

determined its successor. The CASA 212 fitted with a Magnetic Anomaly Detector (MAD) used for mineral resources research could probably be replaced by a satellite.

An announcement on the acquisition of two fisheries patrol helicopters contended by the Westland EH 101, Sikorsky S 70 and the Super Puma, will be made prior to December 31 this year. Whichever is chosen will probably also gain the order for the Puma replacement.



### What is the Portuguese Air Force's current relationship with OGMA?

In 1994, *Oficinas Gerais de Material Aeronautico* (OGMA) was taken from Portuguese Air Force control and now reports directly to the Defence & Industry Minister, so we are a customer. Bearing this in mind and that the Portuguese Air Force is having to cope with a shrinking budget, steps have been taken to carry out some depot level maintenance work at our own bases. Of course we can't do this for all types, like the P-3, C-130H and AlphaJet, because we don't have the infrastructure, but what we can do, we will.

**Mobility and flexibility is very much a priority for most Air Forces in Europe, does**

### this apply to the Portuguese Air Force?

Yes, tighter budgets dictate that all the aircraft have to have more than one role. For example, the F-16s are no longer just for air defence, pilots on the unit have now taken on an air to ground role as well. Needing to be more flexible will probably see our maintenance squadrons merge with aircraft squadrons which should in turn improve the pilots outlook as well. You see, it's very easy for a pilot, until promoted to a certain level of seniority, to become very insular — not notice what's going on outside his squadron — this could go some way to solving that.

Co-operation is another aspect we are attempting to improve and are currently working with Belgium and the Netherlands who operate Block 10 F-16s (Portugal operates Block 15s) in the development of the midlife update programme (MLU) though our F-16s do already have some improvements, like the improved head-up display (HUD).

### The training syllabus at Beja, where screening and fast jet flying is taught, is being overhauled, can you explain why?

Currently, new pilots qualify having flown 120 hours on Epsilons. I don't believe this to be adequate. Instead, we intend to increase

the number of hours a student must fly before qualification, say 200+ which would include fast jet flying on AlphaJets. Once successfully completed they would then receive their hard earned wings.

### While at Sintra, it was revealed that the Chipmunks were being returned to the Portuguese Air Force inventory. Why?

For 18 years now, the Air Force Academy has been providing academic skills to prospective pilots, flying wasn't part of the curriculum.

However, for the 1997/98 course we are planning to rectify this with a flying training course, aided by 6-8 Chipmunks. All will have been upgraded with the Lycoming 180hp engines and fitted with other various modifications, including one for spin avoidance.

Currently, the only flying experience the cadets gain are on gliders, should they then fail their screening test on Epsilons and leave the Air Force, four years training would have gone to waste. This is expensive, we believe that the return of the Chipmunks (they were retired in 1990) could help overcome this problem.

### A future issue of AFM will include a detailed look at the current state of the Portuguese Air Force.

## General Alex Corbal - a profile



*Above: General Alex Corbal, Commander-in-Chief of the Força Aérea Portuguesa (Portuguese Air Force), (FAP)*

General Aurelio Benito Alex Corbal was born April 11, 1939 in Santo Ildefonso, Porto. Aged 18, he joined the Military Academy, where he graduated and completed the pilot training course in 1960.

The following year he was promoted to Second-Lieutenant after completing the Fighters Complementary Course at *Escola de Reactores del Ejercito del Aire* in Spain.

In 1961, General Corbal, at Air

Base N°2, completed the Fighter Pilot Instructors Course and the Navy Communications Course. He was promoted to Captain in December 1965.

Amongst his service postings he served twice in Angola, the first in November 1966 when assigned to the 2nd Air Region, Air Base N°3 (NEGAGE) and four years later — after a period at Montijo as Director of the Survival Training Centre — a second tour of duty saw him serve in Luanda as Chief of Operations of the 2nd Air Region, having flown as Commanding Officer several combat missions in the North and in the East of Angola.

In April 1974, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He returned to Portugal in August, where he performed a number of important Air Force Staff roles until October 1976 when he was assigned to Air Base N°5 (Montijo).

He was promoted to Colonel in June 1977. From January 1978 until October 1983, General Corbal, was assigned to Air Base N° 5 (Monte Real) as Commander where, under his command, the F-86 aircraft stationed at the Air Base were replaced by A-7P Corsair II fighter bombers.

In June 1984 he returned to the

Air Staff and was promoted to Major General a year later.

July 1989 saw promotion to Lieutenant General and appointment as Commander for Air Force Logistics and Administration Command. In February 1992, he was appointed as Commander, Air Force Personnel, until January 1995, when he became the Portuguese Air Force Chief of Staff, and was promoted to Four Star General.

General Corbal, a command pilot with more than 4,000 flying hours has flown 478 combat missions. He has flown numerous reconnaissance, close support, training and fighter aircraft, including the F-86, T-33 T-38, Fiat G-91R4 and the A-7P Corsair II.

Amongst his many military decorations and awards are the Distinguished Services Gold Medal with Palm, two Distinguished Services Gold Medals, Commemorative Medals of Military Campaigns in the North of Angola, the City of Leiria, Medal of Aeronautical Merit of Spain and Medal of the Order of Merit of Greece.

General Corbal is a widower and has two daughters, a granddaughter and a grandson.