



Fact Sheet

United States Air Force

TORREJON AIR BASE, SPAIN
401st Tactical Fighter Wing



Torrejon Air Base is located one and one-half miles (two kilometers) north of Torrejon de Ardoz, nine miles (15 kilometers) east-northeast of Barajas International Airport; 14 miles (24 kilometers) east-northeast of Madrid, and six miles (10 kilometers) west-southwest of Alcala de Henares, Spain.

Torrejon Air Base supports a large population. More than 3,800 military personnel are assigned to the installation, while some 1,100 civilians work for the U.S. Air Force and associated agencies on the base.

Mission

The 401st Tactical Fighter Wing is the principal operating and host unit of Torrejon Air Base. Its mission in support of U.S. Air Forces in Europe is to develop and maintain the capability of implementing war plans and alert orders; to develop techniques and tactics for air superiority, close air support and interdiction operations and to develop mobility plans for quick deployment to support war plans and operations. The wing also maintains support units and installations in readiness for support of wing combat operations and ensures the security of the forces and the installations.

The 401st Tactical Fighter Wing maintains three F-16 squadrons, the 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 613th Tactical Fighter Squadron, and 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron.

401st Tactical Fighter Wing History

The 401st Tactical Fighter Wing began as the 401st Bombardment Group (Heavy) April 1, 1943, at Ephrata Army Air Base, Wash.

The Group trained in B-17s at Geiger Field, Wash., and Great Falls Air Force Base, Mont. In November 1943, it moved at Deenethrope, England, where it served with the 8th Air Force, operating against strategic targets, until April 1945. The Group also participated in the Normandy invasion, the breakthrough at St. Lo and the Battle of the Bulge.

In May 1945 the 401st Bombardment Group returned to the United States. The group was relocated at Sioux Falls Army Air Field, S.D. The group was deactivated Aug. 28, 1945.

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Current as of October 1987

Reactivated in the Air Force Reserves June 26, 1947, at Brooks Field, Texas, the group was redesignated the 401st Bombardment Group (Medium). It was called to active service in May 1951, assigned to the Strategic Air Command and inactivated the following month.

Alexandria Air Force Base, La., became the home of the 401st Fighter Bomber Group when it was redesignated and reactivated Feb. 8, 1954, equipped with F-86 Sabre jets and assigned to the Tactical Air Command. The aircraft assigned to the 612th, 613th, and 614th Fighter Bomber Squadrons were changed to F-84 Thunderstreaks shortly after reactivation and in June 1956, the 401st Fighter Bomber Group once again became an F-86 unit. One year later, the group began its conversion to the F-100 Super Sabres. The 612th Fighter Bomber Squadron received the first 23 F-100s in May 1957.

Upgraded to a wing Sept. 25, 1957, it gained its present designation as the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing, July 1, 1958. When the wing came to Torrejon Air Base in April 1966, the unit added the 307th and 353rd Tactical Fighter Squadrons to replace the 612th and 614th Tactical Fighter Squadrons which were serving in Southeast Asia. The 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron and 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron returned to their parent wing in 1971, after distinguished war service, and the 307th Tactical Fighter Squadron and 353rd Tactical Fighter Squadron were retired to Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, S.C., for inactivation.

With the delivery of a newer aircraft to the wing in July 1970, the wing was completely converted from the F-100 to the F-4E Phantom II.

In September 1973, the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing began swapping F-4E aircraft for the F-4C Phantoms, with the 613th Tactical Fighter Squadron receiving the first four F-4Cs Sept. 14, 1973. The 401st Tactical Fighter Wing was flying F-4C Phantoms exclusively by the end of the calendar year. The wing began converting to F-4Ds Aug. 25, 1978 and completed the conversion in 1979. In February 1983, the wing began converting to the F-16 Fighting Falcon and completed the conversion in January 1984.

Achievements and Honors

Distinguished Unit Citation Jan. 11, 1944, and Feb. 20, 1944; Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, for the period Jan. 1, 1963 to Dec. 31, 1963; Air Offense Europe for the period July 4, 1942 to June 5, 1944; Central Europe for the period March 22, 1945 to May 11, 1945; Normandy Campaign for the period June 6, 1944 to March 21, 1945; and Northern France Campaign for the period July 25, 1944 to Sept. 14, 1944.

