituted on 22 November 1940. It activated just over four months later on 1 April 1941, in Puerto Rico under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William B. Sousa. A year later, in May 1942, it redesignated as the 40th Bombardment Group (Heavy).

While operating from Puerto Rico, and later the Panama Canal Zone, the group’s airmen flew anti-submarine patrols in B-17 Flying Fortresses, B-18 Boleros, and the Martin B-26 Marauder over the Caribbean until June 1943 when it moved to Pratt Army Air Field in Kansas. There the Group underwent transition training to the Boeing B-29 “Superfortress”. Later that same year the War Department redesignated the group as the 40th Bombardment Group (Very Heavy).

During the latter part of March 1944 the Group was once again on the move. This time the unit traveled to India where it was stationed at Chakulia and assigned to Twentieth Air Force. From Chakulia the Group transported supplies over the Hump to staging areas in China and also flew its first combat mission on 5 June; a strike against railroad shops at Bangkok, Thailand. Ten days later, on 15 June 1944, the 40th participated in the first Army Air Forces attack on Japan since the Doolittle Raid in April 1942.

The 40th continued to operate from bases in India through early 1945 striking at targets in Burma, Thailand, China, Japan, Indonesia, and Formosa. Targets in those countries included transportation centers, naval installations, iron works, and aircraft manufacturing plants. The 40th won its first Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for a raid on the iron and steel works at Yawata, Japan, on 20 August 1944. Between February and April 1945, the 40th moved to West Field on Tinian Island. From there the group continued attacks against Japanese operations making high altitude daylight raids against strategic targets. The 40th
also took part in incendiary raids against urban centers in Japan and mined Japanese shipping lanes. During this period the Group won two more DUCs. The first was for raids against the naval aircraft factories at Kure, oil storage facilities at Oshima and the industrial area of Nagoya in May 1945. The Group’s second DUC was awarded for a raid on the light metal industries at Osaka in July 1945.

After VJ-Day, the 40th dropped food and supplies to Allied prisoners in Japan, Korea and Formosa and took part in show-of-force missions. The group returned to March Field in California in November 1945 where it was assigned to SAC on 21 March 1946. Just over six months later, on 1 October 1946, the 40th inactivated.

After 20 years on the Air Force inactive roles, USAFE reactivated the group at Aviano Air Base, Italy, on 1 April 1966, and assigned it to Seventeenth Air Force. HQ USAF had redesignated it as the 40th Tactical Group (TACG). During the years after its reactivation in 1966, the group’s primary mission was to exercise command and control of assigned weapons systems prepared to conduct tactical air operations in and around the Southern Region of Europe. Also, as one of four USAFE weapons training sites, the 40th provided continuous support for the deployments of weapon training detachments deployed to Aviano Air Base from other USAFE units. Headquarters USAFE reassigned the group to Sixteenth Air Force on 1 December 1968, as part of the command’s realignment of the Southern Region.

The 40th TACG was noted for its extensive involvement in the relief effort following a major earthquake in northeastern Italy on 6 May 1976. Immediately after the quake and over the course of the following weeks, the unit and base provided much needed medical assistance, food, clothing and supplies to victims, hosted working parties from other USAFE bases to help move rubble, and utilized some of its heavy equipment and vehicles in recovery efforts. For this effort, the 40th was recognized with an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

In September 1979, Detachment 4 of the 40 TACG became operational on the island of Sardinia. The detachment managed the quadri-national (British, German, Italian, and U.S.) air combat maneuvering and instrumentation (ACMI) range located to the west of the island. It was a one of a kind range within USAFE that provided deployed aircrews with valuable and realistic air-to-air combat training. In 1984, Detachment 4 was replaced by the 7555th Tactical Training Squadron assigned directly to Sixteenth Air Force, although the 40th retained financial and administrative responsibility.

While fighter deployments to Det 4 increased, flying at Aviano AB was reaching low ebb. In 1979, limited funds prompted headquarters USAFE to reduce the number of weapons training detachment deployments throughout the command. Throughout 1981, the 40th experienced a continuous decrease in flying activity. On-going, large-scale construction programs on and around the Aviano AB flight line further compounded the problem. Nevertheless, during 1981-82, the 40th stepped up its local program in an effort to maintain personnel proficiency, oversee the war reserve materiel (WRM) stocks in the region, and provide support to various geographically separated units (GSU). The 40th actively participated in several large-scale exercises such as DISPLAY DETERMINATION, a JCS exercise conducted annually as part of the larger REFORGER exercise series.

On 30 July 1990, HQ USAF redesignated the group as the 40th Tactical Support Wing. Just weeks later, the wing deployed much of its WRM, mobility, construction equipment, and munitions in support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. In total, the 40th deployed over 200 personnel, 4,000 short tons of cargo, and nearly 13,000 short tons of munitions in support of DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. In addition, it assisted in the beddown of other units deployed to other bases in southern Europe in support of operations in the Persian Gulf.

With the imminent closure of its bases in Spain, the USAF selected Aviano to become the new home to a permanent F-16 flying unit. Having vacated Torrejon, the 401st TFW stood up at Aviano on 4 May 1992 assuming all of the base’s personnel and equipment, while the 40th inactivated and ended its 26-year tenure at the base.
31st Fighter Wing

Originally stationed at Homestead AFB, Florida, the 31st replaced the 401st FW as Aviano’s main operating unit on 1 April 1994. The 31st traces its roots back to the 31st Fighter Group that served under the Fifteenth Air Force in Italy during WWII. Before coming to Aviano, the 31st had been stationed at Homestead since October 1970 after having previously served in Vietnam for nearly four years.

One month after arriving at Aviano AB, the 31st FW began flying contingency operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In May 1994, the wing’s newly assigned 555th FS started operations in support of Operation DENY FLIGHT, and by September of the same year, the 510th FS joined her sister squadron in flying missions. Both squadrons conducted daily sorties with other NATO forces, enforcing the “No Fly Zone” over the region. On 29 August 1995, in response to the Bosnian Serb shelling of Sarajevo’s central market, NATO initiated Operation DELIBERATE FORCE. This military action resulted in the largest air assault in NATO’s history. The 31st FW increased its involvement and support to NATO forces during this 23-day operation, flying an average of 18 sorties a day for a total of 418 sorties. After reducing the threat to Sarajevo and other UN safe havens, NATO and the UN ended Operation DELIBERATE FORCE on 21 September 1995.

With the completion of Operation DELIBERATE FORCE, Operation DENY FLIGHT resumed. The wing continued daily missions to enforce the “No Fly Zone” over Bosnia-Herzegovina. On 15 December 1995, the UN Security Council Resolution 816 expired and with it authority for Operation DENY FLIGHT. The UN agreed to terminate the operation and officially turned over authority for the security of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) on 20 December 1995.

On 20 December 1995, NATO’s IFOR began Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR. The air portion of this mission, called Operation DECISIVE EDGE, ensured Aviano-based aircraft continued to maintain the security of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In December 1996, Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR concluded and NATO forces began operating under Operation JOINT GUARD. This new NATO operation also affected the air mission, which changed from Operation DECISIVE EDGE to Operation DELIBERATE GUARD. This new operation implemented by NATO’s Stabilization Forces (SFOR, previously IFOR), became one of stabilization to give civilian agencies the opportunity and time to become functional and operational. The 31 FW continued to fly sorties in support of SFOR requirements even as peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina continued under Operation JOINT FORGE and its air component Operation DELIBERATE FORGE, which are still being conducted over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Throughout the late 1990s and into the 21st century, the 31st FW remained focused on the Balkans. In February 1999, the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) was activated under the 16th ASETF in order to conduct combat operations during Operation ALLIED FORCE. During the course of the 78-day air campaign, the 31st AEW became the largest expeditionary wing in Air Force history with over 6,000 people and 150 combat aircraft that flew nearly 9,000 combat sorties and accumulated almost 40,000 hours of combat service over the skies of Kosovo, Serbia, and all throughout the Balkan region in support of NATO operations. At the end of combat operations, the 31st returned to maintaining a vigilant air presence over the Balkans not only through the continuing JOINT FORGE mission, but additional missions over Kosovo as part of Operation JOINT GUARDIAN for NATO’s Kosovo Force (KFOR).

