

RAF Lakenheath timeline

Below is a record of significant events found in press database and online resources

<u>Year(s)</u>	<u>Events/notes - including source of information</u>
AD500 (Approx.)	Burial of Anglo-Saxon warrior on site of what will later become RAF Lakenheath https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-24307475
1914-1918	Lakenheath Warren used by Royal Flying Corps (RFC) as air ground attack and bombing range by aircraft based in the area. RFC consisted of a plethora of bi-plane aircraft manufacturers/models.
1918	Lakenheath Warren abandoned when peace came.
1940	Air Ministry selects Lakenheath as alternate for nearby RAF Mildenhall
1940	False lights, runways and aircraft installed south of Brandon as a decoy to divert Luftwaffe night attacks on RAF Lakenheath (Q site).
1941	Surfaced runways were constructed at Lakenheath. Main runway (04/22) being 2000 yards. Subsidiary runway (12/30) being 1300 yards. Subsidiary runway (16/34) being 1400 yards. <u>Note:</u> Runways can be used for take off/landings in both directions, hence the dual numbering, and are referenced to Magnetic North (MN) not True North (TN). Cartographers maps are referenced to TN. In 1940 MN was 10 degrees west of TN. In 1950 MN was 9 degrees west of TN. In 2019 MN = TN. (See https://maps.ngdc.noaa.gov/viewers/historical_declination/)
1941	Another 100 yards was added to subsidiary runway (16/34) at Lakenheath making it 1500 yards in length.
1941	Hard standings for 36 aircraft were built at Lakenheath
1941	Two T-2 hangars built at Lakenheath. T-2 is a temporary hangar built of a series of standard steel-fabricated lattice wall and roof units of welded-and-bolted construction. The complete framework is clad with galvanised corrugated iron, 22-gauge for the roof and 24-gauge for the walls. T2 were designed by the architect AE Cotton. One T-2 was at the airfield. One T-2 set up to the east of the airfield (other side of A1065) and linked by a taxiway.
1941	One B-1 hangar built at Lakenheath. B-1 hangar is a large type of military repair hangar mainly used on WWII bomber bases, constructed using steel stanchions and clad in corrugated iron. The B-1 hangar was set up to the east of the airfield (other side of A1065) and linked by taxiway.

Late 1941	Lakenheath used by squadrons on detachment
Late 1941	Lakenheath now functions as a Mildenhall satellite.
Late 1941	RAF No. 149 Squadrons Short Stirling bombers dispersed from RAF Mildenhall to Lakenheath.
24 November 1941	Establishment as a fully-fledged airfield of the RAF. Named RAF Lakenheath
6 April 1942	RAF No. 149 Squadron established at RAF Lakenheath. Squadron used for Maritime operations (mostly mine laying) in the English Channel and the North Sea.
3 January 1943	Stirling (R9334) of RAF No. 149 Squadron crashed on the playing field in Lakenheath after a failed overshoot. One member of the crew died.
Early 1943	Three T-2 hangars erected at RAF Lakenheath on the North side of the airfield to be used as glider storage.
Early 1943	40 Horsa Gliders dispersed to RAF Lakenheath
21 June 1943	RAF No. 199 Squadron established as second Stirling squadron at RAF Lakenheath commencing operations on 31 July 1943
16 August 1943 to 15 March 1944	No. 13 Heavy Glider Maintenance Section was based at RAF Lakenheath
Early 1944	RAF Lakenheath selected to undergo major upgrading so as to be used as a Very Heavy Bomber airfield. The intended aircraft are the United States Army Air Force B-29 Superfortresses.
May 1944	RAF No, 199 squadron moves to RAF Creake in Norfolk due to airfield upgrade
Mid 1944	RAF No. 149 Squadron moves from Lakenheath to RAF Methwold due to airfield upgrade
1944 - 1946	RAF Lakenheath upgraded to accommodate Very Heavy Bombers. Removal of existing runways. New runways will have 12 inches of high grade concrete as their foundation. Main runway (07/25) is 3000 yards long and 100 yards wide. Subsidiary runway (01/19) is 2000 yards long and 100 yards wide. Subsidiary runway (14/32) is 2000 yards long and 100 yards wide. Section of A1065 road is rebuilt and is now further to the east of the airfield. Control Tower built. Works took 2 ½ years to complete and cost 2 million. At peak 1000 men were working on site.
1946 - 1947	Due to war ending, RAF Lakenheath was not returned to service but was placed on "care and maintenance"
March 1947	After unprecedented weather conditions in Suffolk, rivers in the area burst their banks and dykes were breached resulting in the fens being flooded. RAF Mildenhall and Lakenheath deployed transport, manpower and equipment to assist in repair and relief operations.

