

CROSSROADS

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Lajes Field, Azores, Portugal

"6-5...
IN THE FIGHT!"

FY 2013



533
SORTIES

5,472
LODGED



3,13 M
gallons
FUEL ISSUED

Popular Numbers

Medical Appointment:

Base: 535-3261
Off base: 295-573-261
Base Alt: 535-1089
Off base Alt: 295-571-089

Emergency:

Base: 911
Off base: 295-571-911

Lajes Against Drunk Driving:

Fri & Sat: 295-57-5233

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator:

24/7: 535-7272
Off base: 966-677-266

Weekend Weather Forecast

Saturday (a.m. / p.m.)

Mostly Cloudy
Wind SW 17 - 29 mph
SSW 21 - 32 mph
LOW 13C / 56F
HIGH 17C / 62F

Sunday (a.m. / p.m.)

Mostly Cloudy w Showers
Wind S 29 - 40 mph
SSE 29 - 40 mph
LOW 16C / 60F
HIGH 18C / 64F

From The Big Apple to Las Vegas: Lajes Airman realizes Thunderbirds dream



Staff Sgt. Gustavo Cifuentes, 65th Operations Support Squadron Transient Alert/Crash Recovery technician, welcomes a Swedish Air Force pilot returning from Red Flag at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., May 5. Cifuentes, an F-16 crew chief, has been selected to join the Air Force Thunderbirds at Nellis AFB. Upon joining the team, he will complete the Thunderbirds' "21-Day Program," a rigorous training and orientation period. (Photo by Lucas Silva)

By 1st Lt. Mark Graff,
65th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

Riding in his father's New York City taxi cab as a young boy, Gustavo Cifuentes saw an Air Force Thunderbird for the first time. To his surprise, the uniquely styled F-16 wasn't flying overhead, but rather on static display on one of the city's most famous streets.

"The Thunderbirds somehow managed to get one of their aircraft on Park Avenue. They were doing a promotional tour and that was the first time I got to see a Thunderbird," said Cifuentes, an F-16 crew chief currently assigned to Lajes Field's 65th Operations Support Squadron.

Now a Staff Sergeant in the Air Force, Cifuentes' relationship with the Thunderbirds has come full circle; from that first glimpse of the jet, to his recent selection to join the Air Force's aerial demonstration team later this year.

Reflecting on that moment more than 20 years ago, the opportunity to serve on the Air Force's demonstration team is hard to believe, said Cifuentes.

"It's a very humbling experience to be selected to join the Thunderbirds. It's something surreal. Who would believe that 20-plus years later, I would be joining (the Thunderbirds)?" said Cifuentes, who will become one of

more than 120 enlisted Thunderbirds.

As Columbian immigrants to America in the 1980s, the Cifuentes family came from humble beginnings. Before eventually settling in Miami, in search of a better life for his family, Cifuentes' father took the family to New York City.

Despite some obstacles, his family's time in New York City meant a bright future, said Cifuentes. In Cifuentes' case, the path to a bright future led him to the Air Force.

"Being a family of immigrants that came from Columbia, my family came here and all they had were their clothes on their back, but they were hard workers," said Cifuentes. "My mom is now a preschool teacher and my dad owns his own company. They're living the American dream and I'm grateful to this country and joining the Air Force' was pretty much my conclusion (on) how I could live a better life (like my parents)."

Some seven years into his Air Force career, with the encouragement of his wife and some fellow servicemembers previously assigned to the Thunderbirds, Cifuentes revisited his childhood interest in the Thunderbirds and applied to the team.

"I spoke with my wife and I just asked her, 'What would you think of me giving the Thunderbirds a try?' I was

To see more on "Thunderbirds" see page 3

Today's Fight—Airmen and Families—Host Nation Relationship—Future Challenges



Staff Sgt. Gustavo Cifuentes, 65th Operations Support Squadron Transient Alert/Crash Recovery technician marshals Swedish Air Force Saab JAS 39 Gripen fighter jet returning from Red Flag at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., May 5. (Photo by Lucas Silva)

"Thunderbirds" from page 1

stationed at Nellis (Air Force Base) before and so my friends would tell me, 'Gus you should come join.' But I felt that the time now, is right," said Cifuentes.