With their experience with no-fly zone sorties over the Balkans, both the 555th FS and the 510th FS were well suited to participate in similar no-fly zone operations over Iraq, beginning with participation in Operation SOUTHERN WATCH from Kuwait in 2000 and in Operation NORTHERN WATCH from Turkey in 2001. Both fighter squadrons as well as the 31st’s 603d Air Control Squadron continued to meet regular deployments for these two operations, as well as projecting airpower in the Balkans. Following the terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September 2001, the 31st FW stood ready to contribute its experience and expertise in the new Global War on Terror.
Comiso Base History

Comiso Air Station is a part of Vincenzo Magliocco Aeroporto, an Italian air base. The installation began as an aerodrome constructed in southeastern Sicily between 1935 and 1938 at the foot of the Iblei Mountains and near the city of Comiso. In 1936, it was dedicated and named in honor of Major General Vincenzo Magliocco, the first Sicilian to become a general officer in the Italian Air Force. General Magliocco was killed while leading air reconnaissance during Italy’s Ethiopian Wars.

Magliocco Aerodromo became one of several key airdromes in southern Sicily during World War II. German forces served there in 1941, as part of Italy’s Axis Alliance and conducted air operations against Allied positions in North Africa. Allied aerial bombardments rendered the airfield unserviceable in July 1943. Ground assault forces of II Corps, under the command of Lieutenant General Omar Bradley, captured the base on 11 July 1943; marking it as the first such base captured on the island. Six days later, after quick repairs to the airfield, Allied air forces began operating there. The aerodrome remained under Allied control until American forces left in early 1945, just prior to the war’s end.

The airfield and facilities at Magliocco fell into disuse during the postwar years. In 1954, the national Italian airline company, Al Italia, began commercial operations at the field, and it became known as Comiso Airport. When Al Italia closed its operations at Comiso in 1973, the airport returned to military control with the establishment of an Italian Air Force radio monitoring station. On 7 August 1981, NATO officially selected it as the second European main operating base for ground launched cruise missiles (GLCM) to be deployed by NATO in response to the development and deployment of new intercontinental and intermediate range missiles by the Soviet Union.

On 17 March 1982, representatives of the U.S. Navy’s Civil Engineering Corps arrived at Comiso as the resident officers in charge of construction. As the only U.S. representatives at Comiso, they performed liaison duties and served as the local point of contact for early site activities task force and Comiso activation team conferences and initial site preparations. This included the demolition of most of the old Italian Air Force facilities, which was completed on 13 August 1982, and the establishment of an interim base support facility or “porta-cabin city” for the scheduled 1983 summer arrival of the 487th Combat Support Group (CSG).

The 487th CSG was assigned to Comiso AS in May 1983, but the porta-cabin city was not completed until June. On 30 June 1983, the 487th Tactical Missile Wing (TMW) activated at Comiso to assume command of the new GLCM mission at the base. Planning and construction of permanent facilities also began that summer. They were divided into three increments. The first was the construction of major support facilities to include the first two dormitories that were completed in late 1983. This heralded the January 1984 arrival of the wing’s initial group of dispersal-qualified operation, maintenance, and security personnel—nicknamed “Ready Merlin.” The first increment was completed in the summer of 1984. The second and third increments began in 1984, but by 1985 many recreational facilities were several months beyond their original completion dates. Such facilities could not compete with operational construction for resources – and in 1985, with droughts in the summer, flooding in the fall, and power blackouts throughout – resources were minimal.
With the completion of most operational facilities in late 1985 and early 1986, the second and third increments reached the final stages of construction. The year 1986 also marked the beginning of the last major phase of construction at Comiso AS with the start of congressionally-funded facilities to support accompanied tours scheduled to begin by 1987.

Comiso, located on Sicily, was far removed from Italy's large population centers and thus was somewhat insulated from the anti-nuclear movement sweeping Europe in the late 1980s. All of the other GLCM bases were, to some extent, subjected to political protests; sometimes intense ones. With the signing of the INF treaty and the withdrawal of GLCMs from Europe, Comiso's days as a fully functioning operating base were numbered. When the 487th TMW inactivated in May 1991, the station was redesignated as the Comiso Family Housing Site. Comiso was formally transferred to the Italian Air Force on 30 September 1991.

487th Tactical Missile Wing

The 487th Tactical Missile Wing (TMW), with its primary mission organization located at Comiso AS, had the 487th Bombardment Group (Heavy) as its lineal predecessor. After activation on 20 September 1943 at Bruning Army Air Field in Nebraska and extensive B-24 training at Alamogordo Army Air Field in New Mexico, they began combat under Eighth Air Force in May 1944 by bombing airfields in France in preparation for the invasion of Normandy. They attacked and pounded coastal defenses, road junctions, bridges, and locomotives during the assault landings. Later, the 487th bombèd German troops and artillery positions to assist British forces near Caen in July 1944; struck gun emplacements to support the Allied effort at Brest in August, and covered the airborne attack on Holland in September 1944. The group also flew missions against German industries, refineries, and communication facilities during May-August 1944, but it operated almost solely against strategic targets after August 1944. The 487th began converting to B-17s, which was complete by March 1945.

After successfully training in their new aircraft, the group conducted attacks against oil refineries in Merseburg, Mannheim, and Dulmen; factories in Nurnberg, Hannover, and Berlin; and marshalling yards in Cologne, Munster, Hamm, and Heumunster. The unit also aided ground forces during the Battle of the Bulge, from December 1944 to January 1945, and turned again to ground support and interdictory operations in March 1945 as the Allies crossed the Rhine and made the final thrust into Germany. After VE-Day, the Group remained in England until it returned to the United States and inactivated in November 1945.

Another lineal predecessor of the 487th TMW was the 587th Tactical Missile Group (TMG). Activated on 15 September 1956 at Sembach AB, Germany, the 587th served under the 701st TMW and was equipped with Matador (TM-61) missiles. Headquarters USAFE later reassigned the group to the 39th TMW in June 1958. The 587th TMG operated the Matador from September 1956 to April 1959 and then converted to the Mace (TM-76) missiles, which it operated from June 1959 to June 1962. Beginning in October 1958, personnel assigned to the 587th were the first Air Force members to wear the guided missile badge. The unit took part in numerous tactical exercises and frequently conducted live firings in North Africa. On 25 September 1962, USAFE inactivated the 587th TMG, but it would be revived under a new name for a new mission just over 20 years later.

In preparation for the standup of new tactical missile units, HQ USAF consolidated the 587th TMG with the 487th Bombardment Group and redesignated it as the 487th Tactical Missile Wing on 11 January 1982. With no fanfare or formal ceremony, in fact the only American military presence was two Navy officers, both construction engineers; the 487th CSG activated at Comiso Air Station on 1 October 1982. The following year, on 1 July 1983, the USAFE officially activated 487th TMW as the
second of six new units in five NATO countries to operate the new GLCM systems. Headquarters USAFE assigned the new wing to Sixteenth Air Force on the same day. By March 1984, the wing achieved initial operating capability (IOC), and strove to achieve full operating capability. Yet, those efforts were soon overshadowed and overcome by large events in the last years of the Cold War.

