



ORGANIZATION, MISSION & HISTORY OF MORÓN AB



Mission

Provide expeditionary combat support while assuring the finest quality of life for Team Morón and transiting forces

Vision

Build and maintain a superior expeditionary global combat support team at Morón

ORGANIZATION AND MISSION

The 496th Air Base Squadron is the USAFE host organization at Moron Air Base. The mission is to provide expeditionary combat support while assuring the finest quality of life for Team Morón and transiting forces. The 496th Air Base Squadron does this by operating and maintaining a key strategic airhead in a high state of readiness to receive on short notice forces in support of United Nations, NATO, and US contingency and exercise operations. There are no USAF aircraft stationed at Moron Air Base.

The Squadron provides oversight of contractor personnel who actually maintain the base and provide services through the Spanish Base Maintenance Contract. Additionally, Moron Air Base receives forces and fully activates as a NASA Transoceanic Abort Landing site for space shuttle launches.

HISTORY

1953-1959

Morón Air Base is located in southern Spain approximately 35 miles southeast of the city of Sevilla and 75 miles northeast of Rota Naval Station. Negotiations for bases in Spain were conducted between June 1951 and September 1953 under the direction of a Joint United States Military Group, commanded by Major General A. W. Kissner. The negotiations were concluded with the establishment of the Spanish-American air bases, including Morón Air Base, via a 10 year agreement between the US and Spanish Governments. The negotiations were formalized with the signature of Ambassador Dunn of the United States on 26 September 1953.

Construction of Morón Air Base, under the field direction of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, continued for three years. On 1 June 1957, the 3973rd Air Base Group at Morón Air Base was formally activated as part of Sixteenth Air Force assigned to the Strategic Air Command (SAC).

On 13 May 1958, the first flight of B-47s were assigned to Morón Air Base to conduct Reflex operations, and 6 weeks later the first rotational fighter squadron, F-100s from George AFB, CA, arrived for temporary duty to conduct air defense alert. Of note, Major Chuck Yeager (Retired Brig General, USAF) was assigned to Moron with the fighter unit.

1960-1969

In April 1960, Morón Air Base was officially placed under the command of Colonel Henry C. Godman. Brown-Raymond -Walsh were the contract representatives and responsible for the base from the initial date of construction until this ceremony. 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 fueling sortie was generated. On 3 April 1963 the last B-47 aircraft departed Morón. On 26 September 1963 the US Spanish bilateral agreement was extended for five additional years.

On 15 April 1966, the mission of Sixteenth Air Force and Morón Air Base transferred from SAC to United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE). The mission changed to communications support, "fair weather" flying operations of Temporary Duty (TDY) RF-4 and RF-101 reconnaissance units and the support of air rescue operations provided by the 67 ARRS.

In 1969, the USAFE Programming Plan 4406-09 (REDCOSTE) directed a mission change for Morón Air Base to that of a Standby Dispersal Base (SDB). The host unit, the 7473rd Combat Support Group, became the 7473rd Combat Support Squadron (CSS) with a reduction of military personnel to approximately 400 members. In addition, TDY flying activities were curtailed and replaced by occasional exercise flying.

1990-1999

In August 1990, SAC deployed 22 KC-135 and KC-10 tankers to support Operation DESERT SHIELD. In January 1991, SAC changed Morón Air Base from refueling to bomber operations for DESERT STORM. The 801st Bomb Wing (Provisional) at Morón Air Base consisted of 24 B-52s, 3 KC-135s and over 2,800 personnel. This was the largest deployed bomber wing during the war. The 801st was under the command of Colonel Ronald C. Marcotte, now a Lieutenant General in command of Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB, Illinois.

On 1 June 1993, the 7120th Air Base Flight was re-designated the 712th Air Base Flight.

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 draw down of USAFE units at Torrejon AB, Spain, San Vito AS, Italy and Iraklion AS, Greece. Along with the increased responsibility came a new unit designation. The 712th Air Base Flight became the 496th Air Base Flight on 1 July 1994, under the newly formed 616th Regional Support Group located at Aviano Air Base, Italy.

In NATO terms, Morón Air Base remained a standby base, but a 14 Dec 95, HQ USAFE/XP message re-designated Morón Air Base as a limited base. This designation recognizes that Morón Air Base is "austerely manned" and "has no permanently assigned operational tactical forces," but does have "facilities for communications, air traffic control navigational aids, maintenance, base supply, billeting, recreation, messing, transportation, and operational support."

In 1996, the base was the staging area for more than 30 contingency missions, including relief operations in Africa and more than a dozen fighter refueling operations.

In 1997, Morón welcomed the addition of a 15 person AF-SPACECOM Space Surveillance Unit - detached from the 18 SPSS at Edwards AFB, California. The unit operates and electro-optical telescope under the direction of USSPACECOM in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In February 1999 Morón became the home of the 92nd AEW - tasked with providing fuel to OPERATION ALLIED FORCE. In addition to serving as the HQ 92nd AEW (serving units in France, Crete, Sicily and Spain), Morón hosted 37 tankers (KC-135 and KC-10) and 800 personnel. The 92nd AEW became the largest Tanker Wing since the Vietnam War, while Morón held the distinction of being the largest tanker base during the Kosovo war. The 92nd AEW was commanded by Col Vern M. Findley -- now a Brigadier General in command of the 437th Airlift Wing in Charleston AFB, South Carolina.