Cifuentes, with his wife's buy-in, submitted his application to the Thunderbirds and was selected for the team only weeks later, a quick turnaround that Cifuentes attributes to the team's offseason from performances.

The notification came as something of a surprise for both Cifuentes, and his wife.

"I check my emails from home sometimes, and the next thing you know, I see 'congratulations' and my orders," said Cifuentes, who saw the email late at night. "The next thing I did was wake up my wife and I told her that I got picked. She thought that something bad had happened."

Upon arriving at Nellis AFB, home of the Thunderbirds, Cifuentes will complete the Thunderbirds' "21-Day Program," which is a rigorous training program and orientation period according to the team's website.

Cifuentes' selection to the Thunderbirds comes as no surprise to squadron leadership, said Lt. Col. Shawn Cotton, 65th Operations Support Squadron commander.

"From the moment Staff Sergeant Cifuentes stepped off the plane, we knew he was going to be one of our top performers," said Cotton, himself an F-15C Eagle and B-2 Spirit pilot. "Staff Sergeant Cifuentes is the type of Airman that has the Air Force core values ingrained into his DNA. He continually builds upon his professional and technical abilities, perfecting his craft."

For Cifuentes, the opportunity to join the Thunderbirds is an opportunity bigger than any one man. The opportunity presents a once-in-a-lifetime chance to represent the Air Force in a way most Airmen never experience.

"I'm not just representing myself or my team; I'm representing the whole Air Force. I am showing (the world) the professionalism the Air Force has to show," said Cifuentes. "(I'm showing the world) how hard work makes anything possible. If you want something, you've got to go out and get it."

In the coming months, as the Cifuentes family prepares for their early August departure from Lajes Field, the Staff Sergeant understands that joining the Thunderbirds will present a whole new set of challenges, both on and off duty.

"It's not going to be easy. I'm going to have to work hard, put in lots of hours and make sacrifices. I'm not going to be able to see my family as much as I want. But I know that there's going to be good to come out of it," said Cifuentes.

On the technical side of things as an F-16 crew chief, Cifuentes admits that each day with the Thunderbirds will be a learning experience.

"I'm always learning. I'm never going to know everything about the aircraft. From the first day I put my foot on the flightline... it's an ongoing process," said Cifuentes. "(I'm going to have to pay) a lot of attention to detail. I'm going to have to be studying."

Cotton notes that selection to the Thunderbirds is not only the pinnacle of an Airman's career, but often a springboard for greater responsibility in the future.

"Only the sharpest, most capable among us are selected for such an opportunity. For most, it is the highlight of their career," said Cotton. "The precision and reliability required of a team member are characteristics that vital to operating combat aircraft, and being selected for the team means that you have mastered those attributes. Thunderbirds represent the very best of their profession."

Cifuentes, reflecting upon his childhood journey and recent Air Force accomplishments, echoes the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's unofficial motto for all Airmen.

"Like General Welsh said, 'all of us have a story to tell.' Living in a five-story apartment in New York City, and now look where I'm living: in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean in the Azores," said Cifuentes. "It just goes to show that if you want something, you've got to go out and get it. You have to make that effort."

The U.S.A.F. Thunderbirds, America's Ambassadors in Blue, begin their 2012 show season schedule February 24 at Daytona, Fla. For more information on the Air Force Thunderbirds, visit the team's website at www.afthunderbirds.com.

Commander's Action Line

535-4240

65abw.actionline@lajes.af.mil

The Commander's Action Line is your link to the commander for suggestions, kudos and as a way to work problems or issues within the 65th Air Base Wing for which you can't find another solution.

Your chain of command should always be your first option — but when that's not the answer, call or e-mail the Commander's Action Line at 535-4240 or 65abw.actionline@lajes.af.mil.



Col. Chris Bargery

Col. Chris Bargery
Commander, 65th Air Base Wing



The 65th Air Base Wing Public Affairs staff prepares all editorial content in the Crossroads.