On 8 December 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty banning all intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe. With the signing of the INF, the 487th prepared to close another chapter in its history. Drawdown actions took place over the next several years. USAFE completed removal of its GLCMs and other associated equipment by March 1991, when the last 16 missiles were removed from Comiso AS. Then, on 27 May 1991, the 487th TMW and its subordinates inactivated, the next to last GLCM unit to stand down.

**Decimomannu Base History**

Located on the southern end of the island of Sardinia, Decimomannu was an Italian and German bomber airfield during WWII. Army Air Forces (AAF) aircraft raided it numerous times between February and June 1943. Following capture by the Allies, Decimomannu became an AAF medium bomber base, and its 9,800-foot long runway was widened to over 1,000 feet to permit B-26s of the 319th and 320th Bombardment Groups to operate there. The AAF ended operations there and vacated the field on 15 October 1944.

After the war, Italian, German, and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) air units used the base as a training range. Training time became available upon the withdrawal of RCAF units in 1969. After the closure of Wheelus AB in Libya, USAFE obtained rights to the NATO range at Decimomannu in January 1970. On 4 March 1970 the first WTDs deployed to the base. Inferior support and training caused USAFE to withdraw from training there in June 1973. However, later on USAFE activated Detachment 4, 40th TACG on 15 February 1978 to operate the Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation (ACMI) range to be located there. On 1 October 1979, the first WTD deployments to the ACMI range began when F-15s from the 36th Tactical Fighter Wing arrived for training.

On 15 October 1985, Det 4 inactivated, and in its place, the 7555th Tactical Training Squadron (TTS) activated to manage the range. The range at Decimomannu continued to be used by USAF, Italian, German, and RAF fighter units throughout the 1980s. However, in September 1990, USAFE and Sixteenth Air Force notified the Italian Air Force that they would stop permanent operations at the air weapons training installation within the next year. Thus, on 1 October 1991, the 7555th TTS inactivated, and the technical agreement for use of the base reflected the USAF’s change from full user and infrastructure contributor to a participant paying only for training use. Headquarters USAFE fully returned the base to the Italian government on 30 September 1992.

**San Vito dei Normanni Air Station History**

San Vito dei Normanni Air Station is located midway between a community of the same name and the city of Brindisi, Italy. The air station was activated by USAF Security Service (USAFSS) on 1 November 1960, with the 6917th Radio Squadron, Mobile operating the site. The 6917th upgraded to a radio group, mobile, the following year and redesignated as the 6917th Security Group in 1963. In 1974, two subordinate units activated; the 6917th Security Squadron, in charge of operations, and the 6917th ABS, responsible for support. On 1 October 1978, the air station transferred from Electronic Security Command (ESC) to USAFE, which subsequently assigned it to Sixteenth Air Force.
As ESC inactivated the 6917th ABS, USAFE activated the 7275th ABG to assume support responsibilities as the host unit. In addition to the 6917th Electronic Security Group, the 7275th supported the U.S. Naval Security Group Activity (NSGA) and the U.S. Army’s 59th Signal Detachment. Headquarters USAFE assigned initial support for the new cruise missile base at Comiso on the island of Sicily to the 7275th in 1983. This support continued to some degree until Comiso AS was able to stand on its own feet. In 1985, Sixteenth Air Force realigned its support structure in southern Italy so that the 7275th assumed many additional support responsibilities formerly accomplished by the 40th TACG at Aviano AB. This included support of the communications site at Mount Vergine and of U.S. deployments to the Italian Air Force base at Gioia dei Colle. San Vito received additional service from the Italian Air Force at Brindisi’s Campo Casale Air Base. Throughout the remainder of the Cold War and into the early 1990s, the 7275th ABG continued to provide support to tenant units of the Air Force’s Space Command, Intelligence Command, and Weather Service, as well as other Army and DoD organizations.

In 1992, USAFE elected to close San Vito as a result of congressionally-mandated reductions in U.S. troop strength in Europe. On 6 July 1992, the Office for Defense Cooperation (ODC) at the American Embassy in Rome notified the Italian Ministry of Defense of the U.S. intention to close the station by 1994, leaving only a small meteorological station in place. Although the Italian government concurred the next month, real world events soon intervened to extend the use of San Vito.

In February 1993, USAFE needed the base to support emerging operations in the Balkans. With the arrival of Joint Special Operations Task Force-Two (JSOTF-2), USAFE postponed the handover of San Vito’s facilities. Two Air Force units initially deployed people and hardware to San Vito while supporting Operation PROVIDE PROMISE, a humanitarian airlift that sustained thousands of sick and starving civilians trapped by Bosnia's civil war. In the interim, the 7275th ABG dropped its four-digit designation and became the 775th ABG in April 1993. Eventually, as Balkan peacekeeping efforts began in earnest, that tasking switched to Operation DENY FLIGHT with JSOTF-2 resources staying put. In April 1994, USAFE notified the Italian government that it still intended to vacate San Vito, but would not do so completely until six months after the end of contingency operations.

With San Vito then identified as a contingency base and activated, USAFE inactivated the host 775th ABG, and in its place, USAFE designated the 775th ABS (Provisional) as an expeditionary unit in August 1994. All succeeding host units at San Vito would only bear a provisional or expeditionary nomenclature. Permanent party personnel were to be reassigned, but temporary contingency personnel continued to populate the station. Support for San Vito continued into 1995 and 1996, to include Operations JOINT ENDEAVOR and DECISIVE EDGE.

By late 1997 a 1,300-member coalition force, spearheaded by JSOTF-2 continued to operate at San Vito. Its role remained the support of NATO troops deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina and aircrews monitoring a no-fly zone above that volatile country, where swarming Serbian mobs attacked Army patrols in September 1997. Bolstered by commandos from France's Armée de l’Air and a sprinkling of US soldiers and sailors, the 352d Special Operations Group (SOG) and the 16th Special Operations Wing (SOW) comprised most of the joint task force. In 1997, San Vito’s tenants were engaged in supporting Operations JOINT GUARD and SILVER WAKE.

Throughout 1998 units at San Vito maintained a constant alert posture as part of Operation JOINT GUARD, with aircraft and personnel rotating through the station on a routine basis. This role increased significantly in March 1999 during the crisis in Kosovo and Operation ALLIED FORCE. During the NATO air campaign to force Serbian forces from Kosovo, special operators from San Vito conducted two successful Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) operations to rescue downed American pilots. However, the need for the base lessened considerably after the conclusion of ALLIED FORCE, and in July 1999, Sixteenth Air Force reiterated the earlier decision that there was not a permanent operational requirement for the base.

After several years of contingency operations, JSOTF-2 departed San Vito in September 1999. Later in October, a plan to partially return San Vito was finalized by Headquarters USAFE. On 1
December 1999, the 16th Expeditionary ABG that had been responsible for the contingency mission at the base since November 1998 inactivated, and the 775th Expeditionary Support Squadron activated to conclude the closure actions. By April 2000, USAFE had ceased operations at San Vito, and only small detachments of intelligence, space, and weather elements remained.

