

PANAMA IN WORLD WAR 2 – SHORT GUIDE TO OTHER PLACES

PART 1

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¹ <https://www.mapsofindia.com/world-map/panama/>

NOTE

A 1902 Act of Congress authorised the purchase of the property following the ratification of a treaty with Panama creating a second Isthmian Commission (the first had been for the French attempt) for the purpose of directing the construction work and governing the Canal Zone. The Second Isthmian Commission was dissolved in 1914 and replaced by the Panama Canal Organization (PCO). In 1950, the PCO was reorganised into two groups and included the Canal Zone Government (CZG), with authority limited only to maintaining civil government, and the Panama Canal Company (PCC), formerly the Panama Railroad Company (PRC), with authority to maintain operation and maintenance of the Canal.²

Aguadulce Army Airfield

Aka Airdrome Aguadulce, this was a US Army Air Force (USAAF) airfield established on 1 April 1941, in Coclé Province, on the Pacific side of the country, around 118 miles (190 km) west of Panama City. It was in an agricultural district, also known for production of salt, with the name being Spanish for “sweet water”.



² <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/commissary-panama-canal-zone>

The field had been used as an emergency landing field prewar, and in the 1930s there was a daily airline service between Panama City's Paitilla Point airfield (and then Albrook Field from 1935) and the city of David in Chiriqui Province via Aguadulce.³

In 1939, the Emergency Landing Field Project Board, appointed by the Commanding General of the Panama Canal Department⁴ in September of that year, had submitted its findings, naming the sites required outside the canal Zone to improve the defences of the Canal. The Board identified a number of "auxiliary bases", which included Aguadulce, alongside a number of "auxiliary airfields", and "emergency fields".

Even before the 1942 Bases Agreement⁵ on defence sites to be made available to the US Army outside the Canal Zone⁶ many of the airfields included in the Agreement began operations, with Aguadulce being one of the first, on 9 April 1941.

While, technically, the Quartermaster Corps was responsible for the construction of such airfields, the Constructing Quartermaster was over-extended, and the Corps of Engineers insisted that its engineers be allowed to complete the work. Hence, in March, two companies of the 11th Engineers were assigned to the airfields program and were assisted by the 805th Engineer Aviation Company.⁷

The 1942 Bases Agreement also allowed for a dock and fuel pipeline at Aguadulce, which also had (and has) a port on the Pacific coast.

³ This was a part of the first inter-province airmail service established in 1931 and connecting a number of towns throughout the country <https://docplayer.net/53932747-Panama-s-worst-air-disaster.html>

⁴ The name for the US Army command in the Canal Zone, equivalent to a Corps.

⁵ Aka the 1942 Fábrega-Wilson Agreement.

⁶ For more on the Bases Agreement, and the forced rapid departure from the bases involved in 1948, see <https://raytodd.blog/2024/06/30/panama-and-world-war-2-operating-outside-the-zone-the-1942-agreement-and-the-1947-row/>

⁷ https://history.army.mil/html/books/010/10-6/CMH_Pub_10-6.pdf



30th Fighter Squadron P-40 and UC-78 at Aguadulce

USAAF units based at Aguadulce were –

74th Bombardment Squadron 8 November - 11 December 1941

with Douglas B-18 Bolo medium bombers

13 February - 1 May 1945

with Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers

59th Bombardment Squadron 11 December 1941 - 19 February 1942

29th Bombardment Squadron 16 June 1942 - 29 March 1943

with B-18 bombers and Northrop A-17 attack aircraft

29th Fighter Squadron October 1943

just one flight of Bell P-39K Airacobra fighters were detached from Madden Army Airfield to operate from Aguadulce⁸

30th Fighter Squadron 10 February 1943 - 25 January 1945

with Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters

A Brazilian Air Force contingent also trained at Aguadulce under the 30th Fighter Squadron.⁹

The Brazilian Expeditionary Force, which would subsequently take part in the fighting in Italy, included a fighter group from the Brazilian Air Force¹⁰, formed in 1943 and which undertook its combat training under the jurisdiction of the Sixth Air Force at Aguadulce – its commander and 32 pilots using Curtiss P-40 Warhawks.

⁸ The unit was to leave Panama for the US in March 1944.

⁹ Using obsolescent RP-40B, and RP-40C Warhawks, as well as newer P-40E and P-40N versions. North American T-6D and BC-1 Texan advanced trainers were used for night flying and instrument flight training.

¹⁰ 1st Fighter Group (1^o Grupo de Aviação de Caça)

The 1st Fighter Aviation group (1st GAvCa), its personnel being volunteers from the Brazilian Air Force, arrived at Aguadulce on 5 April 1944, having completed three weeks training at Albrook Field (this following training at the USAAF School of Applied Tactics, or AAFSAT, in Florida).

The Brazilians are said to have found Aguadulce hot and inhospitable, with poor water (saturated with chlorine to make it safe – despite the misleading name of the airfield and district). They were housed in wooden barracks, built off the ground and with bug screens on the windows.

The combat training included strafing, dive bombing and formation flying, with an evident emphasis was on close support and ground attack, rather than air combat. One officer, Aviation Second Lieutenant Dante Isidoro Gastaldoni was killed in a training accident.¹¹



*30th Fighter
Squadron P-40,
February 1944*

In May 1944, the group's four squadrons were declared operational and became active in the air defence of the Canal, alongside four existing USAAF fighter squadrons. However, it left in June¹² to travel to the US to join the First Air Force at Suffolk Army Air Field, New York and re-equip with P-47D Thunderbolts, prior to being deployed to Italy.

¹¹ Flying a RP-40C, he had bailed out, but at too low an altitude. He was buried at Corozal, his remains later being removed to his hometown in Brazil, Porto Alegre.

<https://www.defenseforces.com/2018/03/28/brazilian-air-force-1st-fighter-group-in-the-world-war-ii/>
<https://www.defesanet.com.br/aviacao/noticia/695/Dia-de-Aviacao-de-Caca---Parte-1/>
<https://media.defense.gov/2010/Nov/05/2001329891/-1/-1/0/AFD-101105-019.pdf>

¹² This departure being marked by a ceremony on 20 June, attended by the Brazilian Minister of Aeronautics, as well as the commanders of the USAAF Sixth Air Force and the 26th Fighter Command in Panama.

At the end of World War 2, the airfield was reduced in scope, with only a skeleton staff. It closed on 1 March 1948, as the US military withdrew from bases in Panama and outside the Canal Zone.¹³ For several years, it was used as a civil airport, but was later closed, and abandoned, with the runway still visible but in poor condition, although in 2020 it was said to be still in use.¹⁴

Almirante

This is a port town on the Caribbean coast and near the Costa Rican border, in Boca del Toro Province in the west of Panama. It is the capital of the district of Almirante, in the province of Bocas del Toro.



It was developed as a port to service the banana industry, namely the notorious United Fruit Company.¹⁵ For a long time, the town of Almirante¹⁶ was one of several places maintained almost entirely by the banana

trade and, in addition, railways in the provinces bordering Costa Rica were owned by, or heavily reliant upon the company.

Construction of the port begun in 1905, together with the railroad to connect the towns of Changuinola and Almirante, Changuinola being around 14.9 miles (24 km) inland from the port. Construction of the dock itself began in 1908, and it opened in 1909.

¹³ For more on the rapid withdrawal, and the reasons for it, see <https://raytodd.blog/2024/06/30/panama-and-world-war-2-operating-outside-the-zone-the-1942-agreement-and-the-1947-row/>

¹⁴ I spent part of my honeymoon nearby, and a retired police officer, then a taxi driver, claimed it had been used for illicit purposes, presumably drugs.

