

MOULINS-SUR-ALLIER SUB DEPOT

LINEAGE

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Moulins-sur-Allier Sub-Depot

This sub-depot was located in the Cher Department, 145 miles (235 km) south-southeast of Paris and 86 miles (137 km) east of Chateauroux. The city of Moulins is on the east side of the Allier River on National Route N7. The sub-depot (46° 35'N - 03° 19'E) was located in the city of Moulins, about one mile from the train station. The main entrance to the depot was on the east side of the city, east of the main rail line.

The Moulins Depot was operated by the 73d Air Depot Wing and CAMAE, from September 1951 until January 1958. It was initially established as the primary vehicle and electrical power unit specialized sub-depot of Chateauroux in summer 1951. At that time there was insufficient open space on La Martinerie for vehicle storage. Moulins Air Station, annex #2687, was offered by France in February 1951. The Moulins facility had been a French Army Cavalry Caserne built

in 1870-76 after the Franco-Prussian War. Approximately twenty large, tall, garage-like structures had housed an artillery unit and its horse-drawn guns, caissons and limbers; many buildings had been horse stables. The structures were stone and concrete construction, but most had badly deteriorated. Even so, it was leased to save time and money. The troops built up the Moulins depot as a large self-help project from 1951 until 1953. Extensive repair and some new construction was performed by USAF Moulins troops to get the sub-depot in operation. They built new roads, a large gym, improved all office and vehicle shop buildings, and installed a large base sewage system. Beginning with living quarters and progressing through the vehicle shops, the troops did an excellent job building their own depot. Moulins became a comfortable air station with a theater, gym, AFEX snack bar, airmen's club, commissary, and a small base exchange. About \$300,000 USAF construction money was saved, but airmen manpower was diverted from rebuilding old vehicles that were needed to support the new air bases and wings. The Moulins property and buildings were officially accepted from France and dedicated on 25 October 1953.

Moulins grew from eighteen officers and airmen coming from Chateauroux's 73d Air Depot into the 7374th Air Depot Group, with vehicle maintenance performed by the 73d Motor Vehicle Sq. In August 1952 the 75th Vehicle Repair Sq, Depot, arrived at Moulins to supplement the 73d Vehicle Repair Sq.

The depot workforce on 1 January 1956 was 25 officers, 275 airmen, 6 DAF civilians, and 512 indigenous personnel, (minus the 12th Comm Construction Sq).

Many U.S. families lived off base in Moulins in rented apartments. An elementary school was established on the depot that provided grades one through eight, but there was no high school.

No sooner had the depot been announced than hundreds of surplus WWII trucks, trailers, power units, and vehicle spare parts were shipped from West Germany, Belgium, and France. Many of these vehicles were thoroughly worn out, requiring major repairs, and should have been scrapped in 1946. Extensive depot level maintenance shop space was developed in the old caserne structures. The depot performed all vehicle and power unit repairs that were beyond the capabilities of the air base motor vehicle squadrons. Moulins had an extensive salvage and reclamation yard that sold obsolete vehicles and scrap parts. Supplying vehicle repair parts to all USAFE activities was the primary duty of the 7374th Supply Squadron. The most critically needed parts were for fire/rescue trucks, aircraft refueling trucks, and fork lifts. Forty-three different AF Stock Classes were stored to support the vehicles and power units. Over 72,000 line items valued at US \$19 million were stocked, and 3,500 items were shipped every month to support 17,500 USAFE vehicles. The term "line item" is a USAF expression referring to one item description and part number entered on a CARDEX card line along with the quantities due-in, due-out transactions, plus item location within the storage complex. One card could contain eight or more items. The CARDEX card was one of the most important pieces of paper in the whole USAF!!

On 1 April 1956, the 7374th Air Depot Gp designation was changed to 3136th Air Depot Gp, the 7374th Motor Vehicle Repair Sq became the 3136th Motor Vehicle Repair Sq, the 7374th

Supply Sq was changed to the 3136th Supply Sq, and the 7374th Support Sq became the 3136th Support Sq.