**Hellenikon Base History**

In early 1946, the British government informed President Harry S. Truman that for economic reasons, it could no longer continue to provide military aid and support to the Greek government. The British requested that the United States take over and provide military mission support to assist the Greeks in the repulsion of communist forces which were trying to take over the country. President Truman agreed and ordered a military aid mission to be established in Athens to provide military aid, supplies, and advice to the Greek Government as part of the larger Marshall Plan for European recovery after WWII. This mission consisted of approximately 65 people, 15 of whom were members of an Army Air Forces supply function and operated military flights from Athenai Airport, located on the seacoast side of the flightline at that time.

When the Air Force was declared a separate service in September 1947, those 15 people became the first Air Force members to serve at Athenai Airport. Following the creation of the USAF, personnel of the Air Transport Command and USAFE soon arrived at Athenai to provide support services. Although responsibility for these services still belonged to the Joint U.S. Military Aid Mission Group in Greece (JUSMAGG), USAFE, and Military Air Transport Service (MATS) personnel provided support for the mission and for USAF flights between Greece and bases elsewhere in Europe.

On 5 April 1948, jurisdiction for Athenai Airport was assigned to a detachment of the 7907th Air Force Base Unit (USAFE), made up of USAF personnel already stationed at the airfield. This detachment served until 1 July 1948 when it discontinued and jurisdiction over Athenai was transferred from USAFE to MATS, which itself had only recently replaced the Air Transport Command. The 1015th Air Base Squadron (ABS) performed mission activities at Athenai during this time from 1 July to 1 October 1948, followed by the 1632d ABS from 1 October 1948 to 23 November 1949, and Detachment 3 of the 1602d Air Transport Wing after 23 November 1949. The MATS activities continued from Athenai until 1 April 1954.

A detachment of the U.S. Military Mission to Greece assumed responsibility for administrative and logistic support to the USAF activities on 1 December 1949. However, on 12 March 1951, upon the establishment of the 1191st Foreign Mission Squadron, these activities became its responsibility. Later, USAFE organized the 7206th ABS, a lineal predecessor of the 7206th Support Group, at Athenai Airport on 1 April 1954. This squadron, a unit of Seventeenth Air Force, took over air operations at Athenai at that time and had detachments in Italy and Turkey. On 1 July 1954, it assumed administrative and logistic functions from the 1191st Foreign Mission Squadron.

By September 1958, the 7206th USAF Dispensary remained the only unit assigned directly to the group. However, numerous organizations, including communications, weather, postal, auditing, special investigations, and air transport were attached to the Group for logistical support. The Group continued to support the U.S. Embassy, JUSMAGG, the Military Sea Transport Service, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Engineers, NATO, and other organizations. Throughout 1958 and 1959, the Group supported various Air Force combat units. In June 1958, for example, it serviced and maintained eight F-100 aircraft of the 48th Fighter-Bomber Wing during a NATO exercise. The following month it supported U.S. forces during the Lebanon Crisis. In April 1959, F-100 aircraft from England AFB deployed to Athenai in support of a NATO exercise. Again in June 1959, aircraft deploying to Turkey from New Mexico received maintenance and refueling support at Athenai.
Only two organizational changes took place during the next three years. On 15 November 1959, Headquarters USAFE assigned the 7206th Support Group to the 7217th Air Division, attaching the 7222d USAF Dispensary at Iraklion in February 1960. In the spring of 1962, the group organized detachments at Iraklion and Larissa Hellenic Air Bases, with the latter being detached within a week. During the next seven years, several more detachments came into being: 1 April 1963, Hortiatis and Keffallihia, Greece, and Det. 8, Tanagara, Greece, with war readiness missions. The group itself was assigned directly under Sixteenth Air Force on 9 September 1970.

Minor organizational changes took place in the 7206th over the next several years. For instance, on 1 April 1972, Detachments 7 and 8 at Araxos and Tanagara were discontinued. The 7061st Munitions Support Squadron (MUNSS) replaced Detachment 7 on that same date, while the 7062d MUNSS replaced Det 8 at Tanagara, only to be discontinued several years later. On 1 January 1973, the 7206th Support Group became the 7206th Air Base Group (ABG).

Originally, the only operations conducted from Athenai Airport dealt directly with flightline activities, with other functions being conducted from hotels in the Athens and Old Phaleron areas of Attica. In 1958 negotiations with the Greek Government succeeded in moving U.S. operations from the coastal side of the flightline to a new location 10 miles south of Athens, which the Group shared with the Hellenic Air Force’s 129th Support Wing. Subsequent negotiations in the 1970s, in which Greece indicated a desire that the base should be more “hellenized,” led to the renaming of Athenai Airport as Hellenikon Air Base on 28 February 1976. At the time, Hellenikon AB consisted of 172 acres, including the ramp area. The 7206th ABG and its associate units occupied 209 buildings on base and 25 leased facilities in the area surrounding the base.

In April-May 1977, Hellenikon served as a safe haven for the evacuation of U.S. personnel from Ethiopia. Again the 7206th provided a safe haven from December 1978 to February 1979 for U.S. citizens evacuated from Iran during the overthrow of the Shah and the Islamic revolution. Later, the base served as a refueling stop, on 20 January 1981, for two Algerian airliners carrying to freedom 52 American embassy personnel who had been held hostage by Iran since 1979. Only a month later, a series of earthquakes hit central Greece from 17 February to 5 March 1981, causing extensive damage near Athens, Corinth, Thebes, and their outlying communities. The 7206th ABG stepped in to provide emergency supplies and equipment to the devastated areas.

In 1985, Hellenikon also witnessed a terrorist attack, when on 2 February a bomb at a bar near the base injured over 70 people, mostly base personnel. Throughout the remainder of the 1980s, the base continued to provide continuous administrative and logistical support to U.S. units and organizations in Greece, the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, and parts of North Africa. However, as the Cold War neared its end, the Defense Department announced in late January 1990 a series of base closures for eight USAFE bases, which included Hellenikon. The pace of final closure actions proceeded fairly rapidly, and on 28 June 1991, USAFE inactivated the 7206th ABG and returned Hellenikon AB to the Greek government.

Iraklion Air Station History

Iraklion Air Station was located on the north side of the Greek island of Crete about 15 miles east of the Iraklion city airport. The station began USAF operations in 1954 in support of activities of the 1603d Air Transport Wing (ATW) and USAFE liaison operations on Crete. Although initially managed by Detachment 1, 1603d ATW, the 7222d ABS was activated in August 1955 to operate the base. As a major tenant of Iraklion, the USAF Security Service (USAFFS) activated Detachment 2, 34th Radio Squadron, Mobile, in 1954 to run its operations. Next the 6930th Radio Group, later Security Group, moved from Wheelus AB to Iraklion in 1958. Under an agreement with USAFE, the 6930th managed the station’s
operations and served as host unit, as the 7222d ABS was inactivated. In 1963, the 6930th was replaced by
the 6931st Security Group, which continued to provide all administrative and logistical support to the
station and outlying annexes.

On 1 October 1978, Iraklion’s management was shifted from USAFSS back to USAFE. The 6931st Security Group and 6931st
ABS were discontinued, while USAFE activated the 7276th ABG to assume host unit responsibilities at the station and assigned the
7276th to Sixteenth Air Force. The 7276th’s main tenant unit continued to be the 6931st Electronic Security Squadron. For the next 16
years, the 7276th ABG continued to provide administrative and logistical support to the
6931st, as well as operate and maintain the
installation. Finally, USAFE inactivated the
7276th ABG on 1 October 1994, after having returned the station to Greek control earlier in
June 1994.