¹⁵ Puerto Almirante was built by the United Fruit Company in 1905 for the shipment of bananas, as well as the railway to connect the towns of Changuinola and Almirante and later into Costa Rica. Admiralante Pier opened in 1908, and the port in 1909. It remains in active use, and in the 2020s fresh investment by Chiquita Brands (a successor company to United Fruit) was being reported.

¹⁶ In Bocas del Toro on the Caribbean coast, Puerto Almirante was built by the United Fruit Company in 1905 for the shipment of bananas, as well as the railway to connect the towns of Changuinola and Almirante and later into Costa Rica). Admiralante Pier opened in 1908, and the port in 1909. It remains in active use, and in the 2020s fresh investment by Chiquita Brands was being reported.

The *Chiriqui Land Lineas del Norte*, also known as *División Bocas*, was a railway in the Bocas del Toro Province, and was built primarily to service the banana trade. The first line ran from Almirante on the Caribbean coast to the rural areas inland. It was extended northwards, to Rio Sixaola on the border with Costa Rica. After banana production in Panama was affected by the outbreak of the “Panama disease”, from 1929, the railway line was extended across the Rio Sixaola and into Costa Rica, to bring bananas from new plantations there for shipment. However, banana production in Panama recovered in the mid-1930s, with an accompanying expansion of the rail network, including another bridge across the Rio Sixaola.

In the Spring of 1931, the Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee carried out an inspection of the Panama Canal Department, and indicated the need for additional airfields in the Republic. Almirante was one of several sites identified. In January 1939, the War Department notified the Panama Canal Department that \$200,000 had been made available for the establishing of airfields in the Republic under the Air Corps Augmentation Program. In February, the War Department was supplied with a list of 10 sites – and this list also include private land at Almirante.

However, the 1942 Bases Agreement, which formalised the acquisition of a large number of additional defence sites in the Republic, while it included Almirante in its list of places involved, this was only for the siting of an Aircraft Warning Station, established in April 1941.

While the banana sector was affected badly by the so-called Panama disease in the 1920s, its recovery was helped by cultivation of abaca in the 1940s, which was used to provide ropes to the US Navy.¹⁷

There was a small refuelling base for PT Boats established there in Summer 1943. While training became the prime role of PT Boats in Panama during the war, they also carried out patrol and defensive duties, on both Caribbean and Pacific coasts. Hence

¹⁷ For more on the role of Abaco in Panama, see <https://raytodd.blog/2024/08/03/panama-in-world-war-2-abaca-manila-hemps-important-role/>

the refuelling base at Almirante, this being on the other side of the country from the PT Boats' base at Taboga Island, which was close to the Pacific entrance to the Canal.¹⁸ Almirante was not one of the 15 sites that the US sought to retain postwar under the 1947 Filós-Hines Treaty, a treaty which would be rejected by the Panamanian National Assembly, leading to the withdrawal of US forces and abandonment of all of sites.¹⁹

Anton Army Airfield

This was a USAAF airfield, and an auxiliary to Howard Field. It was located in Coclé Province on the southern coast, near the Pacific entrance to the Canal and Panama City. It was relatively close to Albrook Airfield and adjacent to the current Corozal passenger terminal of the Panama Railroad.²⁰



Like Aguadulce, Anton's field was one of those connected by the intra-province airmail service begun in November 1931. It was also one of many landing fields that the US Army Air Corps (USAAC)²¹ made use of

prewar.

The airfield was one of those covered by the 1942 Bases Agreement, and one of those airfields that the US stressed as being essential in meetings with the new President De La Guardia, who replaced President Arias Madrid after he was deposed in late 1941. The new President approved the plans in January 1942, giving the US permission to proceed and occupy and improve the sites concerned. It was official occupied by the USAAF from 5 February 1942.²²

¹⁸ They were even seen as far away as the Galapagos Islands – some 1,000 miles (1,609 km) out into the Pacific Ocean, where the US maintained an Army airbase by agreement with Ecuador.

¹⁹ *We Answer Only to God: Politics and the Military in Panama 1903-1947* by Thomas L Pearcy (University of New Mexico Press, 1968).

²⁰ Passenger services on the railway is limited to excursions for tourists and locals, there now being no regular passenger service.

²¹ The USAAC became the USAAF in June 1941.

²² *We Answer Only to God: Politics and the Military in Panama 1903-1947* by Thomas L Pearcy (University of New Mexico Press, 1968).

During the war it hosted –

30 th Fighter Squadron	3 January - 10 February 1943
with P-40 Warhawk fighters	

29 th Bombardment Squadron	29 March - 13 May 1943
with A-17 attack aircraft	

When the 30th Fighter Squadron moved to Anton from Chorrera Field, all of its personnel were reassigned to the 53rd Fighter Squadron at France Field near Colón, before it relocated to Aguadulce. Meanwhile, the 30th Fighter Squadron was reclassified an Operational Training Unit (OTU), with the mission of preparing new fighter pilots for duty in the tropical conditions of the Canal Zone, inheriting an assortment of 28 different models of mostly well-used P-40 Warhawks from the 53rd Fighter Squadron. However, it soon relocated to Aguadulce (see above).²³

Arraijan Tank Farm

This formed part of the Rodman Naval Station and was located on west side of the Pacific entrance to the Canal. It had an underground bulk fuel storage installation, built in 1942 inland and near Howard Field. It was therefore within the Canal Zone.²⁴ In 1940, there had been only two fuel storage tank farms able to supply US Navy shipping in the Canal Zone – one at Balboa at the Pacific end of the Canal, and the other at Mount Hope at the Atlantic end. Both were vulnerable to air attack. Had these farms been destroyed it would have been impossible to refuel shipping in the Canal Zone.²⁵

There was a great increase in fuel requirements during the war, and a need to safeguard the new tanks by making them bombproof and sited underground. In January 1941, the Secretary of the Navy recommended that all liquid fuel be in underground storage as soon as practicable.²⁶

²³ https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/30th_Fighter-Bomber_Squadron

²⁴ The site now lies in the Arraijan District of Panama Oeste province.

²⁵ <https://www.elistmopty.com/2021/09/depositos-de-combustible-de-la-panama.html>.

²⁶ <https://www.elistmopty.com/2021/09/depositos-de-combustible-de-la-panama.html>

Two areas were identified for the new tank farms, one being a 820-acre (331.8 hectares) site at Arraijan, adjoining the Thatcher Highway, which led to the Thatcher Ferry, the main crossing point across the Canal.²⁷

The new tank farm consisted of 37 underground tanks covering around two square kilometres, capable of holding some 25,000 barrels of oil.²⁸ It was connected to the Gatun Tank Farm further along and at the Atlantic end of the Canal by a pipeline completed in 1943.²⁹

The Arraijan Tank Farm became part of Naval Station Rodman, as did the Arraijan Ammunition Depot.

In the heightened tensions that preceded the US invasion to remove the Noriega regime in 1989, US Marines guarding the tank farm were allegedly involved in a firefight in which it was said that several “intruders” were killed in Spring 1988. Further incidents continued until the following April, the marines having reported sighting armed, uniformed intruders³⁰ on at least 43 occasions and receiving gunfire or discharging their own weapons during 16 incidents. However, no enemy ammunition, bodies or body parts were ever found (although “freshly dug fighting holes” were reported).³¹

²⁷ The other was the Gatun Tank Farm, a 1,700-acre site near Cristobal harbour at the Atlantic end of the Canal. Reserve storage for aviation fuel was also provided adjacent to the air station at Coco Solo. Eventually, in 1962, the long-promised Bridge of the Americas (initially known as the Thatcher Ferry Bridge to the US authorities) opened where the Thatcher Ferry had operated.

²⁸ Equivalent to around 1.05 million US gallons, 870,000 Imperial gallons, or nearly 4 million litres.

