



PRESS RELEASE

Ambassador Sherman's Statement on the Results of the EIC Process and Implications for U.S. Presence at Lajes Air Base

January 8, 2015

The Department of Defense announced today the results of the European Infrastructure Consolidation (or "EIC") process. This process aimed to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of our presence in Europe by consolidating and realigning infrastructure and personnel, and divesting of properties and physical structures at several locations throughout Europe. Even as we consolidate our footprint, we will ensure the infrastructure remaining in place continues to support our operational requirements and strategic commitments, including maintaining a constant, capable rotational presence in Europe in order to meet our national security interests and the interests of our Allies.

The United States remains committed to NATO and to our presence in Portugal and in Europe. We have invested heavily in our European infrastructure in the last several years in order to ensure that we are ready and able to defend U.S. interests and meet our commitment to our Allies now and in the future.

Lajes Air Field remains an important element in the enduring, deep strategic partnership between Portugal and the United States. We value the tremendous support Portugal has provided us for decades and continues to provide today at Lajes. With the increase in the range of modern aircraft, however, the frequency and volume of flights requiring the capabilities provided by Lajes Air Field have changed. Lajes has supported on average fewer than two U.S. military flight arrivals per day in the last four years. Our personnel numbers need to match our operational requirements. As part of the EIC process, the Department of Defense, working closely with our Portuguese counterparts, will reduce manpower and facilities in Lajes Air Field in 2015. Our assessment of the operational need at Lajes is that the current presence of an air wing exceeds the capabilities required to support the number of transiting aircraft, and resources should be aligned to meet operational needs in other locations to maximize efficiency in the region. Nevertheless, the Department of Defense, in addition to maintaining a presence at Lajes, will continue to support operations at Lajes utilized by civil aviation and our Portuguese Air Force partners, such as air traffic control and airfield operations.

With the understanding this rightsizing operation will have an immediate economic effect, we are working diligently to lessen its impact on the civilian and local national workforce, and we are collaborating with our Portuguese counterparts to help spur economic development in the Azores. The U.S. Embassy already has developed several programs to engage with local partners in the Azores to provide increased economic opportunities to the local population. The U.S. Government is also working to provide a generous severance package to Portuguese employees at Lajes affected by this decision.

Our strategic bilateral relationship includes a broad set of security issues and cooperation. Items currently under bilateral discussion include Portugal's participation in support of the coalition in its fight against ISIL, maritime security, collaboration and training in cyber security and defense, and broadened exercises and

training between our respective Armies, Navies, Air Forces and Marines.

I want to emphasize, our partnership with Portugal is robust and spans a host of areas – including international peace and security, human rights promotion, shared social challenges, law enforcement, science and technology, and trade and investment. In addition, we maintain an ongoing dialogue with our Portuguese counterparts through a Standing Bilateral Commission, which is high-level bilateral talks, and we are currently preparing for the next meeting which will take place in Lisbon in early February.

- U.S. Department of Defense briefing:
<http://www.defense.gov/live/>
- Statement by EUCOM commander on EIC:
<http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/30936/statement-from-eucom-commander-on-european-infrastructure-consolidation-announcement>