Ankara Air Station History

After Turkey joined NATO in 1952, the U.S. initiated a major increase in the amount of American
military aid and the number of personnel assigned to the country. To centralize this activity, in April 1953,
the JCS appointed USAFE as the responsible agent for logistical support to all U.S. forces in Turkey. Headquarters USAFE delegated this responsibility
to the 7206th ABS at Athenai in Greece, and on 1 April 1954, Detachment 1, 7206th ABS activated in the Turkish capital of Ankara. This detachment
was later absorbed by an advanced echelon (ADVON) from Headquarters
Seventeenth Air Force in December 1954, and subsequently, this ADVON element activated as the 7217th Support Group on 15 May 1955. The 7217th
became the first unit to have the cover designation, The United States Logistics Group (TUSLOG), as it was prescribed by EUCOM. A few
months later, Det 1, 7206th ABS was inactivated, and the 7217th ABS was activated in its place. Using the cover designation nomenclature, the 7217th
ABS was also known as TUSLOG Det 1, and all other U.S. military units and civilian components were also required to bear a TUSLOG detachment
designation because of political sensitivities in relations with the Turkish
government.

Facilities grew haphazardly in the Turkish capital of Ankara, as had the rest of U.S. facilities in
Turkey. By 1960, Headquarters TUSLOG had some 60 leases for 34 facilities scattered throughout the
capital. These included offices, apartments, warehouses, a base exchange, a hospital, and an old streetcar
barn. The TUSLOG staff occupied two 11-story office buildings downtown, and problems in coordination
and efficiency of operations became painfully obvious. Eventually, this situation resulted in a serious
security problem, especially during the 1960s and early 1970s, when terrorism became rampant in Turkey.
In 1961, the Turkish government granted the U.S. a lease on a parcel of land in the nearby village of
Balgat. At first, this land was only used for dependent schools, but a 1971 move of the boarding school
made facilities available for TUSLOG agencies. Accordingly, TUSLOG moved to Balgat, which by then
was known as Ankara Air Station. The move of the hospital to the air station in 1983 completed the
consolidation of TUSLOG facilities at Balgat.

On 1 November 1982, USAFE separated the TUSLOG’s staff agencies into those having more
local responsibilities and those handling matters throughout Turkey. From this action, the 7217th ABG
was created on 15 November 1982, and USAFE assigned it the task of providing logistical support for U.S. units in central and northwestern Turkey. In 1988, Sixteenth Air Force established its War Support System there to help make the quick transition from peace time to a war-fighting posture. A Sixteenth Air Force War Support Center and Mission Support Center activated under the 7217th ABG at Ankara AS to help coordinate and plan the command's wartime missions with NATO officials.

As part of the termination in the use of 4-digit unit designations and a general cutback in military support activity at Turkish bases, USAFE redesignated the 7217th ABG as the 717th ABS on 15 June 1993. Further reductions in the military force structure in Turkey quickly followed, and on 30 January 1994, USAFE inactivated the 717th ABS in preparation for the closure of Ankara AS. Finally, on 30 April 1994, USAFE officially turned over major portions of the station to the Turkish government. When Ankara Air Station closed in 1994, it became the Ankara Support Element. The military community dropped from a peak of 5,000 in the late 1970s to about 550 in 2001, including Marine guards, ODC officials and U.S. Embassy personnel. The Turkish government moved into 82 percent of the base, while the U.S. retained the other 18 percent to house a school and its facilities and a few other buildings.

**Headquarters The United States Logistics Group (HQ TUSLOG)**

Over a period of nearly four decades, several organizations bore the designation of The United States Logistics Group, or TUSLOG, and at various periods, TUSLOG was either a detachment, squadron, group, wing, or division level organization. In the beginning, USAFE activated Det 1, 7206th ABS in Ankara on 1 April 1954. In December, it was absorbed by an ADVON from Headquarters Seventeenth Air Force. On 15 May 1955, the ADVON, then designated as the 7217th Support Group, became the first organization known as TUSLOG, and its primary mission was basic logistics responsibility for the arrival and support of U.S. forces in Turkey.

During the mid-1950s, EUCOM, USAF, and the American Embassy gave TUSLOG more and more support taskings for all Americans in Turkey. This burden became a major unprogrammed consumer of USAFE's resources. Concerned with TUSLOG's growth, USAFE reduced the size of TUSLOG's headquarters staff to a liaison office, known as Detachment 1, Seventeenth Air Force on 1 July 1958, when it also inactivated the 7217th Support Group. General Frank F. Everest, CINCUSAFE, also tried to divest the command of its support responsibilities for all of Turkey. Although USAFE succeeded in limiting some of its logistics workload in Turkey to "up-to-the-gate" type of service, the command retained a large, expensive, and difficult mission that kept growing for the next decade. To manage this mission, TUSLOG implemented the first base maintenance contract in the European area. This action was essential to cutting blue suit personnel strength, particularly in light of an expanded mission, which included operational control of TAC fighter aircraft on rotation to Turkey in support of NATO alert requirement. Finally, USAFE had to reverse its previous decision and elevate HQ TUSLOG to an air division, designated as the 7217th Air Division under the Turkey cover plan, on 7 August 1959. The 7217th Air Division was later reassigned from Seventeenth Air Force to Sixteenth Air Force on 23 October 1968, as part of Sixteenth Air Force's assumption of responsibility for Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean in late 1968 and early 1969.

On 9 September 1970, as a result of Project REDCOSTE, the TUSLOG headquarters in Ankara shrank to a fraction of its former size and was reestablished as Detachment 1, Sixteenth Air Force. The detachment still retained the cover title "HQ TUSLOG," with its commander serving as "Vice Commander of Sixteenth Air Force for Turkey." Some of TUSLOG's command functions were decentralized to the field units, with its aircraft operations responsibility divided among the 39th TACG, Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force, and Headquarters USAFE. This mini-headquarters concept lasted until 15 October 1971, when Headquarters TUSLOG was formally activated as a wing-level named unit assigned directly under Sixteenth Air Force, and it had command over USAFE units in Turkey.
TUSLOG's most trying hour came after the Cyprus crisis of 1974. Turkey invaded the island following a coup d'etat led by a group of Greek officers. In February 1975, the U.S. Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey, and five months later, in reaction, Turkey placed all U.S. Forces in the country in a "provisional status." Almost all U.S. military operations ceased, and assigned personnel found their privileges curtailed. For example, the Ankara base exchange was closed, and military post parcel deliveries were prohibited. The fortitude shown by USAF personnel during this difficult time earned HQ TUSLOG the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award in 1976. Finally, the Congress realized that the embargo did not contribute to solving the Cyprus problem, but only served to undermine U.S.-Turkish relations and impaired NATO's defense posture on its Southern Flank. The U.S. lifted the embargo on 26 September 1978, and a week later, Turkey cancelled most of its restrictions and placed U.S. units in a “modified provisional status,” and the command resumed normal operations.

Over a year and a half later in March 1980, the U.S. and Turkey signed the five-year Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA), which formally ended the “modified provisional status” of U.S. units in Turkey. Later, in November 1982, USAFE separated the staff agencies of HQ TUSLOG that had local responsibilities from those that had handled matters throughout the country. The former became the 7217th ABG, and the latter remained as HQ TUSLOG. In addition, EUCOM had finally allowed U.S. units to drop their TUSLOG detachment cover designations and instead use their actual U.S. unit designations. As its responsibilities in the collocated base program and wartime planning missions grew, TUSLOG was elevated to divisional status by USAFE on 24 October 1984.