²⁹ *Historic Resources Assessments: Department of Defense Activities 1993* (Panama Canal Treaty Implementation Plan Agency, Washington DC, 1995).

³⁰ Described as individuals wearing black camouflage uniforms, carrying weapons and night vision devices. According to the US Marines, the Army had previously sold night vision devices to the Panama Defense Forces.

³¹ There were even suggestions that multiple patrols, unaware of each other’s position, may have exchanged fire:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235901812_Did_the_Panamanian_Defense_Forces_Conduct_Infiltration_Operations_at_the_Arraijan_Tank_Farm_in_1988

On 11 April, a marine corporal died in “an unexpected collision with another patrol”, being shot by another marine. At the time, Panamanian authorities argued that the incidents were US provocations, psychological warfare designed to provoke Panama or to provide justification for an invasion.

By the time of the incidents, the tank farm was covered by rolling grassland and landscaped to resemble a golf course from the air. However, it was bordered by dense jungle, that would allow the close approach of intruders.³² In any case, Army special forces established observation posts in the jungle “*around the Arraijan Tank Farm, adjacent to Howard AFB*”.³³

Marines patrol up a small stream in the jungle surrounding the Arraijan Tank Farm. The terrain provided intruders with good cover and avenues of approach both to the fuel storage facility and Howard Air Force Base.



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During the 1989 invasion itself, codenamed Operation *Just Cause*, marines moved to safeguard the tank farm, with reports that Panama Defense Forces (PDF) armoured personnel carriers were on the move in the vicinity of Rodman. They also attacked and secured a nearby PDF facility.³⁵

³² https://www.marines.mil/portals/1/Publications/Just%20Cause%20Marine%20Operations%20in%20Panama%201988-1990%20PCN%2019000313400_1.pdf

³³ https://arsof-history.org/articles/19oct_absolute_confidence_page_1.html

Did the Panamanian Defense Forces conduct infiltration operations at the Arraijan Tank Farm in 1988? by William Yaworsky (Small Wars and Insurgencies, 2012).

³⁴ <https://www.enlodados.com/tag/army/>

³⁵ Directorate of Traffic and Transportation (DNTT) Station No.2 in Arraijan.

https://www.marines.mil/portals/1/Publications/Just%20Cause%20Marine%20Operations%20in%20Panama%201988-1990%20PCN%2019000313400_1.pdf

NOTE

Plans were also considered for a pipeline connecting both coasts in order to replace tanker shipment through the Canal, but the difficulties and cost of construction caused those plans to be dropped until 1942, when the course of the war made it a project of vital urgency.³⁶ A contract was awarded in August 1942 for two 33-mile-long (53 km) pipelines, and construction began in October 1942. Running from Rodman to Coco Solo, it was originally built and maintained by the US Navy. After a year of operation, in April 1944, work began to double the capacity of the pipelines, with larger-diameter pipes. Trans-Isthmian pipeline was able to handle a daily flow of 265,000 barrels of fuel oil, 47,000 barrels of diesel-oil and 60,000 barrels of gasoline.³⁷

Balboa³⁸

Regarded as the “capital” of the Canal Zone, this was a town at the Pacific entrance to the Canal. It was home to the administrative headquarters of the Canal Zone, substantial docks, and a US Navy base. It was founded by the US during construction of the Canal.



Balboa docks in 1938

³⁶ <https://www.elistmopty.com/2021/09/depositos-de-combustible-de-la-panama.html>

³⁷ https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/Building_Bases/bases-18.html

The Panama Canal Company later used it postwar. The old pipeline still sits at the bottom of Gatun Lake and in the undergrowth today: <http://www.czimages.com/CZMemories/Pipelineproject/mlindex.htm>

³⁸ The town of Balboa included schools, post office, police and fire stations, commissary, cafeteria, movie theatre, service centre, bowling alley, and other recreational facilities and company stores, 2 private banks, a credit union, a Jewish Welfare Board, several Christian denomination churches, civic clubs (such as the Elks Club and the Knights of Columbus), a Masonic Lodge, a YMCA, several historic monuments, and a miniature Statue of Liberty donated by the Boy Scouts of America.



1940 postcard

Around 1914, the earliest naval installation in the Canal Zone had been established as the Balboa Naval Radio Station in land separated from Fort Amador for use by the US Navy. The naval station was soon renamed the 15th Naval District and was subsequently expanded considerably³⁹, and the Radio Station became US Navy Communications Station (NAVCOMMSTA) by World War 2.⁴⁰

Since 31 December 1999, Balboa has been a district of Panama City and headquarters of the Panama Canal Authority, as well as having large docks and container port facility. The central area, including the Canal Administration Building, still closely resemble their wartime appearance.

Part way up the steps to the Canal Administration Building⁴¹ is a memorial to employees lost during World War 1. I know of no equivalent for anyone lost in World War 2 (although there is a memorial in the grounds in front of the building for those who died during the COVID-19 pandemic).

³⁹ <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00022175/00001/pageturner#page/37>

⁴⁰ <http://navy-radio.com/commsta/balboa.htm>

⁴¹ On a hill of the same height as the Canal raises shipping passing through the waterway.

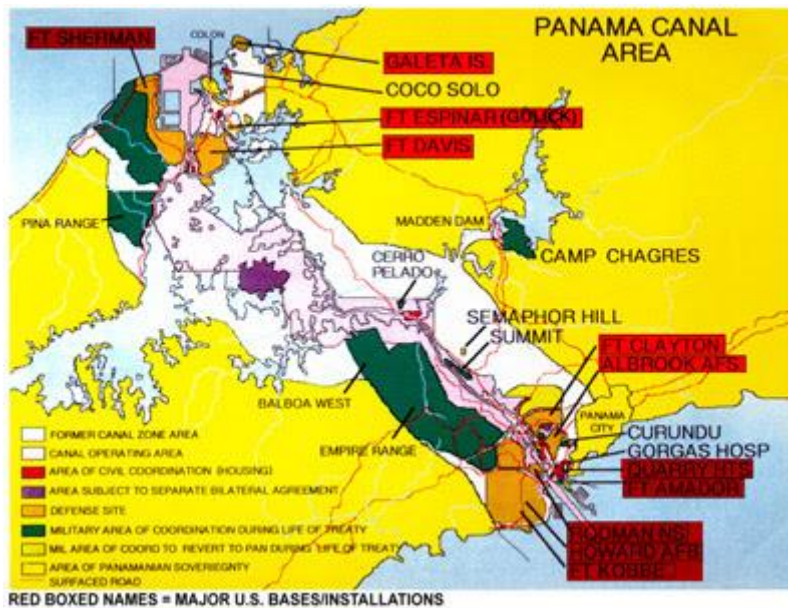


Calzada Larga and Madden Army Airfield

The name of Calzada Larga means “*long causeway*” in Spanish and the place is in the province of Panama, and was used 1942-44, including for the training of glider transport pilots.⁴² It was said to have involved the operation of both gliders and North American P-51 Mustang fighters.

Located about 12.5 miles (20 km) from Panama City, and situated outside the original Canal Zone territory, the Canal Zone Government also built a paved road running the 12½ miles from the dam to the township of Summit in the Canal Zone. It was used by elements of the 29th Fighter Squadron from 17 May 1942 to 25 March 1944, for missions such as flying anti-submarine patrols using Douglas A-24 Dauntless dive-bombers.

⁴² A Major William H Taylor began undertaking experimental jungle landings of troop-carrying gliders in Panama using the Waco CG-4A, the most widely-used troop-carrying and cargo glider of the war, in 1943-44, and attracted the attention of officers seeking to establish a new Air Commando organisation, inspired by the Wingate Chindit operations of the British in Burma⁴², and with the original intention of spearheading such operations there. Taylor was eventually selected to be commander of the glider detachment and travelled to Kentucky to help form and train a new unit, which was to take part in operations in Burma in 1944. The unit was the 5318th Provisional Air Unit, whose men included former child film star Jackie Coogan.