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2012 Annual Award Winners



Airman of the Year
Staff Sgt. Lucas Thompson
65th Logistics Readiness Squadron



NCO of the Year
Tech. Sgt. Mark Delcambre
65th Security Forces Squadron



SNCO of the Year
Master Sgt. Greg Lee
65th Medical Support Squadron



First Sergeant of the Year
Master Sgt. Chris Riffle
65th Operations Support Squadron



CGO of the Year
Capt. Cody Hess
65th Medical Support Squadron

2012 Annual Award Winners



Honor Guard of the Year
Staff Sgt. Kenneth Thomas
Honor Guard



US Civilian Cat. I of the Year
Jennifer Amaya
65th Operations Support Squadron



Local National Civilian Cat. I of the Year
Jose Costa
65th Civil Engineer Squadron



US Civilian Cat. II of the Year
Leland Livingston
65th Civil Engineer Squadron



Local National Civilian Cat. II of the Year
Pedro Silva
65th Civil Engineer Squadron



On the job: 65 MDOS Physical Therapy

Feature



Maj. Brandon Morgan, 65th Medical Operations Squadron physical therapist, manipulates a patient's back and helps another exercise with a balance rebounder, as part of a manual therapy technique to treat pain.

Tech. Sgt. Gilbert Gutierrez, 65th Medical Operations Squadron physical therapy technician, helps promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability by carrying out the physical therapist's treatment plan.

Lajes' physical therapist and technician works with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility by developing fitness and wellness oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

(Photos by Guido Melo)

LAJES ON THE WEB



Lajes Field

6-5...
in the FIGHT!

"Lajes Link" - www.lajes.af.mil

Here are some of the latest web highlights from the 65th Air Base Wing on 'Lajes Link'

**Annual Awards Banquet Feb. 22
"Spotlighting Excellence... Saluting Our Stars"**

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There's a tab for that!

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Lajes Field, Azores

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'Like' Lajes Field, Azores for the latest news stories, photos, videos and weather updates!



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ASK ED

A column that looks at the culture and history of the Azores

By Eduardo Lima, Community Relations Advisor



Mount Brazil, an historical place worth visiting



Standing next to the city of Angra is Mount Brazil, formed by an old volcanic eruption that originated the mount with its shape. This elevation, although small, is a very pleasant area offering visitors some interesting vistas and a relaxing leisure spot.

One of the many attractions of Mount Brazil is the stone wall that partially surrounds the Mount's base and the Fortress São João Batista inside it. The wall and part of the fortress was built by order of Phillip II of Spain when he took the Portuguese throne in 1580 and is one of the largest former Spanish bulwarks in the whole world.

Its construction began in the 17th century and was concluded in 1640 when the people of Terceira rebelled against the Spanish occupation of the island.

Some Portuguese people who were deported from mainland were imprisoned in the fortress, including King Alphonso VI and Gungunhana, the chief of an African tribe from the former Portuguese territory of Mozambique. The Portuguese Army's Regiment of Garrison No.1 currently occupies the fortress.

Another site worth visiting is the monument on top of Mount Brazil.

This is actually a replica of the stone monument the Portuguese explorers placed in the different territories they discovered around the world. Engraved with the dates 1432 and 1932 on each side, it was erected to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the Azores by Portuguese navigators. The monument is located on a place called "Pico das Cruzinhas" (Little Crosses Pike). This is where the Spanish installed the gibbets where some of the island's leaders were hanged during the Spanish occupation as retaliation for the resistance offered by the island's population against the Spanish presence. This site is a must-visit place not only because of its historical significance, but also for the stunning panoramic view of the city and surrounding villages.

Visitors can also find a picnic area, a very enjoyable recreational place, especially during the summer months, that offers barbecue grills and has plenty of trees and shrubs that provide a pleasant shade to picnickers.

The center of Mount Brazil is actually a huge crater of an extinct volcano that is used as a firing range by the Portuguese Army and is the only area off limits to visitors.

Mount Brazil can be visited everyday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. during the winter months. Admittance is free.