On 12 Oct 1999 more than 60 people and four KC-135Rs deployed to provide the backbone of support to the initial air expeditionary force.



2000-PRESENT

Since January 2000, Morón's mission has matured to make the base a critical link in supporting the rotation of Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEF) -- deployed in EUCOM and CENTCOM Areas of Responsibilities. Tanker Task Forces (KC-135 and KC-10), Fighter Units from the Air Force and Marine Corps, and airlifters (C-141, C-17 and C-5s) use Morón as a staging base for AEF operations. The base also frequently welcomes rotating US Army personnel.

Morón staffing swells during these operations with temporary duty personnel (known as Expeditionary Combat Support) supplementing the contract, civilian and active-duty personnel. In the past, active-duty personnel filled the temporary duty slots. However now the slots are almost entirely with Air Reserve Component personnel, making Morón one of the largest users of ARC personnel in Europe. In conjunction with efforts and guidance from 38th CSW, 16th AF, HQ USAFE and HQ AMC, Morón has forged a lasting partnership with the Air Reserve Command, located at Warner-Robins AFB, Georgia.



1970-1979

Phase-down activities were complete in early 1971. In November 1971, Morón Air Base was re-designated to a "modified caretaker status." Torrejon Air Base was designated as the Primary Support Base (PSB) with support services to start in April 1972. Military personnel were reduced to a staff of approximately 100 members of the 7473 CSS. All flying activity was halted except for occasional exercises. Civil Engineering, Supply, and Transportation functions were contracted under the Spain Base Maintenance Contract (SBMC), which became operational in July 1972.

In February 1976, congressional action known as the "Nunn Amendment" identified reductions and realignments, and contracting of most military authorizations at Morón Air Base. Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) approval followed in April 1976, and USAFE was directed to implement these reductions. The 7473 CSS was deactivated on 31 May 1976, and OL-A, 401 TFW was established on 1 June 1976. Further reorganization took place when OL-A, 401 TFW was deactivated on 31 July 1976, and Detachment 2, 401 TFW was established on 1 August 1976. USAFE/XP letter dated 16 August 1976, Subject P program Guidance Letter Morón Air Base Standby Deployment Base (SDB), implemented reduction actions and expansion of the Base Maintenance Contract (BMC) to include Civil Engineering, Services, Transportation, Supply, Housing Supply, Fuels, AGE 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 Air Base. By September 1977, all phase down actions were completed and the base military, civilian, contractor and tenant population stabilized at 400, consisting of more than 300 contractor personnel and approximately 30 Det. 2, 401 TFW personnel.

On 19 March 1979, HQ USAFE directed, through the BMC Executive Committee, that a 25 percent reduction in the contractor work force be considered, resulting in a modification to the BMC known as "MOD 89." Contractor manning was reduced to about 220 personnel by the beginning of 1980.

1980-1989

Detachment 2 personnel authorizations fell to 20 during the same period. The new contract specified further reductions in conjunction with increased contractor productivity. The first round of reductions was completed in December 1980, and contractor authorized personnel dropped to 198 while Det 2 authorized manpower was reduced to 14. The second round of reductions in April 1982, decreased contract manning to 178 assigned personnel. The standby mission of the base continued, although standards of facility maintenance were reduced in conjunction with the shrinking work force. During calendar years 1982 and 1983, there were minor work scope increases to the BMC, which resulted in a slight increase of contracting manning. Det 2, 401 TFW also gained two additional authorizations.

The 14 May 1983 US Spanish bilateral Agreement of Friendship, Defense and Cooperation authorized the United States to station up to 15 tanker aircraft at Morón Air Base. A manpower change request was developed to increase blue-suit manning, based on the tanker task force and the increased War Reserve Materiel (WRM) requirements. The Morón Air Base work force, including all military, civilian, contractor and tenant personnel, was approximately 300 personnel.

In 1983, Morón Air Base began hosting multiple exercises and has since developed into a major peacetime staging base. During FY 86, Morón Air Base hosted over 4,000 TDY personnel from all services and had active flying missions for over 180 days of the year.

In 1984, Morón became a NASA Space Shuttle Transoceanic Abort Landing Site. Since that time, Morón and NASA have developed a lasting partnership in service to Shuttle ventures.

In March 1984, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as a Transoceanic Abort Landing (TAL) site for the space shuttle program selected Morón Air Base. Special navigation and landing aids are in place, and personnel are highly trained to recover landing of the orbiter vehicle. Major enhancements were completed in 1986, and included the permanent installation of a Microwave Landing System. Morón Air Base is the only TAL site in the world situated to support high, mid, and low inclination launches. For this reason, Morón Air Base activates for almost all space shuttle launches.

On 1 November 1989, Det 2, 401 TFW became the 7120th Air Base Flight under 16th Air Force.

