

BACALAN SUB DEPOT

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OPERATIONS

Chateauroux Sub-Depots

Chateauroux Air Depot commanded several sub-depots. These Sub-Depots were located at Bordeaux-Bacalan, (special clothing & medical supplies); Niort-Chize (aircraft ammunition); Metz-Frescaty (vehicles & construction supplies) St. Mihiel (conventional ammunition storage); St. Nazarene (aircraft seaport); and Les Moulin's (vehicle storage and maintenance) and the Villefranche (parts storage).

Bacalan Sub-Depot

Bacalan, a suburb of Bordeaux, is on the west side of the Gironde River, 344 miles (550 km) south-southwest of Paris on Autoroute A10, in the Gironde Department.

The Bordeaux-Bacalan Depot, Storage Annex #2690, was located very near the large WWII submarine pens, about four miles (7 km) north of the main train station in Bordeaux. The depot was 230 miles (373 km) southwest of Chateauroux. The closest airdrome was Bordeaux-

Merignac. From June 1951 until December 1959 it was operated by the 73d Air Depot Wing, CAMAE, headquartered at Chateauroux.

Bordeaux Air Station (44° 52'N - 00° 33'W) was offered by France in March 1951. This facility included buildings constructed by the Ford Motor Company in 1934 and a SNCASO aircraft plant completed in 1936. The Ford plant consisted of four large factory structures with 118,360 square feet of space that were convenient to the harbor and immediately available for nine million francs rent (US \$25,700) for five years. The buildings were well built, steel and concrete construction. This was another example of using rented facilities whenever possible in France to save time and money. An eighteen acre, 766,880 square-foot storage yard with a railroad siding was located adjacent to the buildings. The Bordelaise (SNCASO) aircraft plant was across the road from the Ford plant, providing 143,646 square feet of covered space and 568,160 square feet of open storage space. This space, annex #2703, was rented for nine years at a cost of 15 million francs (US \$42,900). Some structures required repairs after WWII bombing. U.S. Army Engineers performed the repairs during the summer of 1951 to get the storage facility in operation quickly. It was needed for Bordeaux-Merignac Air Base as there was inadequate covered storage at Merignac airdrome to secure supplies delivered during interim air base construction. Bacalan was also used for equipment storage by the 126th Bomb Wing and the 7913th Air Base Group, as well as for storage of USAF supplies being shipped to the Bordeaux port. Bacalan sub-depot became operational on 4 April 1952, and both the American and French flags were raised at this facility.

In the summer of 1952, after departure of the 126th Wing from Bordeaux AB, the Bacalan storage facility had space for the needed AF Class 13 clothing depot. It was expanded from 73d Air Sub-Depot to the 7349th Air Depot Group in 1954 with the primary mission of supplying clothing items to all USAFE. This job was handled by the 7349th Supply Squadron. On 1 January 1956 the 7349th was redesignated the 3137th Air Depot Group. Depot clothing stocks consisted of all USAF uniform items, cold/wet weather clothing, individual field equipment, tents, bedding, and aircrew flight clothing.

Supply processing and storage contracts were established with the Sursol and Baronnet companies at Bacalan. The Baronnet contract cost the USAF \$1,701 per month. Sursol's price was \$1,875 per month, but this cost was shared with the U.S. Army.

Bacalan was manned by a mix of 14 officers, 158 airmen, 4 DAF civilians, and 289 French civilian personnel in January 1956. Three airmen from Det #2, 12th Postal Sq operated a small substation of APO 16 at Bacalan. U.S. families lived off base in GRI housing at Pessac.

Bacalan also became a storage center for USAFE medical supplies. It was operated by Det #1, 7373d Medical Material Sq, which later became the 3134th Medical Material Sq. Three Federal Stock Classes (#6515, #6520 and #6830) requiring 40,000 square feet of indoor storage, were stocked to support the European area.

On 1 January 1959 the 7415th Support Group was ordered to support the Bacalan depot. Det.#1, 7415th provided administrative, personnel, and budget assistance. This action was required prior to shutdown of the 7413th Air Base Group and the Bordeaux-Merignac Air Base in 1958. On 28

February 1958 the official name of the Bordeaux Air Station, was changed to Bordeaux Storage Station.

As part of the 1958 USAFE budget cuts, the 3134th Supply Group closed the Bacalan Depot and moved the clothing and medical supply operation to the Chateauroux Air Depot at La Martinerie by March 1959. By then Chateauroux had indoor warehouse space available for storing all clothing stocks. This relocation saved about US \$6 million per year. The property was formally returned to France in June 1961. Today most of the Bacalan depot structures remain and function as a large storage/shipping business. Anyone wanting to visit Bacalan can reach Bordeaux by train from Paris Gare Montparnasse station. See Michelin Map #335 Local and IGN Series Blue #1536 0.

Air Force Order of Battle
Created: 16 Jun 2011
Updated:

Sources