Through the remainder of the decade, TUSLOG continued to function as USAFE’s primary agent for force sustainment, beddown, readiness, planning, and logistical support in matters involving units and bases in Turkey. However, as the Cold War began drawing to a close and on-going contentious issues such as labor disputes by host-country base support and ever-changing Turkish re-interpretation of the DECA, the USAF and USAFE began looking at downsizing a significant portion of its force structure in Turkey. In July 1992, USAFE activated Detachment 2, 39th TACG at Ankara AS and assigned TUSLOG’s units to the detachment. In addition, on 1 August 1992, the Joint U.S. Mission for Military Aid to Turkey (JUSMMAT) reorganized to establish a new Air Force operational support branch that would handle USAF support issues that had previously rested with TUSLOG. Therefore, stripped of its traditional duties, TUSLOG continued to exist in name only until it was finally inactivated on 30 June 1993.

**Incirlik Base History**

The U.S. Engineering Group (TUSEG) began construction of Incirlik's 10,000-foot asphalt runway in 1951. The base was then known as Adana Air Base and was located east of the city of the same name. In December 1954, the USAF and the Turkish Air Force signed a joint tenancy agreement pertaining to the base. On 20 February 1955, USAFE’s 7216th ABS, also known as TUSLOG Det 10 under the Turkey cover plan, moved from Wheelus AB to open Adana for SAC rotations. The 7216th upgraded to group level on 1 May 1958, with the name of base changed to Incirlik about this time. After using Incirlik as a staging base for Operation BLUE BAT, which was conducted in response to the July 1958 crisis in Lebanon, TAC began keeping rotational alert squadrons on site until May 1966, when USAFE assumed that mission.

Continuing to use the TUSLOG Det 10 cover designation, Incirlik’s host unit became the 39th Tactical Group (TACG), which activated on 1 April 1966.
Incirlik became a USAFE Weapons Training Site in 1970, with its aircrews using the Konya air-to-ground range and the offshore LTD-15 air-to-air range. Following the Cyprus crisis of 1973-1974, when Turkish Air Force aircraft operated from Incirlik during the invasion, the Turkish government closed the base to MAC transit aircraft. This action was in response to the U.S. arms embargo on Turkey. However, Turkey allowed regular fighter rotations to continue. Base operations returned to normal after the U.S. and Turkey signed a new DECA in 1980. On 1 October 1982, the TUSLOG cover plan was finally dropped, and the host unit became publicly known by its true designation as the 39th Tactical Group. The Turkey Catch-Up project, initiated following the signing of the DECA, greatly improved quality of life conditions at Incirlik and included a model on-base housing complex.

Throughout the remainder of the decade, the base continued its Cold War mission of hosting rotational alert squadrons. However, in January 1989, massive political changes in Eastern Europe began that would end 45 years of Soviet domination. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact brought euphoria to the West, but also forced nations to ponder the future role of NATO. Meanwhile, Iraqi aggression in Kuwait brought increased activity to Incirlik once again. Instead of focusing on a possible confrontation in Europe, the base turned its attention to events in Southwest Asia.

After Iraq’s August 1990 invasion of neighboring Kuwait, the 7440th Composite Wing (Provisional) assumed operational control of the 39th TACG and other units at Incirlik. The 7440th was the air component of Joint Task Force (JTF) PROVEN FORCE which eventually controlled 140 aircraft and opened a northern air front, forcing Iraq to shift its defenses between the north and the south, where the main thrust of coalition attacks originated as part of DESERT STORM. Following combat operations, Incirlik hosted Combined Task Force (CTF) PROVIDE COMFORT, the effort to provide humanitarian relief to millions of Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq.

Later on, the U.S. State Department’s Operation QUICK TRANSIT evacuated thousands of Kurds from northern Iraq late in 1996. Incirlik provided logistical support in Turkey to this operation, which signaled the close of the humanitarian aspect of PROVIDE COMFORT, which ended on 31 December 1996. In its place, Operation NORTHERN WATCH (ONW) began on 1 January 1997. CTF-ONW enforced the U.N.-sanctioned no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel in northern Iraq and monitoring Iraqi compliance with UN Security Council resolutions. Incirlik hosted ONW’s deploying expeditionary units for the next six years.

In response to the events of 11 September 2001, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM began in October 2001. Incirlik served as a main hub of humanitarian airlift operations to Afghanistan, MC-130 special operations missions, KC-135 refueling missions, and sustainment operations for deployed forces. The aerial port managed a 600 percent increase in airflow during the height of OEF. When the main bases in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan were constructed, Incirlik’s airflow supporting OEF decreased to a baseline sustainment level. Another front opened in the Global War on Terrorism with Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, which began in March 2003. In the midst of this new conflict in Iraq, ONW drew to a close with its last mission being conducted on 17 March 2003, and the operation officially ended with the CTF’s inactivation on 1 May 2003.
39th Tactical Group and 39th Wing

The 39th Tactical Group's lineal predecessor was the 39th Bombardment Group in World War II. Activated on 15 January 1941, the group flew B-17s and conducted patrols off the northwest coast of the United States until February 1942. Then, it was reequipped with B-24s to serve as an operational training and replacement unit. During this period, the 39th was stationed at Davis-Monthan Field in Arizona.

On 1 April 1944, the group converted to B-29s. After a training period at Smoky Hill Army Airfield in Kansas, the 39th deployed to Guam on 18 February 1945. From North Field on the island, it began conducting bombing missions as directed by Twentieth Air Force. The 39th bombed enemy held Madang in April 1945 and conducted its first mission against the Japanese home islands, hitting the Hodagaya chemical plant at Koiyama on 12 April 1945. The group supported the invasion of Okinawa by bombing Kamikaze airfields. From then until the end of the war, the 39th carried out numerous raids on Japan.

Following VJ-Day, the 39th group dropped food and supplies to Allied Prisoners of War (POW) and took part in show-of-force missions. The 39th BG received two Distinguished Unit Citations for notable action during bombing missions over Japan. The group later returned to the United States where it inactivated on 27 December 1945.

As part of an effort to bring units with combat history into the theater, USAFE inactivated Incirlik’s 7216th ABG and activated the 39th Tactical Group (TACG) in its place at Incirlik on 1 April 1966. The Group was assigned to the 7217th Air Division, also known as TUSLOG, and assumed control of permanent support units and hosted rotational squadrons conducting training and maintaining NATO alert at Incirlik.

After the Lebanon crisis, TAC began deployments of F-100 fighter squadrons on 100-day rotations to Incirlik from the U.S. However, TAC transferred the 401st TFW to USAFE in April 1966, and with that the responsibility to deploy fighter squadrons to Incirlik became USAFE’s. The 401 TFW and its F-100s had recently moved from England AFB to Torrejon AB, and also assumed alert duty at Aviano AB, Italy. These rotational squadrons supported NATO plans and forces. The last F-100s departed Incirlik in January 1970 when F-4s from units in Germany relieved them for approximately 6 months. During the break, the 401st converted to F-4s, then resumed rotations in July. The flying mission at Incirlik further diversified in 1970 as a result of the 1969 coup in Libya that brought Muammar Qaddafi to power. After successfully overthrowing the King of Libya, the Revolutionary Command Council asked the US to remove its forces, thus prompting USAFE to more fully utilize other training areas, such as Incirlik.

During a brief interlude in the status of HQ TUSLOG, the 39th TACG was directly assigned to Sixteenth Air Force from September 1970 to October 1971, when TUSLOG was reinstated and assumed control over USAF units in Turkey. The 39th would remain assigned to HQ TUSLOG until that organization was dismantled in 1992-1993. On 17 July 1992, the 39th TACG was once again directly assigned to Sixteenth Air Force.