As Madden Army Airfield it was used as a base for fighters, with the intended role of defending the Madden Lake and Dam (which were part of the reservoir arrangements to main water levels for the Canal).⁴³



P-39K Airacobra of 29th fighter Squadron at Madden Field in 1943⁴⁴

⁴³ The Madden Dam was one of the first improvements to the Canal, although the need for such a construction was first envisaged in the late 19th Century. It was completed in 1935 on the Chagres River to control both the flow of that river, form Madden Lake (later renamed Lake Alajuela after the US withdrew, Alajuela – actually Alhajuela - was a town close by) as a reservoir in the Canal watershed, and control the water level in the also man-made Lake Gatun, which was at the heart of the Canal. The dam was named in honour of Martin B Madden, an English-born member of the US House of Representatives, who had died in 1928. The name change followed a resolution of the House in 1928.

⁴⁴ This aircraft was lost on 3 July 1943.



The 29th Pursuit/Fighter Squadron⁴⁵ moved from Albrook Field to be based there from 8 March to 15 August 1944, flying Bell P-39 Airacobra fighters.

Calzada Larga Airport (aka Aeropuerto Alex H Bosquez) remains as a small general aviation airfield near the town of Caimitillo⁴⁶, with a near-4,000 feet (1.220 metres) runway.⁴⁷

Camp Empire and Empire Range

A former Canal construction-era community close to the Culebra Cut (known during the Canal Zone era as the Gaillard Cut), it and one at Culebra were taken over by the Army in November 1914, with elements of the 33rd Infantry Regiment stationed at Empire in the new Camp Elliott (and the nearby Camp Otis) after being formed in Panama in 1916.

There had also been Camp Gaillard, which was named (in the same way as the Culebra Cut was renamed the Gaillard Cut) after the late Colonel David D Gaillard, who had been chief of the Central Division during Canal construction, and responsible for the Cut.

The township of Empire dated to before the advent of the trans-isthmus railway in 1855, providing a place for pack mules to stop. During the French attempt at constructing a canal, the largest township of the French era was at Empire, about 3.7

⁴⁵ Nerdy point, but when the USAAC became the USAAF in 1941, the former term “pursuit” for what we would know as a “fighter” also changed, at least for its unit titles. The new US Air Force from 1947 would change the P for Pursuit designation system to F for Fighter.

⁴⁶ Separated from the town of Chilibre in 2012 as a township in its own right

⁴⁷ <http://www.gcmap.com/airport/MP23>

miles (6 km) north-east from the Pedro Miguel Locks. When the Canal was completed the Isthmian Canal Commission had no need for the site, hence why first the Marines and then the Army took it over.⁴⁸

In 1927, following the completion of the permanent military installations at either end of the Canal, Camp Gaillard was inactivated, buildings were either moved or demolished, and the land was part of the area converted to an artillery practice range, called Empire Range, which stretched across the other side of the Canal..

It was used for internment of enemy aliens during World War 2. Run by the US Army, it



housed civilian
internees, including
women and
children.

*Residents leaving the
temporary internment
camp to join their male
relatives in US
internment camps in
April 1942⁴⁹*

The Army's Military Police also ran a "stockade" at Camp Empire, which housed the more serious offenders, although those who made themselves a nuisance could be sent to "The Rock", as the Galapagos Islands were known, as punishment.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ <https://www.czimages.com/CZMemories/Photos/photoof1018.htm>

⁴⁹ <https://jlacampaignforjustice.org/photo-library/>

⁵⁰ *A Peek at Military Law, Canal Zone, WWII* by George Chevalier.



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The Empire Range was one of two Army training and gunnery ranges, totalling over 7,000 acres (2,832 hectares), that lasted until the end of US military presence in Panama. The Empire Range Complex was on the banks of the Canal below the site of Camp Empire, and was used as a training range until the area was handed over to Panama under the 1977 treaties. It is said that almost every type of ground munition used by the US Army for training was deployed on Empire Range including mortars, shells and other projectiles, 66 mm rockets, small arms, hand grenades, and submunitions.⁵² It has also been reported that the US Army Tropic Test Center used a site on the Empire Range to test tear gas grenades in 1965.⁵³



A sign at the entrance to the former Empire Range warns of dangerous explosives⁵⁴

⁵¹ <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Lethal-legacy-Panama-wants-U-S-to-clear-2817524.php>

⁵² <https://uxoinfo.com/blogcfc/client/includes/uxopages/sitedata1.cfm>

⁵³ <https://www.revistaenvio.org/articulo/1386>

⁵⁴ <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Lethal-legacy-Panama-wants-U-S-to-clear-2817524.php>



Igloo magazine at Camp Pelado⁵⁵

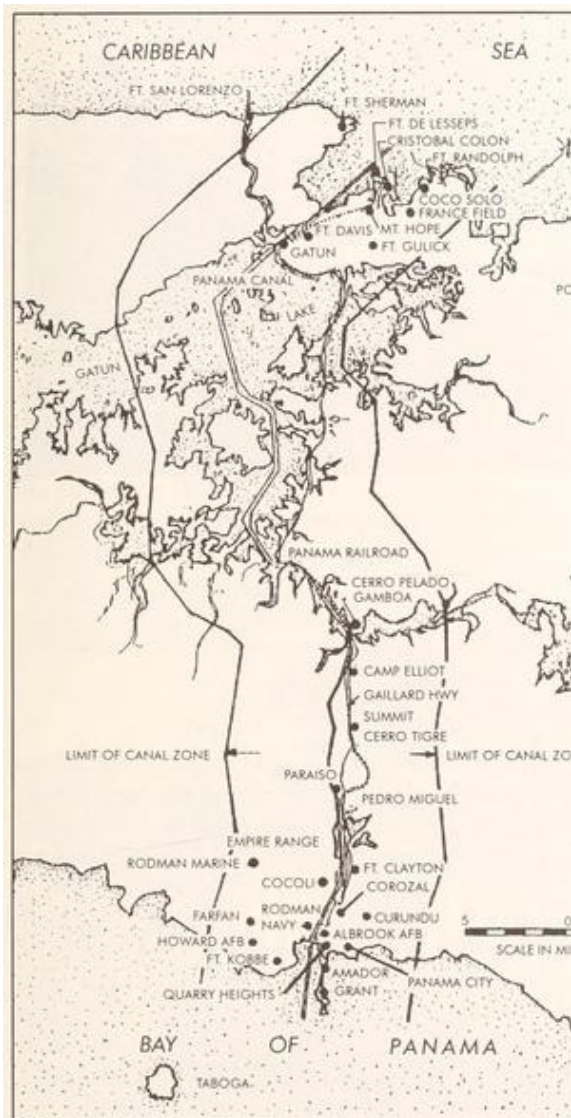
Camp Pelado Ammunition Depot Military Reservation

Aka Cerro Pelado Ammunition Depot, this was established on 26 September 1938⁵⁶, covering 278.6 acres (112.7 hectares) as an ammunition depot for the Canal Zone. Cerro Pelado is a steep hill in Gamboa. It now belongs in part to the Technological University of Panama (UTP), the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) and the Panama Canal Authority (ACP). After the 1977 treaties, the site was used by the Panama Canal Commission, under a licence from the US Army, which continued to own the site until the withdrawal of US forces, by which time it was known as the Cerro Pelado Ammunition Transfer Point.



⁵⁵ The “Igloo” was a standard US Corps of Engineers standard design. Earth-covered with concrete or steel arches used in their construction.