April 1947	RAF Bomber Command returns to RAF Lakenheath. Runways repaired and resurfaced.
May 1948	RAF Lakenheath declared operationally ready.
July 1948	USAF 2nd Operations Group deploy B-29 Superfortresses to RAF Lakenheath for a planned 90 day deployment to help with the Berlin blockade airlift operation.
27 November 1948	Operational Control of RAF Lakenheath is transferred from RAF to United States Air Force Europe (USAFE).
1948 - 1956	Primary base host is USAFE 7504th Base Completion Squadron During this period a number of bomber squadrons were on Temporary Duty (TDY) deployments (33 instances in total) to RAF Lakenheath
28 January 1950	Squadron elevated to Air Base Group (ABG)
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1951	93rd bomb group flew B50's from RAF Lakenheath. Giant B36's and Globemasters followed.
16-20 January 1951	6 x B-36D's were on temporary deployment to RAF Lakenheath which created quite a bit of media attention. See https://youtu.be/q3AG-JsjoyA and https://youtu.be/701Oz0VInsM and https://youtu.be/48Rh2skyywM)
May 1951	Control of RAF Lakenheath is transferred from USAFE to Strategic Air Command (SAC) and placed under 3909th Air Base Group.
1952	"High Security" was implemented with high wire fencing being installed at RAF Lakenheath
1953	B47's arrived at RAF Lakenheath
1954	3910th Base Air Group takes over from 3909th Base Air Group
29 April 1956	Four top secret CIA U2 aircraft arrive at RAF Lakenheath. This unit was known as the "1st Weather Reconnaissance Squadron" (WRSP-1) and 'publicly' its mission was to study wind direction and structure of the high-altitude jet-stream, convective clouds and cosmic radiation up to 55,000 feet. By 11 June this unit had moved on to Wiesbaden (another story behind this move https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB434/ Chapter 3 Page 94).
27 July 1956	A near nuclear incident was reported after a B-47 aircraft, of 307th Bombardment attachment, crashed on landing and collided with a bomb storage "igloo" that contained three Mark 6 nuclear bombs. Luckily the bombs, each containing 8000 pounds of high explosive and without their fissile cores, did not ignite in the ensuing fire. Unfortunately, 4 crewmen died in the crash.

15 January 1960	48th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) relocated from France (Chaumont) to an empty RAF Lakenheath under project "Red Richard". Charl de Gaulle had demanded the removal of all nuclear capable NATO forces from France. 48th TFW consisted of 3 squadrons (492-blue, 493-yellow and 494-red) of F-100 Super Sabres. With this action SAC transferred control back to USAFE.
January 1961	A parked Super-Sabre caught fire. The pilot accidentally jettisoned the external fuel tanks which burst open and engulfed the aircraft. The jet was reported to have been carrying a nuclear bomb which was "scorched and blistered". https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2003/oct/13/energy.nuclearindustry
Autumn 1966	2 x HH-43B Huskie rescue helicopters arrived for operations at RAF Lakenheath
May 1968	As RAF Mildenhall was undergoing runway reconstruction Operations of Heavy jets were conducted from RAF Lakenheath. These operations continued until January 1969.
March 1970	F-100 Super Sabres from RAF Lakenheath stationed at RAF Mildenhall due to runway improvements. Aircraft returned to RAF Lakenheath August 1971.
7 January 1972	First F-4D Phantom II arrives at RAF Lakenheath
1972 to 1977	Gradual 5 year conversion of squadrons from F-100 Super Sabre to F-4D Phantom II
15 April 1972	Last F-100 leaves RAF Lakenheath
1 June 1975	F-4Ds operational in USAF and NATO
Early 1977	Operation "ready switch" sees F-4D's swapped out for F-111 with RAF Lakenheath swapping aircraft with squadrons in the USA.
1 March 1977	First 3 x F-111Fs arrive at RAF Lakenheath
1 April 1977	495th Tactical Fighter Squadron (Green) reactivated at RAF Lakenheath. Operates F-111F aircraft as a Pilot and Weapons System Officer (WSO) training squadron. Went Operational on 29th July 1977.
31 December 1982	Protestors at RAF Lakenheath protest the storage of nerve gas weapons on UK soil. See https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAEZ1HPO9T2031LIUL58IQCHCE6-UK-ANTI-NERVE-GAS-STORAGE-PROTEST-AT-LAKENHEATHROBERT-NURICK-FROM-INST/query/raf+lakenheath
1986	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) "ban the bomb" protests at RAF Lakenheath.
14 April 1986	24 x F-111s are ordered to strike Libya in Operation Eldorado Canyon See https://media.defense.gov/2012/Aug/23/2001330097/-1/-1/0/Op%20El%20Dorado%20Canyon.pdf
13 December 1991	495th Tactical Fighter Squadron (Green) inactivated at RAF Lakenheath.