Operations for Incirlik and the 39th accelerated quickly with the onset of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM from August 1990 through March 1991. During the operational campaign of DESERT STORM, the 39th TACG was under the operational control of the 7440th Composite Wing (Provisional) and was responsible for supporting the large number of aircraft and personnel pouring into the base.
After the end of combat actions, the fast pace of operations continued for Incirlik and the 39th as Operations PROVIDE COMFORT I and II also used Incirlik as the hub of operations. Because of the size and scope of these operations, USAFE redesignated the unit as the 39th Wing (WG) on 1 October 1993. The organization was restructured to make it a standard Air Force objective wing, consisting of operations, logistics, support, and medical groups. This organizational change gave deploying squadrons a structure they were familiar with, enabling the wing to better fulfill its support role. The wing also became the parent unit for all air base support functions and geographically separated units in Turkey.

Operation PROVIDE COMFORT II was succeeded in January 1997 by Operation NORTHERN WATCH, which was responsible for the execution of a no-fly zone over northern Iraq. On 15 September 1997, USAFE inactivated the 7440th and activated the 39th Air and Space Expeditionary Wing (ASEW) in its place. The 39 ASEW concept sought to organize deploying squadrons into a familiar structure, and relied on temporary duty augmentees to provide adequate numbers of personnel to support the mission. The 39th Wing commander, dual-hatted as the commander of the 39 ASEW, exercised administrative control over all USAF forces assigned to the task force.

The final years of the 1990s saw Incirlik AB busy as ever. On 27 June 1998, an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale hit Incirlik AB, causing extensive damage to base structures and leaving most base residents without power for several hours. One week later, on 4 July 1998, a second earthquake shook Incirlik residents, further damaging buildings and again causing power to be lost. Following the two earthquakes, the base hired additional personnel for 60 days to assist in repairing the damage. The 39th Wing spent over $7 million to repair damaged buildings.

On 23 July 1998, workers from the Turkish labor union Harb-Is began a labor strike. The workers, employed at Incirlik AB, Izmir AS, and the Office of Defense Cooperation in Ankara were involved in the strike lasting 69 days. The 39th WG also provided humanitarian assistance following two devastating earthquakes in northwest Turkey. The two earthquakes occurred on 17 August 1999 and 12 November 1999, killing thousands and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. Members of the 39 WG deployed to the Istanbul area to aid in search and recovery operations and to help in the repair of the power and water systems.

Following the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the 39th Wing inherited a portion of the humanitarian mission of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The humanitarian operation was designed to provide relief for the oppressed and starving people of Afghanistan. The wing provided mission airlift and tanker support, and provided the refueling bridge for those airlift aircraft continuing their missions into the airspace over Afghanistan. The first mission occurred on 8 October 2001. Aircraft, usually the Air Force’s newest transport frame – the C-17 Globemaster III, airdropped the humanitarian daily rations into areas in Afghanistan where they were most needed.

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM was followed in 2003 by Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, with its aim of ending the regime of Saddam Hussein and freeing the people of Iraq. With the beginning of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM on 19 March 2003, ONW finally ended. ONW flew its last patrol 17 March 2003 to close a successful 12-year mission to contain the Iraqi military. All of the ONW personnel and assets had departed Incirlik as ONW officially drew to a close on 1 May 2003. As a result of the dramatic decrease in activity and as the demand for expeditionary support grew smaller, USAFE inactivated the 39th ASEW. Later, because of the fluctuating pace of operations at the base after major combat operations ceased, the USAF returned the 39th to group status as the 39th Air Base Group (ABG) on 16 July 2003. However, that change only lasted eight months as the USAF once again redesignated it as the 39th Air Base Wing on 12 March 2004.

Izmir Installations and Cigli Base History

Almost from the beginning, the histories of both the USAFE support activities at Izmir and Cigli Air Base were intermingled. Headquarters USAFE activated the 7266th Support Squadron, known as TUSLOG Det 20 under the Turkey cover plan, in Izmir city on 15 November 1955 to support NATO's
LANDSOUTHEAST and SIXATAF headquarters. Previously, beginning in 1952, U.S. personnel in Izmir received support from the U.S. Navy’s Sixth Fleet.

In April 1955, the United States began constructing Cigli Air Base, a few miles northeast of Izmir, as a SAC B-47 post-strike recovery airstrip. The 9,000-foot concrete runway was completed in September 1956, and Cigli AB was activated as a USAFE base in February 1961.

Starting in 1959, the base was built up for a SM-78 Jupiter Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) squadron. On 1 July 1959, most of TUSLOG Det 20 moved to Cigli Air Base, and on 5 July 1962, merged with USAFE's 7231st Technical Training Group to become the 7231st Combat Support Group, or TUSLOG Det 116.

Then, in March 1963, with the withdrawal of the Jupiters, TAC began rotating fighter squadrons to Cigli to meet NATO alert requirements. Following this, in April 1966, the 41st Tactical Group activated at Cigli to replace the 7231st CSG, retaining the TUSLOG Det 116 cover designation, while the 41st Combat Support Squadron assumed the cover identification of TUSLOG Det 118. At the same time, USAFE fighters from Third Air Force took over rotational alert duties at Cigli in June 1966.

As part of Project REDCOSTE reductions, USAFE ended fighter rotations to Cigli and turned the base over to the Turkish Air Force on 1 July 1970. The 41st TACG inactivated, and TUSLOG Det 118 moved back to downtown Izmir as the 7241st Support Squadron, operating out of a variety of leased facilities. In 1970, the unit was briefly reassigned from HQ TUSLOG to the 39th Tactical Group at Incirlik AB, then later that year directly to Headquarters Sixteenth Air Force. The unit returned to assignment under HQ TUSLOG again in December 1971. On 1 January 1973, USAFE redesignated the unit as the 7241st Air Base Squadron, upgrading it to an air base group on 1 August 1980. On 1 October 1982, the TUSLOG cover designation was finally dropped.

The 7241st ABG continually worked towards the elimination of its need to work out of widely scattered facilities in Izmir. In 1988, a large number of functions moved into the new leased Akin Building, and the group developed plans to obtain an air station property under Project Izmir 95.

On 15 June 1993, the host unit was changed back to an air base squadron and renamed the 741st ABS. The most recent change came on 1 November 1994, when the squadron was renamed the 425th Air Base Squadron. The unit’s primary mission continued to focus on support for all U.S. and NATO units in Izmir, as well as the management of U.S. support to Cigli AB. Although some actions were taken in 2001 and 2002 to reduce the size of personnel at Izmir because of security concerns, the station and 425th ABS recently gained a new and increased focus when NATO announced in June 2003 that it was moving the headquarters of its AFSOUTH air component, currently called AIRSOUTH, from Naples, Italy, to the former LANDSOUTHEAST headquarters at Izmir.

Nouasseur Base History

In late 1950 and early 1951, the U.S. and French governments signed agreements for the construction and use of five air bases in then French Morocco, of which only three, Nouasseur, Ben Guerir, and Sidi Slimane, were actually built. Air Force construction at Nouasseur, which was located just outside
of Casablanca, began on 22 April 1951, and the base opened for flight operations on 15 December 1951. The USAFE's 80th Air Depot Wing arrived in July 1951 to assume control of the facilities. The wing was later replaced by the 7280th Air Depot Wing on 8 June 1953, but nine months later USAFE inactivated it in March 1954, as the Air Materiel Command Europe (AMFE) assumed control of the base's depot. On 1 January 1956, the depot transferred to Air Materiel Command's Air Materiel Force European Area, and it was known as Southern Air Materiel Area. Nouasseur AB's original host unit was the 7280th ABG, which was replaced on 1 June 1956 by Air Materiel Command's 3153d ABG. When Nouasseur became a SAC asset assigned to Sixteenth Air Force on 1 July 1958, the 3922d ABG assumed responsibility for the base. The 3922d later redesignated a Combat Support Group on 1 May 1959.