⁵⁶ Executive Order 7979 — Cerro Pelado Ammunition Depot Military Reservation
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-7979-cerro-pelado-ammunition-depot-military-reservation>



Camp Rousseau⁵⁷

During World War 2, a US Navy hospital facility was built at Camp Rousseau, adjacent to the Canal, on a 77-acre (31 hectare) site and between Rodman Naval Station and the town of Cocoli.

⁵⁷ It was named for Rear Admiral Henry H Rousseau, a member of the Isthmian Canal Commission, the organisation which oversaw construction of the Canal. He had been responsible for the design and construction of all terminals, wharves, coaling stations, dry docks, machine shops and a warehouse associated with the construction of the Canal. In post-Canal Zone days, it would be nicknamed *Camp Gator* by US forces, and became the starting point for Task Force Gator (responsible for capturing the *Comandancia* headquarters centre) during the 1989 invasion, where a number of M551 Sheridan tanks had been kept hidden.

Known as Rousseau Naval Hospital this was a temporary construction, unlike the two other Army General Hospitals built at the same time, having been approved in 1937 and completed in 1943, at Fort Clayton and Fort Gulick.

Declared surplus after the war, it was converted into 72 housing units in 1947-48⁵⁸, with what had been wards being converted into apartments. The US Civil Aviation Administration (later the Federal Aviation Administration) took over the accommodation in the 1950s. The housing was demolished in 1962, with the entire population moved to the new town of Cardenas.



The large building in the centre is probably the T-shaped main hospital building, when in use by the Civil Aviation Administration

In 1979-99, it was used by the Army, with the Navy's permission, as a storage and staging area for exercises. The Army's Empire Range Control also maintained an office at Camp Rousseau.⁵⁹

During the US invasion in 1989, Camp Rousseau was the headquarters of a mechanised infantry battalion (part of which was located just to the north on the Empire range), as well as a number of tanks airlifted into Panama the month before. This unit formed part of Task Force Gator, tasked with assaulting the Panama Defense Forces' headquarters in Panama City.⁶⁰

Until late 1990s it was also used as staging area for inbound and outbound units deployed to Panama for engineering exercises in Panama and training at the Army Jungle Operations Training Center at Fort Sherman.

⁵⁸ <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00022175/00001/pageturner#page/63>

⁵⁹ http://william_h_ormsbee.tripod.com/milprop_transf_p13.htm

⁶⁰ https://arsof-history.org/arsof_in_panama/pdf/gen/cmhPub_55-3-1.pdf

In 1994-95, it was used as family reception centre and joint information bureau during Operation *Safe Haven*, with Cuban migrants being accommodated at part of Empire Range.⁶¹

It was finally handed over to Panama in 1999

Chame Airfield

Aka Chame Airdrome or Chame Airfield #1, this was located in the Chame District, 2½ miles (4 km) inland from Panama Bay, in the province of Panama Oeste; 42 miles (67 km) from Panama City.

Chame was one of a number of airfields identified by the Emergency Landing Field Project Board, which had been appointed by the Commanding General of the Panama Canal Department in September 1939, and earmarked as a suitable “auxiliary base”. It was therefore on the list of defence sites outside the Canal Zone presented to the Panamanian Government in 1940. Even before the eventual 1942 Bases Agreement was signed, on 3 April 1941, Chame became the first two airfields to be officially turned over to the US Army.⁶² In January 1942, still before the Agreement was finalised, the Panamanian President agreed to improvement and expansion of Chame, including a machine gun range.

It was used as an auxiliary airfield of Howard Field 1942-45; and was home to units including the

14 th Fighter Squadron	January – November 1942
28 th Fighter Squadron	November 1942 to September 1945

⁶¹ The operation was intended to relieve the overcrowding at the US Guantanamo base in Cuba. Four camps were established on Empire Range for up to 10,000 Cuban migrants who had attempted to enter the US across the Florida Straits. They were returned to Guantanamo after the crowded conditions there were remedied. During their stay in Panama, uncertainty over their future led to unrest and riots, two Cubans drowned in the Canal while trying to escape the camps.

https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/safe_haven.htm

⁶² For more on the Agreement, the events leading to it, and the return of the bases, see <https://raytodd.blog/2024/06/30/panama-and-world-war-2-operating-outside-the-zone-the-1942-agreement-and-the-1947-row/>

This squadron flew P-40 Warhawks and, from late 1943, P-39Q Airacobras.⁶³ It began conversion from single-engine types to the twin-engine Lockheed P-38 Lightning in May 1945, but was soon relocated to Howard Field, ceasing operations in June, being deactivated in October 1946.

Also included in the 1942 Bases Agreement was a bombing range at Chame Point (*Punta Chame*), now a popular windsurfing area on the *Bahia de Chame*.

Chame was not included in the list of sites outside the Canal Zone that the US forces proposed retaining postwar under the Filós-Hines Agreement of 1947.



The 1,200-foot (366 meters) runway is extant and remained in use (and aka Krish Persaud Airfield). In 2021, the “airport”, with the hangar converted into a residence was being advertised for sale as a “pilot’s paradise”.⁶⁴



Chame Airfield in 2012

⁶³ Other types are said to have used the airfield, including AT-6 Texan and BT-13 Valiant trainers, and Cessna UC-78 Bobcats light transports.

⁶⁴ https://regionpanama.com/estate_property/chame-airport-home-with-hangar-id-cc-10-cha4/

Chiva Chiva

Used as a training area, this area was located on the Pacific side of the country, near Fort Clayton. Developed in the defence expansion period in 1940, it contained almost 100 acres (40.4 hectares) and was located about a mile (1.6 km) north of Fort Clayton. Construction began on 12 February 1940 and was completed on 11 May 1940 at a total cost of about \$27,500.

The Chiva Chiva Firing Range was "*provided to serve all units stationed at Fort Clayton, to facilitate the completion of small arms firing*". Construction of the range was assigned to the 11th Engineers, with additional labour supplied by enlisted men assigned to Fort Clayton. Target equipment was supplied by the Panama Canal Department Ordnance Officer; the Department Signal Officer was tasked with installing communication facilities; and the Canal's Constructing Quartermaster provided all building materials and heavy equipment required for earthmoving.

The Firing Range consisted of three shed-type firing point shelters, each measuring 20 x 99 feet (6.1 x 30.1 metres), with corrugated iron roofs but no walls or floors. Parallel to the shelters were three target houses built entirely of reinforced concrete.⁶⁵

In 1953 to 1957, the Tropical Test Team, a Chemical Corps unit conducted frequent tests of distilled mustard gas in Panama. The team conducted most tests of toxic materials in Curundu, as well as some on a knoll on the Chiva-Chiva Trail, and the Chiva Chiva Trail has been identified as a demolition and disposal site for toxic munitions from 1952 to 1956.⁶⁶

Postwar it became the Chiva Chiva Antenna Farm, with towers and facilities of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)⁶⁷ on the Pacific side of the Chiva Chiva

⁶⁵ *Guarding the Gates: The Story of Fort Clayton - Its Setting, Its Architecture, and Its Role in the History of the Panama Canal* by Susan I Enscoe, Suzanne P Johnson, Julie L Webster, and Gordon L Cohen (ERDC/CERL Monograph 00-01, Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, US Army Engineer Research and Development Center, September 2000): <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA388262.pdf>

⁶⁶ <https://www.revistaenvio.org/articulo/1386>

⁶⁷ FBIS was an open-source intelligence component of the CIA Directorate of Science and Technology. It monitored, translated, and disseminated within the US Government openly available news and

Training Area. The FBIS facilities were later moved to the US Embassy, when the area was transferred to Panama in 1998.



