

## EIGHT DECADES DEFENDING THE FIRMAMENT

When Minister Joaquim Pedro Salgado Filho stepped at Campo dos Afonsos on January 27, he was given the authority to be in charge of the institution which trained the future leaders of the national force. At the ceremony, held at Aeronautics School, the Minister of War, Eurico Gaspar Dutra, transferred to Salgado Filho not only a military school, but also a space endowed with great importance for the nascent Brazilian Air Force.

In early 1941, Aeronautics First Minister visited all units hitherto belonging to the Army, the Brazilian Navy and the former Civil Aviation Directorate, assuming responsibility for all military aerial activities and aeronautical regulations in Brazil. The beautiful institutional building that was then being erected, added a wide range of actions and a diversity of qualified personnel who demanded a new organization and a unifying guideline. The acquired heritage, carefully assembled, gained a new status within the Brazilian state apparatus, grew in importance and took more responsibilities. Much work was carried out by the Ministry of Aeronautics in order to manage and expand, simultaneously, the civil aviation and the bold military flights. From then on, the aeroclubs were expanded and were given special attention by the government; the inspected airports fulfilled the role of connecting with several regions of Brazil and the world.

Alongside the concern with the commercial use of aviation, an action of a nature strictly linked to the maintenance of the sovereignty of a country was stated in a powerful way. The national skies had only one protector: the Brazilian Air Force! The armed arm of the Ministry of Aeronautics, the youngest of the national armed forces, equal in importance and constitutionally on the same level as the land and naval branches of war, was born in a moment of worldwide belligerence. In times of political and military cooperation with the United States, the Brazilian wings adopted the modern methods and the most advanced airplanes for instructional and operational use. A bold new planning for the defense of the extensive Brazilian coastline started being executed, guarding the land and patrolling the sea.

From that moment on, the foundations of the Brazilian Air Force were launched, allowing an evolution that lasts up to now and will last into the future. Much has been learned in eight decades: the experience lived in the World War II, the defense of the coast and the observation and attack operations in Italy, the cooperation with the UN in peacekeeping missions, the search and rescue in hard-to-reach places, the aerospace project, the acquisition of new piloted or remotely controlled aviation resources. Many commanders have left their marks.

Everything that can be witnessed today has had a great start in a venerable past. And we have the opportunity of addressing the distant 1940s in the articles that are part of this commemorative edition.

Good reading! Let the centenary come!

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Aeronautics was established on January 20, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> The initial designation was National Air Forces, being modified on May 22, 1941 to the Brazilian Air Force.