The SAC began bomber rotations at Nouasseur in late 1951 with an initial task force of B-36s. Later, USAFE began fighter training deployments to the field in September 1952, which was followed by reconnaissance training in the mid-1950's. The 357th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron (FIS) was reassigned from Air Defense Command (ADC) to USAFE, and was stationed at Nouasseur for air defense from June 1953 until it inactivated in March 1960. Rotational B-47 Reflex operations began at Nouasseur on 21 February 1958. The 4310th Air Division, which was responsible for overseeing Sixteenth Air Force's bases in Morocco, moved from Sidi Slimane to Nouasseur on 15 June 1958.

While operations at Nouasseur and the other Moroccan bases continued into the early 1960s, a December 1959 meeting between President Eisenhower and Morocco's King Mohammed V at Nouasseur culminated in the latter's request for a withdrawal of all U.S. military from Morocco by the end of 1963. In compliance with that request, Sixteenth Air Force began ending Reflex operations at the Moroccan base in June 1963, and the last Reflex aircraft departed Nouasseur on 30 June. As part of the closure actions, the 4310th Air Division inactivated on 15 August 1963. In addition, Nouasseur's host unit, the 3922d CSG, inactivated the same day with the 3922d ABS (Provisional) remaining to complete the withdrawal from the base. Phase out efforts were complete by 20 December 1963, when the 3922d ABS (P) inactivated, and the U.S. turned the base over to Moroccan government. The airfield at Nouasseur converted to civilian use and was eventually named Casablanca Mohammed V International Airport.

The last B-47 departs Nouasseur AB on 30 June 1963
Wheelus Base History

Originally built by the Italian Air Force in 1923, the fighter strip was known as Mellaha, the Arabic name for the local area. The British Eighth Army captured the base in January 1943, and the RAF used it as a fighter base until November of that year. The AAF began using it as a bomber base in the spring of 1944 after the RAF had abandoned the base. Mellaha was taken over by Air Transport Command (ATC) on 15 April 1945, and renamed Wheelus Airfield on 17 May 1945. After being declared surplus to ATC’s need, the base was transferred to USAFE’s European Air Transport Service (EATS) on 30 June 1947. Wheelus was renamed Tripoli Air Base on 15 September 1947 and used for USAFE air transport needs in North Africa and the Middle East. In December 1947, Wheelus also began operating a fighter gunnery camp for USAFE’s F-47s because of its ideal fair weather conditions. The fighter training mission was one that Wheelus would continually conduct over the next two decades.

Once again, the base was renamed Wheelus Air Base on 2 April 1948, and primary responsibility transferred to ATC’s successor, the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) on 1 June 1948. Although initiated in 1949, the base began hosting regular SAC bomber deployments in November 1950. On 24 December 1951, Libya achieved Independence and signed a base rights agreement with the United States. Wheelus AB was reassigned to USAFE on 1 January 1953 along with its host 1603d Air Transport Wing. The 431st Fighter-Interceptor Squadron was reassigned for air defense in July 1953 and moved to Zaragoza in September 1958.

Wheelus also served as Headquarters, Seventeenth Air Force from August 1956 until November 1959. Wheelus also became USAFE's Weapons Training Center in March 1957, with the 7272d Air Base Wing serving as host unit, which later redesignated as the 7272d Flying Training Wing (FTW) in 1964. In August 1963, the Libyan government activated the Royal Libyan Air Force (RLAF) at Wheelus, and the USAFE Weapons Training Center was responsible for training the RLAF at the base. The USAFE later assigned the 7272d FTW to Sixteenth Air Force in December 1968, as part of the transfer of responsibility for the Mediterranean theater from Seventeenth Air Force to Sixteenth Air Force.

With the overthrow of the Libyan king by Lieutenant Colonel Qaddafi and the Revolutionary Council in September 1969, all training at Wheelus came to a halt. Over the course of the next three months, the new revolutionary government repeatedly demanded that the U.S. withdraw all of its forces from the country. The U.S. officially agreed to the demands, and through the first half of 1970, USAFE began looking at other countries for training ranges. The base was vacated, its facilities finally turned over to the Libyan government, and the 7272d Flying Training Wing inactivated on 11 June 1970.
SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE LINEAGE & HONORS

Originated as a separate operating agency, this postwar numbered air force has served both Strategic Air Command and United States Air Forces in Europe. The Sixteenth Air Force has been the operational air force for USAF combat operations in NATO’s Southern Region and the Balkans since its move to Aviano AB, Italy, in 1992.

Lineage

Established as Joint United States Military Group, Air Administration (Spain), and activated as a separate operating agency (SOA) of the USAF on 20 May 1954. Redesignated: Sixteenth Air Force on 15 Jul 1956.

Assignments

Separate operating agency (SOA) of the USAF on 20 May 1954; assigned to Strategic Air Command on 1 Jul 1957, losing SOA status; assigned to United States Air Forces in Europe on 15 Apr 1966–.

Components

**Air Divisions:** 65th Air Division (Defense) 8 Apr 1957-1 Jul 1960; 4310th Air Division 15 Jan 1958-15 Aug 1963; 7217th Air Division (Command) (also identified as HQ TUSLOG) 23 Oct 1968-9 Sep 1970.


Stations
Madrid, Spain, 20 May 1954; Torrejon AB, Spain, 1 Feb 1958; Aviano AB, Italy, 10 Aug 1992–.

Honors

Service Streamers. None.


Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers. None.


Emblem

Azure, a bend of the like seme’ of mullets and fimbriated Argent, overall the numeral “16” Or, all within a diminished bordure Or.

Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed with the designation “SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE” in Blue letters.

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 bend bordered in white indicates the adherence to the unit mission. The stars signify the high quality of the rank and file within the organization. The large numerals “16” show pride of performance. Approved by CSAF 17 Mar 1994 and updated on 6 Aug 2003.
**SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE COMMANDERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start Date – End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

* Dual-hatted as COMAIRSOUTH. See COMAIRSOUTH list for overlapping commanders.
**NATO SOUTHERN REGION AIR COMMANDERS**

*(COMAIRSOUTH)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lt. Gen. Ralph P. Swofford, Jr.</td>
<td>4 May 1960 – 2 June 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt. Gen. John S. Hardy</td>
<td>1 November 1966 – 1 August 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt. Gen. William E. Brown, Jr.**</td>
<td>1 August 1982 – 5 October 1984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All USAF officers assigned as AIRSOUTH commanders have been Lieutenant Generals, except Major General Luigi Bianchi, Italian Air Force, the AIRSOUTH deputy commander who served as interim acting commander.

** Dual-hatted as Sixteenth Air Force Commander. Ellis was initially serving as COMAIRSOUTH, then was appointed as Sixteenth’s Commander in May 1973; and later, Druen continued to serve as COMAIRSOUTH after he relinquished command of Sixteenth Air Force in June 1981. Likewise, Ashy was initially serving as COMAIRSOUTH since December 1992 and later assumed the additional command of Sixteenth Air Force in January 1994.