Company of the 33rd Inf. on the Pedro Miguel road passing the Chiva-Chiva Trail entrance as the march back to Fort Clayton in 1933⁶⁸

Chorrera Army Airfield



This airfield was about 40 miles (64 km) from Balboa and on the southern side, and to the east of the Canal, some distance from the Canal Zone. It consisted of an emergency fighter airfield with hard runways, and was a sub-base for Albrook Field, being used for dispersal and overflow.

In January 1939, the War Department had notified the Panama Canal Department, the Army command in the Canal Zone, that \$200,000 had been made available for the establishing of airfields outside the Canal Zone under the Air Corps Augmentation Program. In February, the War Department was supplied with a list of 10 sites which

information from media sources outside the US. It began in 1941, under the FCC, as the Foreign Broadcast Monitoring Service, with a role of providing translations of radio broadcasts from selected foreign countries. It transferred to the Army at the end of the war, and to the new CIA in 1947:

<https://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/govpubs-quick-links/FBIS>

⁶⁸ https://www.czimages.com/CZMemories/Fort_Clayton/FC_index.htm

included the area at Chorrera, which was owned by the Panamanian Government. At the time, the airfield situation was described as “critical”, with just the two major airfields in the Canal Zone, at Albrook and France Field, and two commercial airfields (at David and at Paitilla Point by Panama City, neither of which were considered of a satisfactory standard), with other “landing fields” being just that.

While discussions with the Panamanian Government continued, which would be adversely affected by the inauguration of President Arias Madrid in October 1940, the Emergency Landing Field Project Board, appointed by the Commanding General in September 1939, had submitted its findings, naming the sites required. The list included Chorrera as an “auxiliary airfield”.⁶⁹

Despite problems in negotiations, and while the eventual Bases Agreement would not formally come into effect until May 1943, in April 1941, the US Ambassador reported to the Commanding General of an agreement for the US Army to acquire several of the airfields required. As a result, on 3 April 1941, Chame and La Chorrera became the first to be officially turned over to the US Army. By mid-November, the site had two gravelled landing strips.

It would include a bombing, gunnery and testing range.

The USAAF units assigned to it were –

30 th Fighter Squadron	24 November 1941 - 3 January 1943
with P-40 Warhawks	
31 st Fighter Squadron	9 - 23 December 1941; and
	3 February - 19 May 1942

⁶⁹ Shortly after the inauguration, the Panamanian foreign ministry received from the US Ambassador a list of 71 defence sites, including the 12 airfields, thought to be required. The Panamanian Government stalled on a response, accused the US military with having occupied the sites without proper authorisation, that the new administration would not recognise decisions of the previous administration, and any fresh decision would be for the new President.

For more on the problems with obtaining such bases with the Arias Madrid administration in place, see <https://raytodd.blog/2024/06/30/panama-and-world-war-2-operating-outside-the-zone-the-1942-agreement-and-the-1947-row/>

with P-40 Warhawks

24 th Fighter Squadron	March - September 1942; and 10 January – 28 May 1943
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with P-39 Airacobras⁷⁰

28 th Fighter Squadron	26 March - 2 May 1942
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with P-40 Warhawks

15 th Fighter Squadron	2 January - 10 November 1942
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with P-39 Airacobras

53 rd Fighter Squadron	7 January - 8 June 1943
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with P-40 Warhawks

43 rd Fighter Squadron	6 April - 29 August 1944
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with P-39 Airacobras

It was also occupied for a short time in 1944 by the Navy, who set up two portable stick masts, together with special helium equipment to service blimps for anti-submarine patrol duties. It was said to have been “abandoned” by the USAAF (presumably as a permanent base) in 1943.⁷¹ However, by November 1944, such patrol operations were curtailed in the Caribbean and Central American areas.⁷²

The airfield was officially disestablished in November 1945.⁷³

In the expansion of defences and troop numbers, in early 1942, three places including Chorrera had training camps established to orientate new arrivals, and where the importance of jungle fighting was emphasised. The camp at Chorrera also covered a natural approach for potential attackers from the suitable nearby landing beaches and was occupied from 3 August 1942. The camp was 15 miles (24.1 km) west of the Canal Zone, i.e. between the airfield and the town and the Canal. Permission to occupy the

⁷⁰ At least one photo exists that are said to show a “dummy airplane” beneath a shelter at Camp Chorrera circa August 1942.

⁷¹ <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/b/building-the-navys-bases/building-the-navys-bases-vol-2.html>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/Building_Bases/bases-18.html

area and establish infantry positions was obtained from the Panamanian Government on 3 August 1942.⁷⁴ Shortage of suitable accommodation, as elsewhere during the expansion program, saw newly arrived troops initially in tents, until T/O type barracks were built.⁷⁵

The need to improve communications between existing and new defence sites in the Canal Zone and throughout Panama saw many new roads being built, including a trans-isthmus highway which opened (for military traffic) in April 1942.⁷⁶ There was also a 61-mile (98.1 km) connection of the Inter-American Highway from Chorrera to Rio Hato, which was completed in July 1942.⁷⁷

There is now a sizeable city of Chorrera (or La Chorrera), which is the capital of Panama Oeste Province.

Cocoli

One of three new towns built by the Canal's Building Division in 1940, alongside the expansion of existing ones in the expansion programme launched in the lead up to war.

Originally authorised to support the planned Third Locks Project⁷⁸, as increased housing for the labour force was expected as a consequence. It was to consist of Cocoli Gold (for US citizens) and Cocoli Silver (for non-US citizens).⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *Security and Defense of the Panama Canal 1903-2000* by Charles Morris (Panama Canal Commission) <https://original-ufdc.uflib.ufl.edu/AA00047733/00001/1>

⁷⁵ Theater of Operations Type (T/O) were single-storey temporary structures, designed to last from two to four years, and constructed to house combat soldiers in a rear area. They featured simplicity and speed of construction in place of permanence or comfort., and used a wooden base, and largely of wood with tarpaper covering, lacking insulation and often without utilities.

⁷⁶ Previously US forces had considered such a thing a risk, as it could aid an attacker.

⁷⁷ In May 1943, *"the United States liquidated the credit of \$2,500,000 made available to Panama by the Export-Import Bank for the construction of Panama's share of the Chorrera-Rio Hato Road"*: Memorandum by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Central America and Panama Affairs (711.19/1-2048), 20 January 1948. Subject: General Relations Between the United States and Panama: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v09/d467>

⁷⁸ Authorised by Congress in August 1939, with excavation begun on 1 July 1940. The scheduled completion would have been in 1946. However, changed plans, and competing wartime requirements, saw the plans "modified" as soon as in May 1942 and, by the end of June 1944, just 88 men were being employed. For more on the abortive Third Locks Project, see...

⁷⁹ The system of "Gold Roll" (for US employees) and "Silver Roll" (for others) was used as the basis for discriminating and segregation, with separate accommodation standards, mess halls, waiting rooms etc.