21 February 1992	First F-15E Arrives at RAF Lakenheath. F-15's are to replace F-111's
14 December 1992	493rd Tactical Fighter Squadron declared de-activated at RAF Lakenheath, formally ending the career of the F-111 with the 48th Fighter Wing. 74-0889 and 74-0178 had commemorative artworks added to their noses for the occasion.
15 December 1992	3 of the last 4 F-111 (74-0888, 74-0889 and 74-1078) left RAF Lakenheath for Cannon RAF in the USA.
18 December 1992	Last F-111 (74-0178) leaves RAF Lakenheath after fuel leak repair.
May 1994	48th F-15E delivered to RAF Lakenheath
October 1997	Discovery of burial site of Anglo-Saxon warrior and horse at RAF Lakenheath. The warrior is believed to have been about 30 when he died, and to have been buried around AD500. A further 200 graves, spanning 150 years, were discovered during excavations. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-24307475 Over the next 5 years, three cemeteries containing 446 graves would be identified - a major find for East Anglia.
2001	9/11 – security tightens, and the airbase becomes more detached from the community. Previous public footpaths through the base are closed. 1 new footpath (10) created to go around the base
1 June 2006	56th Rescue Squadron operational at RAF Lakenheath. HH-60G Pave Hawk is operated by this squadron.
2009	Old Control Tower demolished
2013	Anglo-Saxon warrior skeleton found at RAF Lakenheath goes on display at Mildenhall Museum: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-24307475
18 February 2015	57th Rescue Squadron activated at RAF Lakenheath. Squadron operates from 56th Squadron HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters in a pararescue role only - no flying role or additional aircraft.
June 2018	56th and 57th Rescue Squadrons leave RAF Lakenheath
Late 2018	Works start on demolishing old buildings and construction of facilities for F-35 Lightning II aircraft due to arrive in 2021
July 2019	Two archaeological discoveries made while preparing F35 building sites. One from the late neolithic period and the other from the medieval period. https://www.lakenheath.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2038206/48th-fw-uncovers-the-past-while-building-for-the-future/
15 June 2020	F-15C crashes into the North Sea during a routine exercise. Pilot, First Lt. Kenneth “Kage” Allen, 27, killed. https://www.airforcemag.com/investigation-found-pilot-error-caused-june-f-15-crash/
1 October 2021	The 495th Fighter (nicknamed the Valkyries - green) was reactivated to be the first F-35A Lightning II squadron at Lakenheath

- 15 December 2021 First 4 F35A Lightning II aircraft arrive at Lakenheath bound for 495th squadron
- 15 April 2022 493rd squadron receives its first F-35A Lightning II aircraft
- 27 April 2022 The last 4 F-15C aircraft of 493rd squadron left Lakenheath bound for the USA
- 22 May 2022 CND protests possible storage of nuclear weapons at RAF Lakenheath
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-61541233>
- Early December 2022 Archaeological items were unearthed while excavating for the 48th Civil Engineer Squadron's construction of a new airfield lighting vault.
- 20 May 2023 CND protests the deployment by the US, of new B61-12 guided nuclear bombs across Europe
- 02 September 2023 All major UK newspapers and TV stations report on the possibility of nuclear devices returning to RAF Lakenheath. The original article is found here
<https://fas.org/publication/lakenheath-air-base-added-to-nuclear-weapons-storage-site-upgrades/>