

## 424 AIR BASE SQUADRON



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

424 Air Base Squadron

### STATIONS

RAF Fairford, England

### ASSIGNMENTS

603 Regional Support Group  
100 Air Refueling Wing, 1996

### COMMANDERS

### HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

### EMBLEM



## MOTTO

### OPERATIONS

CHIÈVRES AIR BASE, Belgium Standing at the end of the short runway, only chickens can be heard clucking from a family farm just a stone's throw away. The morning air is dull and misty, but not as foggy as yesterday, so if you squint your eyes just right you can see clear across the small military base. Today's mission has been canceled and there's a charming calm to the base, like an old man who's lived through so much, there's just no need for the rush anymore. Chièvres Air Base is home to the 424th Air Base Squadron, a group of Airmen nestled in the heart of the Belgian countryside to provide airfield operations support for the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), NATO transient aircraft and distinguished visitors. The squadron is made up of approximately 70 Airmen, and about 18 career fields, with DV aircraft transiting through up to three times a week. The 424th ABS, like the 65th Air Base Group in Lajes Field, Azores, and the 496th ABS in Moron, Spain, is a geographically separated tenant unit that falls under the 86th Airlift Wing at Ramstein AB, Germany. The base is located about 20 minutes from SHAPE and almost four hours from Ramstein AB. The area, along with much of Belgium and Europe is rich in history and certainly has a story to tell.

In 1967, Belgian authorities turned the base over to SHAPE and it has been known as Chièvres AB since. Occupations within the squadron range from security forces and firefighters to air traffic controllers, fuels management and vehicle mechanics. Although each Airmen at the base has specific job, being geographically separated with a limited amount of personnel, Airmen end up getting the opportunity to fulfill multiple roles within the squadron.

"There are a lot of things Airmen do here that are unique to this location, that they wouldn't normally do at a bigger base," said Senior Master Sgt. Christopher Wagoner, the 424th ABS superintendent. "A lot of positions here are only one-deep slots, so our Airmen end up getting the chance to run programs that are normally ran by someone of a higher rank. It's actually a great opportunity for our Airmen to get experience and grow."

The 424th ABS is a self-sustaining unit; they function somewhat like a wing, just on a smaller scale. They conduct their own official physical fitness testing and even urinalysis testing. When Airmen in the squadron have questions that can't be answered or a service that the base just isn't equipped for, that's when they reach back to Ramstein AB for support. "We do a lot on our own here but we know we can always reach back to our counterparts back at Ramstein for assistance," Wagoner said, who also doubles as the squadron's airfield manager. "We have to figure things out

sometimes without the immediate mentorship we might be used to, so although it might have its challenges, it pushes us to learn things that we might have never had to." When Wagoner isn't busy revising enlisted performance reports or managing the airfield he has the opportunity to meet every single Airman he works with and really get to know them. He knows when they put their last stripe on, their kids' names and where they just came back from leave. "It feel likes our own little Air Force family sometimes," said Senior Airman Derrick Kemp, a member of the 424th ABS. "We're a tight-knit unit. We hang out together, workout together and help each other out with whatever we might need." Along with the great relationships he's been able to build in his short time, Kemp said one of his favorite things about being stationed at Chièvres AB is the location in Europe and the amount of time he has to really focus on his upgrade training and growing his career. Being stationed at a geographically separated unit has its challenges, but being at a place like Chièvres AB will continue to give Airmen there a unique outlook on the Air Force mission as they provide world-class airfield support to their SHAPE and NATO customers.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.