The community consisted of 356 family apartments, 24 bachelor apartments and 160 bachelor rooms, together with other buildings and facilities. It also had a clubhouse, commissary, theatre, dispensary, patrol station, post office, fire station, elementary school and several churches. Accommodation was in the typical wooden buildings with corrugated metal roofs.⁸⁰

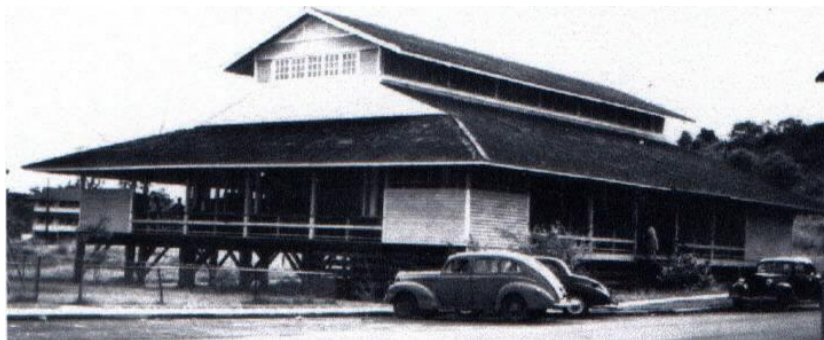


US Army housing in Cocoli

It was acquired from the Panama Canal Company by the US Navy in 1951, and transferred to the US Army (with its greater housing requirements) in 1965,

although the number of buildings had decreased.⁸¹

The Army housing area of 146 acres (59 hectares) was included in the handover of Fort Kobbe to Panama in 1999. It was said at the time to consist of 162 “substandard” family housing and a community centre.⁸²



Cocoli Post Office, which opened 1 July 1941 and closed in 1954

In 2009, the media in Panama was reporting that around 336 hectares (830

for more on the system, see <https://raytodd.blog/2024/06/30/panama-in-world-war-2-war-discrimination-and-segregation/>

⁸⁰ https://www.angelfire.com/cantina/que_pasa/mycocoli.html

It is said that the Cocoli housing was primarily wood-frame housing so termites and fire took their toll, and so that very little was to remain.

⁸¹ <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00022175/00001/pageturner#page/49>

⁸² http://william_h_ormsbee.tripod.com/bases_summ_p02.htm
http://william_h_ormsbee.tripod.com/milprop_transf_p14.htm

acres) in the Cocoli area would have to be cleared of live ammunition, left behind by the US Army.⁸³

The new locks created by the Canal expansion project, which opened in 2016, are called the Cocoli Locks.



Typical four-family Tropical housing, as common in Cocoli

Corozal

A sub-installation of Fort Clayton, this area had been used as a settlement by the Isthmian Canal Commission, which oversaw construction of the Canal, and had been originally developed for the railroad, until turned over to the Army by the Commission in 1911, as one of the earliest US military posts in Panama.⁸⁴

⁸³ <https://www.laestrella.com.pa/panama/nacional/be-must-cocoli-cleaned-IJLE229526>

⁸⁴ There are two other Corozals, small communities in Veraguas province and Los Santos province, not far from one another and roughly midway between the Canal and the Costa Rica border

The installation primarily served the Army as a supply depot and maintenance centre.⁸⁵

At the start of World War 2 there was also radio intelligence monitoring station MS-4 at Corozal, operated by the Panama Signal Company, whose personnel would be transferred to the newly-formed Second Signal Service Company in 1939. MS-4 was one of seven monitoring stations remained the basic source of SIS intercept traffic until after Pearl Harbor. MS-4 was closed in 1943 (the designation temporarily reused for MS-5 in Hawaii, and then for a new station in Ethiopia).

It was divided into West Corozal (on the banks of the Canal) and East Corozal, and lies about halfway between Balboa and Fort Clayton. Across the Gaillard Highway, East Corozal comprised buildings constructed by the Isthmian Canal Commission, including the Civilian Personnel Training Center.⁸⁶

Now one can find the passenger terminal for the railway and, across the trans-isthmus highway, the American Cemetery (see below). There is also Corozal docks (aka Corozal Oeste Landing) on the Canal approaches to the Miraflores Locks. In the 2010s there was a plan for a further major container terminal at Corozal Oeste.

⁸⁵ *Guarding the Gates: The Story of Fort Clayton - Its Setting, Its Architecture, and Its Role in the History of the Panama Canal* by Susan I Enscoe, Suzanne P Johnson, Julie L Webster, and Gordon L Cohen (ERDC/CERL Monograph 00-01, Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, US Army Engineer Research and Development Center, September 2000): <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA388262.pdf>

⁸⁶ <https://bdigital.binal.ac.pa/bdp/an%20american%20legacy3.pdf.pdf>

Corozal American Cemetery⁸⁷

Corozal American Cemetery has been managed by American Battle Monuments Commission since 1982, having been assigned to the Commission⁸⁸ following the 1977 treaties that provided for the end of the Canal Zone and the eventual handover of the Canal and withdrawal of US forces. A further agreement between the US and Panama



in 1999 safeguarded and formalised the role of the Commission following the US withdrawal. The Cemetery and Memorial comprises the 17 acres (6.9 hectares) that was the “Gold Roll” section of the cemetery traditionally reserved for white US citizens (even in death, at least during the first half of the existence of the Canal Zone,

segregation persisted).

It was first established in 1914, when the Isthmian Canal Commission initially designated two acres for the purpose.



Buried here are US servicemen who served during the Mexican – American War, the Civil War, World War 1, World War 2 and other major conflicts. It also contains a small number of graves of those from Britain and the Commonwealth.

Immacuately maintained, and suitably peaceful, it lies about 3 miles (4.8 km) from Panama City.⁸⁹

The small memorial on the hill dates from a decision of Congress in 1923.

⁸⁷ <http://www.interment.net/data/panama/panama/corozal-american-cemetery/records-h-i.htm>

⁸⁸ Executive Order 12115 of 19 January 1979.

⁸⁹ http://www.interment.net/data/panama/panama/corozal-american-cemetery/Corozal_Brochure_Mar2018.pdf

Adjacent is the former “Silver Roll” employees’ cemetery, much larger and less well maintained.

Cristóbal

The port of Cristobal is located on the Bay of Limón in the south-eastern part of the city of Colón and at the Atlantic entrance of the Panama Canal. Both Cristóbal and Colón were named after Christopher Columbus.



The original, Old Cristóbal, was first built by the Panama Railroad Company in the 1850s, as its headquarters and port of arrival for railway travellers, and was expanded in the 1880s. It was also the port of entry for construction equipment and materials for

Canal construction, most Canal workers, and supplies and provisions for them and their dependents.



*Cristobal
passenger
terminal in
1926*

The town was rebuilt by the Isthmian Canal Commission from 1912, and all the original buildings, including Ferdinand de Lesseps’ mansion, were demolished.

What became known as New Cristobal was built between 1917 and 1938, to be a new and necessary residential area in the Canal Zone, on reclaimed swamp land.

Cristobal was also the administrative district centre for the Atlantic end of the Canal Zone (Balboa was that for the Pacific end).⁹⁰ Cristobal also had one of the five civil councils that administered the Canal Zone.⁹¹



*General View
of the
Cristobal
Terminal and
Harbor Area
circa 1934*

Ship-repair facilities serving the Atlantic end of the Canal were at Cristobal, including a graving dock, marine railways and wharf.⁹² During World War 2, a 1,700-acre (688 hectare) site near Cristobal was developed as the new Gatun Tank Farm with underground tanks, and pipelines linked to the harbour. This supplemented the existing tank farm at Fort DeLessups and Mount Hope.

Once the Trans-Isthmus Pipeline was in place, this allowed older, smaller, and slower tankers to be used for a shuttle service between Cristobal, the supply sources along the Gulf of Mexico, and the huge refineries in Aruba and Curaçao, eliminating the need for tanker traffic through the Canal. It greatly improved the turnaround times of the large, fast tankers needed to carry oil into the Pacific theatre.

Facing the Caribbean, the battle with the U-boats in 1942-43 affected traffic to and from Cristobal. The US Navy had an administrative headquarters at Cristobal (although the 15th Naval District main headquarters were at the other end of the Canal). In June

⁹⁰ The legal system was similarly divided into the Cristobal Division and Balboa Division.

⁹¹ The others were Balboa-Ancon, Pedro Miguel, Gamboa, and Gatun. All had members elected by the popular vote of the US employees.

https://aquadocs.org/bitstream/handle/1834/19156/pages39_66.pdf

⁹² https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/Building_Bases/bases-18.html

1942, the harbour was closed for a time due to U-boat activity, and ships sailing to and from the port were lost during 1942-43. When convoys were introduced as a result of the threat, the convoy codes were allocated for sailings Cristobal – Trinidad (CT, although there was just a single CT.1 convoy); Curacao to Cristobal (CZ, between September 1942 and the following February); and Cristobal to Curacao (ZC, for same period as CZ).

