

57th Rescue (Lajes Fld, Azores)

Air Rescue Mission

The early 1970s marked the end of an era at Lajes when the 57th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron was inactivated on 1 December 1972. The U.S. air rescue mission had been at Lajes since 1948 with the activation of Flight B, 7th Air Rescue Squadron. In 1952, the unit designation changed to the 57th Air Rescue Squadron. The Air Rescue Squadron mission was to intercept lost or damaged aircraft and bring them back to Lajes.

It also performed search and rescue for downed aircraft and ocean-going vessels. Through the years the Rescue Squadron flew SB-17s, C-54s, **SH-19s helicopters**, and C-130s. The Squadron generated thousands of sorties and hundreds of saves throughout its history. One of those saves included rescuing 48 lives from the Portuguese ship SS Arnel that hit the rocks off Santa Maria in 1959. In the 1960s, the rescue squadron supported the Gemini and later Apollo Space missions. When the 57th was inactivated at Lajes, the Portuguese Air Force took up the air rescue mission. Also, Navy P-3 assisted in search and rescue missions.