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Aircraft Used

1943 - 1945: B-17G Flying Fortress
1947 - 1949: AT-6
1947 - 1949: AT-11
1949 - 1950: B-29
1950 - 1951: B-50
1954 - 1955: F-86F Sabre Jets
1955 - 1956: F-84 Thunderstreaks
1956 - 1957: F-86F Sabre Jets
1957 - 1971: F-100D Super Sabres
1970 - 1973: F-4E Phantom
1973 - 1979: F-4C Phantom
1979 - 1984: F-4D Phantom
1984 - present: F-16 Fighting Falcon

Wing Insignia

"The Sky is Our Arena" is the motto inscribed on the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing emblem. The emblem is symbolic of the wing's primary mission. The light blue background represents the sky, the primary theater of operations. The four lances denote the weapons stacked ready for instant use as needed. A black and white checkerboard battlefield, crossing the lances in a horizontal position, indicates our wing is willing to go into battle anywhere in the sky. The colors of the squadrons attached to the wing, forming a banner which sweeps across the emblem, indicates support to the overall Air Force mission. The four colors represent the original four squadrons assigned to the 401st; the 612th, 613th, 614th and 615th.

Torrejon Air Base History

In 1952, the United States entered into negotiations with Spain to obtain strategic bomber and naval bases there. With the phase-out of the B-50 and B-36 bombers, Strategic Air Command needed forward operating bases, in addition to those already acquired in Morocco, for its new B-47 jet medium bombers and required tanker support. The United States obtained the right to build and "joint use" air bases in Spain when the two nations signed the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement in September 1953.

Following the signing of the agreement, a site was selected at Torrejon, Spain, and construction of the installation began. The site was dedicated as Torrejon Air Base Sept. 23, 1956. Six weeks later Torrejon Air base was assigned to 16th Air Force, the command designated to oversee Strategic Air Command operations in Spain and Morocco.

It wasn't until June 1, 1957 the Torrejon Air Base was activated. A month later 16th Air Force along with other U.S. facilities in Spain, were reassigned to SAC.

From 1958 until 1965, Torrejon Air Base also supported the 65th Air Division, which had responsibility in conjunction with the Spanish air force for air defense of Spain. In the mid-1960s, with the closure of U.S. bases in France, Torrejon Air Base became the main airlift access point to Southern Region and Mediterranean bases.

In the early 1960s, Tactical Air Command began supporting NATO strike commitments at forward operating bases in NATO's Southern Region. This was accomplished by rotating fighter squadrons from the United States to bases in Italy and Turkey. By 1966, TAC's commitment to the Vietnam War reduced its ability to support the rotational program. In April 1966, Headquarters Air Force officials reassigned the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing with its three fighter squadrons, to Torrejon Air Base for this purpose. At the same time, Headquarters 16th Air Force and Torrejon AB, Spain, were reassigned to U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

In its 20 years at Torrejon, the 401st TFW mission has grown to include, in addition to NATO forward area commitments, support of U.S. space shuttle flights, joint exercises with NATO forces in Portugal and the southern region, and participation in the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force. The 401st TFW remains the only U.S. Air Force tactical combat force based in 16th Air Force.

Associate Units

Torrejon Air Base, Spain is also the home of the 16th Air Force headquarters. The 16th Air Force commander's authority extends to other U.S. air bases in the Mediterranean theater.

The 1989th Information Systems Wing plans, programs, budgets, operates and maintains command and control communications and air traffic services in support of the U.S. Air Force and other agencies in Spain. The wing also provides communication-electronics and air traffic control staff support to 16th Air Force which has operational responsibility for U.S. Air Force operations throughout the Mediterranean area.

The 625th Military Airlift Support Group operates the terminal facility supporting the movement of passengers, cargo, mail and aircraft.

The 2186th Information Systems Squadron has responsibility for four information systems detachments that are part of the Defense Communications Agency's tropospheric scatter wide-band system that carries communications throughout the Mediterranean area.