Colón remained under Panama control and outside the Canal Zone, and the dividing line ran down the middle of the street in front of the YMCA.⁹³

During the 1950s, the population of Old and New Cristobal were drastically reduced, with redrawing of Canal Zone boundaries and the construction of new city of Margarita. In 1955, the population of Cristobal had fallen to just 562, and that of New Cristobal to 1,130. Then, beginning in late 1957, as the 1955 Treaty changes were implemented, five tracts of land totalling 48.5 acres (19.6 hectares) in Cristobal and all of Nueva Cristobal were transferred to Panama, with the railway station, high school and hospital all having to be relocated from what had become Panamanian territory.



New Cristobal High School in 1959

By the 1960s, Cristobal had become almost exclusively a commercial and social area with few residents, although New Cristobal became a more upmarket residential area.

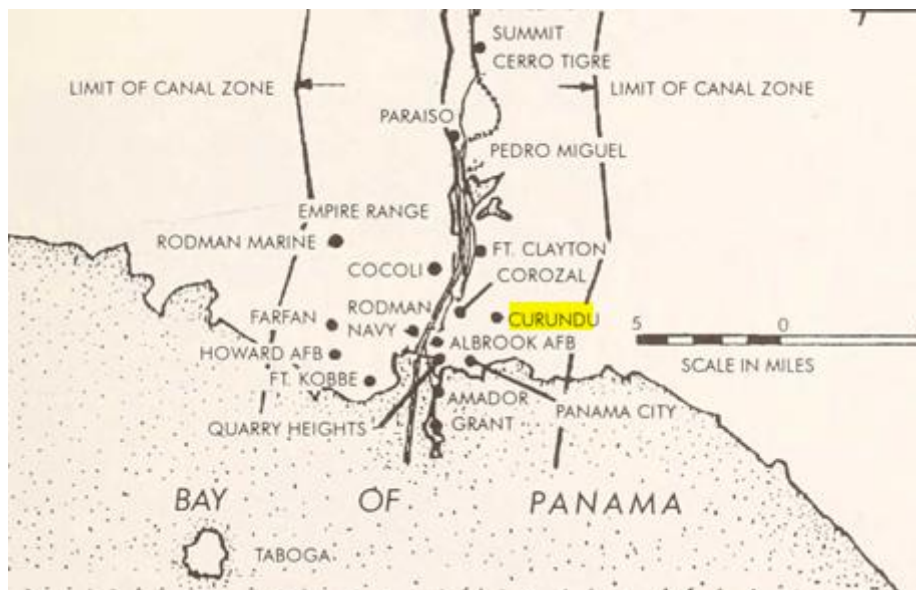
⁹³ <http://www.geocities.ws/goliverjones/page12.htm>

Following the 1977 treaties, and the abolition of the Canal Zone, many areas of Cristobal were among the first to be affected and being restored to Panamanian control.

Cristóbal is now part of the city of Colón, but it is also the name of the district which encompasses the Atlantic Side portions of the former Canal Zone, with the port operated by Hutchinson Ports since 1997 once more active and successful, although the area, and the city of Colón as a whole, suffers from high crime rates and a lack of investment.

Curundu

When the Canal Zone was created in 1904 the Curundú River served as the boundary between it and Panamanian territory, with the US authorities eventually naming the territory it administered in the area as Curundu (and not Curundú, the Spanish spelling).



Curundu Military Reservation was established in 1919 (though not officially named until 1934, and originally its name was misspelled "Corundu").



Former Army bachelor housing at Curundu

It originally encompassed Fort Clayton and Albrook Field, as well as the Panama Ordnance Depot (originally called the Panama Arsenal, which was created in 1916), the Canal's Engineer Depot and the Port of Corozal. Camp Paraiso was a sub-post located near the Panama Canal town of Pedro Miguel, itself adjacent to the locks of the same name.⁹⁴

Albrook Field was separated from the Curundu Military Reservation and established as a separate installation in 1924.⁹⁵

The Panama Air Depot (PAD), collocated at Albrook Field (and under its jurisdiction from 1939), was initially developed as the Curundu Project by the Panama Canal Company in 1931 as an industrial area of automotive repair shops and garage, the district quartermaster's shops, the constructing quartermaster shops, and the municipal division shops and storage. During World War 2 it assembled and repaired Army aircraft. The Panama Air Depot was transferred to Panama in stages from October 1979 through 1982, in compliance with the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977.⁹⁶

In the 1950s, it is said that the US Chemical Corps carried out tests of mustard gas in the Curundu reservation.⁹⁷

In 1950 and 1956, the boundaries of the Curundu Military reservation were adjusted, with sections reallocated to Albrook Air Force Base and Fort Clayton, others becoming

⁹⁴ <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00022175/00001/pageturner#page/39>
<http://bdigital.binal.ac.pa/bdp/an%20american%20legacy3.pdf.pdf>

⁹⁵ <http://bdigital.binal.ac.pa/bdp/an%20american%20legacy3.pdf.pdf>

⁹⁶ http://william_h_ormsbee.tripod.com/bases_summ_p04.htm

Having accommodated postwar other organisations, such as the Defense Mapping Agency's Inter-American Geodetic Survey and a number of tenant activities which used the warehouse facilities -- including in later years the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) warehouse and Army Medical Department Activity (MEDDAC).

⁹⁷ <https://www.revistaenvio.org/articulo/1386>

the Port of Corozal and Curundu Housing Area. In 1967, the Curundu Elementary School was built, but in the Fort Clayton grounds.

The Curundu Housing Area provided accommodation for civilian employees of the Army as well as military personnel. They were housed in “low cost” building constructed during the wartime expansion program, with such amenities as a clubhouse and post office also being included.

The Panamanian residential area was originally called “Skunk Hollow” by its residents. In 1943, local newspapers reported on a proposed change of name (“Jungle Glen” was apparently favoured, others being “Jungle Hollow” or “Skunk Glen”). However, a ballot of residents chose the name Curundu, naming the area after the river.⁹⁸



Photograph of Curundu centre in 1947, featuring the commissary, taken from the theatre⁹⁹

Most of the Curundu Army Reservation, some 779 acres - which consisted of family and bachelor housing and command and

community support facilities - reverted to Panamanian control by 1982, the first 20 family housing units in 1979, and is now a part (and a poorer part) of the sprawl of Panama City. The Curundu residential area was one of several places “shared” by the US and Panama following the 1977 treaties.¹⁰⁰ Panamanian government consolidated several offices of some ministries in the bachelor officers’ quarters in the area known as Curundu Heights (there were two areas – Curundu Heights and Curundu Flats) as well as other governmental entities previously spread out in different parts of Panama City after making modifications.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ <https://www.czbrats.com/Towns/curundu.htm>

⁹⁹ <https://www.czimages.com/CZMemories/Photos/photoof340.htm>

¹⁰⁰ Others included Quarry Heights, Fort Amador, the Gorgas Army Hospital, and Fort Gulick.

¹⁰¹ http://william_h_ormsbee.tripod.com/milprop_transf_p03.htm

Othe facilities of the US Army in Curundu included the Curundu Antenna Farm and an Army laundry.¹⁰²

During the US invasion in 1989, one of the task forces had as one of its objectives protecting the US accommodation that remained in Curundu, which was quickly achieved, despite a Panama Defense Force Engineer Compound being in the area.

Ray Todd

Panama City

Republic of Panama

18 January 2025

¹⁰² http://william_h_ormsbee.tripod.com/treaty_impact_military_p04.htm