Community Toulon sur Allier Storage Station, a large, thirty-acre, vehicle storage yard was located four miles southeast of the depot off highway N7. The yard could hold up to 1,200 vehicles in outdoor storage and had 186,360 square feet of covered storage for large vehicle parts. A small airstrip south of Moulins was suitable for cargo aircraft operations.

The 2d Communications Sq at Moulins operated a communication center and radio station into the Twelfth Air Force logistics net. The microwave radio relay system was not extended southeastward to Moulins due to budget cuts. Detachment #3, 12th Postal Sq operated the Moulins Depot Post Office, APO 10.

Another Air Force unit located at the Moulins Sub-Depot was the 12th Communications Construction Squadron. The 12th Comm Const Sq mission was heavy construction required for all USAFE communications/electronics installations beyond a combat wing's capabilities. This squadron had personnel, vehicles, and equipment to build telephone pole lines, bury telephone cables, install and splice large telephone cables, erect antenna towers, and install telephone switching systems. The 12th Comm Const Sq was activated at Moulins on 1 February 1953 with personnel and equipment from the 610th Signal Light Construction Company (Aviation), a SCARWAF reserve unit activated on 19 October 1951 from the Washington Air National Guard. The unit had 125 vehicles assigned. About forty of this fleet were special purpose trucks and trailers for handling telephone poles, hole digging, cable reels, and splicing tools. Upon activation the squadron was manned by 7 officers and 163 airmen.

The officers and airmen spent much of the time TDY at construction jobs far away from the Moulins depot. The 12th Comm Const Sq applied their skills to virtually every USAFE facility across Europe, North Africa, and Saudi Arabia; installing, repairing, and replacing outside and inside telephone plant systems. Work ranged from initial site surveys to final circuit testing and customer sign-off. Most new air bases in France required total telephone system installation requiring six to ten miles of buried and pole mounted multi-pair phone cables on base. Cable splicing had to correctly interface with the commercial French Post Telephone and Telegraph (PT&T) system running off base.

A very special construction project began on 15 February 1955. This was the construction of microwave antenna towers in France to assist the 7th and 8th Radio Relay Squadrons. Fifty-three 80-foot towers were constructed at the rate of one per week and two towers had to be increased to one hundred feet. Work involved not only tower erection, but tower concrete bases, anchors, guys, reflectors and microwave antenna dishes. No on-the-job accidents or injuries occurred through careful planning and training. This project was completed in March 1956.

On 1 January 1956, the 12th Comm Const Sq at Moulins consisted of 6 officers, 142 airmen. Fifty-five family dependents resided in the Moulins area.

With the planned closure of the Moulins Sub Depot, the 12th Comm Const Sq was ordered to relocate to the Bordeaux Bacalan Sub-Depot. This movement started on 28 March 1957 and the

unit moved all 250 tons of equipment, supplies, and project material 280 miles west to Bacalan using its own vehicles. This move was completed by 10 April and the unit was fully operational on 15 April. No construction schedules were interrupted by this relocation. Of course, the squadron found it had less storage space and inadequate facilities at Bacalan (SNCASO) compared to Moulins Air Station. The 12th moved again, this time to Chateauroux, in June 1958 because of additional USAFE budget cuts that closed the Bacalan Storage Station. It operated at La Martinerie until deactivated in May 1965.

As part of the 1957 USAFE budget cuts, the 3136th Air Depot Group closed the Moulins Vehicle Depot. It was moved to the Chateauroux Air Depot and immediately reestablished at La Martinerie. The well planned movement occurred over six months, from 10 January through 20 June 1957, and vehicle support was uninterrupted. By 1957 Chateauroux had space available for the vehicle shops, and after 1958 the vehicle fleets in France decreased as many air bases were reduced to standby status. Also, as the vehicle fleets were modernized they needed fewer repairs. This relocation saved USAFE about \$9 million per year. Most of the French employees were transferred to other U.S. sites in France and continued their employment until 1967. Moulins real estate was returned to France in October 1958. Today portions of the old depot buildings remain and the site is operated as a business park. Moulins is accessible from Paris by train from Gare D'Austerlitz station, and can be found on Michelin Map #326 Local and IGN Series Blue #2627 O.

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

Sources